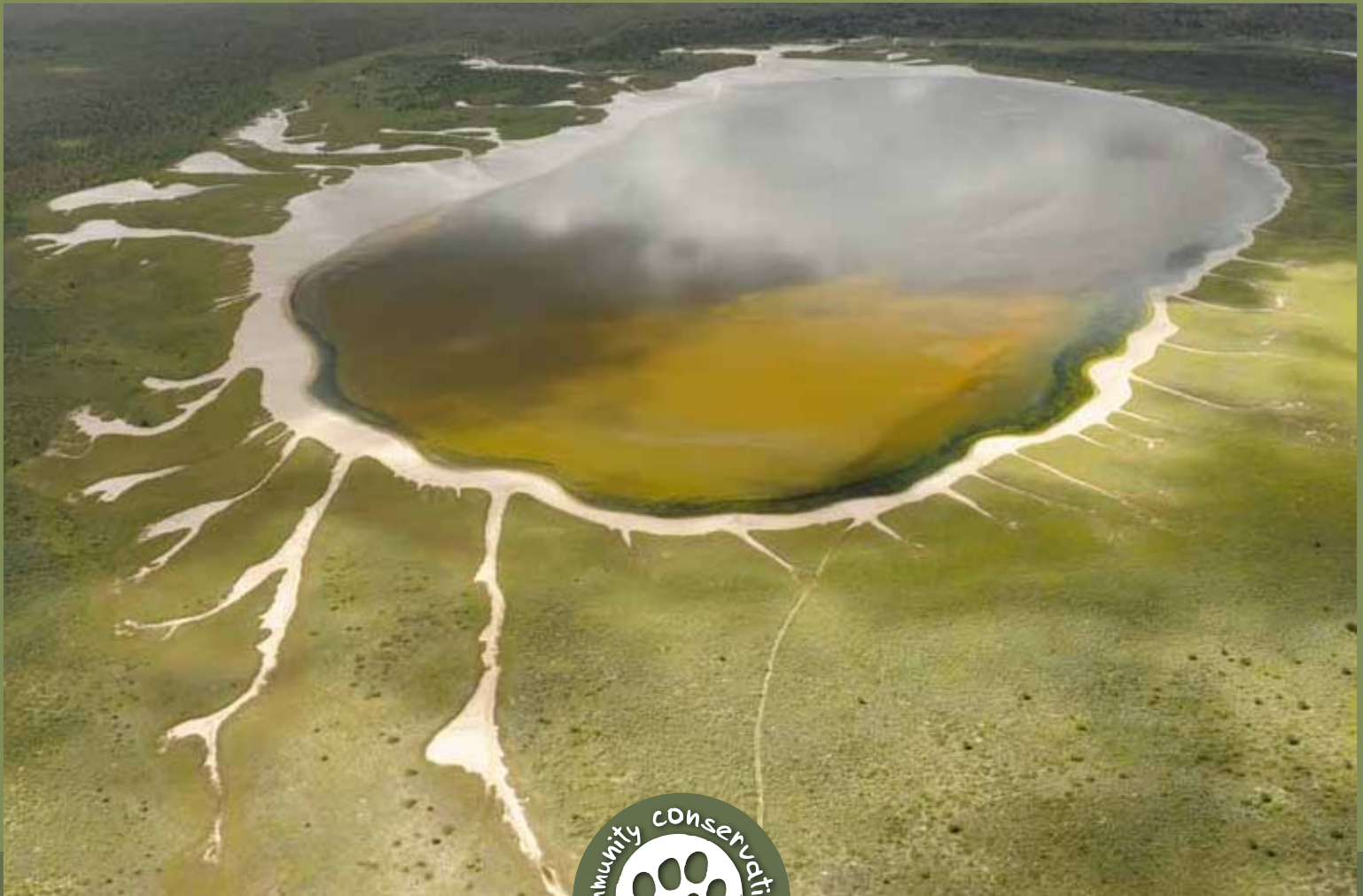


Living with wildlife –
the story of **Sheya Shuushona Conservancy**



Sheya Shuushona – after the brave King of the Ongandjera Traditional Authority

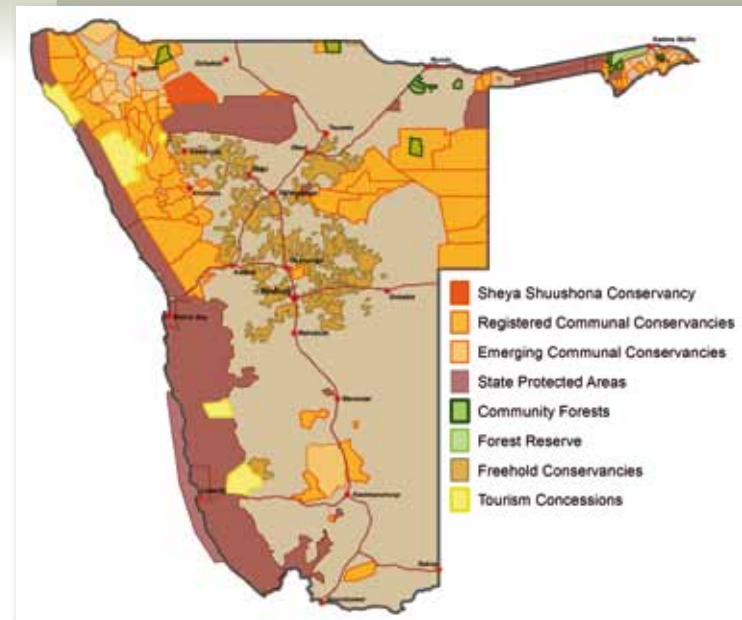


Living with wildlife – the story of SHEYA SHUUSHONA CONSERVANCY

Conservancies
enable conservation and development over large areas...

MILESTONES AND SUCCESSES

- 1996** – policy changes allow communal area residents to benefit from wildlife and tourism by forming conservancies
- 2003** – residents accept the future conservancy's constitution
- 2005** – Sheya Shuushona Conservancy is registered in September
- 2006** – His Excellency Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding President of the Republic of Namibia, who was born in the region, becomes a patron of the conservancy
- 2006** – implementation of the Event Book monitoring system in Sheya Shuushona Conservancy
- 2010** – implementation of an annual game count in Sheya Shuushona Conservancy



A CONSERVANCY IS...

- a legally registered area with clearly defined borders and a constituted management body run by the community for the development of residents and the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism
- managed by a group elected to serve the interests of all its members
- a place where residents can add income from wildlife and tourism to traditional farming activities
- a place where wildlife populations increase as they are managed for productive gain
- a place where the value of the natural resources increases, enhancing the value of the land
- a forum through which services and developments can be channelled and integrated
- zoned for multiple uses to minimise conflict and maximise the interests of all stakeholders



QUICK FACTS

Region: Omusati
Size: 5,066 square kilometres
Approximate population: 35,360
Main languages: Oshiwambo, Otjiherero, #Akhoe Hai//om
Date of registration: September 2005

SHEYA SHUUSHONA offers an enchanting mix of

PEOPLE



interesting cultures and dynamic communities committed to sustainability - people living in Sheya Shuushona share a common vision for managing their area and its resources

PLACES



vast, diverse and spectacular landscapes – wonderful salt pans, grasslands and woodlands... a healthy environment diversifies economic opportunities and drives economic growth

& WILDLIFE



charismatic, free-roaming wildlife – elephant and black rhino, lion and leopard, a diversity of plains game... wildlife generates a variety of benefits for local people

people are living with wildlife, are managing natural resources wisely and are reaping the benefits...

A LITTLE HISTORY

Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, communal area residents had few rights to use wildlife. Wild animals were often seen as little more than a threat to crops, livestock and infrastructure, as well as community safety. Ground-breaking legislation passed in the mid-nineties laid the foundation for a new approach to the sustainable use of natural resources. By forming a conservancy, people in communal areas can now actively manage – and generate benefits from – wildlife and other resources in their area, encouraging wildlife recoveries and environmental restoration. While a conservancy is a natural resource management structure, it is defined by social ties. Conservancies unite groups of people with the common goal of managing their resources. Today, over 60 communal conservancies embrace one in four rural Namibians, underlining a national commitment to both rural development and conservation.

Sheya Shuushona covers an extensive area of 5,066 square kilometres and is home to about 35,000 people, most of whom belong

to the Ongandjera Kingdom, one of the eight main Owambo Kingdoms. While Oshiwambo is the home language of the majority of the population, Otjiherero and #Akhoe Hai//om are also spoken. The conservancy is named after King Sheya Uushona who reigned in Ongandjera between 1862 and 1878. The idea of forming a conservancy arose when residents noticed how neighbouring Uukwaluudhi Conservancy was benefiting from its wildlife resources. Community members, the traditional authority and the regional councillor decided to form their own conservancy with the aim of creating an environment to which wildlife would return, where tourism could be developed to generate income and jobs, and where fauna and flora would be protected. The Rössing Foundation provided a variety of support during the registration process, and the first conservancy constitution was accepted at Okahao in 2003. The conservancy was registered in September 2005, and enjoys the patronage of Namibia's first President, Dr. Sam Nujoma, who was born in the region.

RESOURCES AND ATTRACTIONS

Conservancies
are living landscapes...

The **culture** of the Owambo kingdoms is rich in heritage and the Ongandjera Kingdom has embraced the land that is now the Sheya Shuushona Conservancy for many generations. Today, the vibrant mix of modern lifestyles and traditions makes the communal lands north of Etosha National Park one of the most interesting areas of Namibia. Traditional homesteads and agricultural activities are juxtaposed with bustling markets, cuca shops and other small businesses, signifying a diverse economy. This creates a dynamic and unique atmosphere, and aspects of the culture have been embraced by the national mainstream, such as the traditional Oshitaka and Oshikandela dairy drinks that are available in supermarkets countrywide.

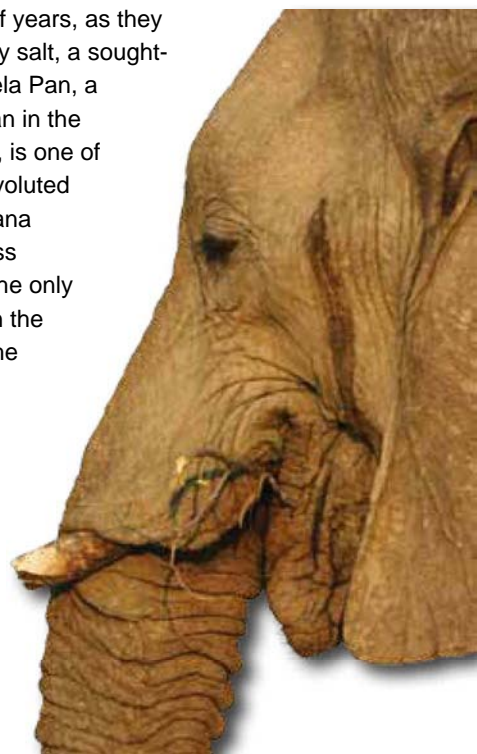


isolated traditional cattle posts with their nearby cluster of hand-dug wells infuse the landscape with a sense of frontier; the few larger settlements exhibit that dynamic and vibrant mix of traditions and modern lifestyles that gives this part of Namibia its own wonderful atmosphere

The **environment** of Sheya Shuushona is shaped by the dynamics of the Cuvelai Basin, also known as the Owambo Basin. The conservancy and Etosha National Park lie along the western and southern fringes of the basin, respectively. The vast, landlocked depression covers much of northern Namibia and southern Angola. Run-off from high rainfall in Angola is drained southward along broad, shallow waterways called Oshanas, which culminate in the Omadhiya Lakes and Etosha Pan. Wind-blown sands and river-borne sediments have steadily filled the basin over the last 65 to 70 million years. The sands contain few nutrients and are too porous to retain much water, while the clay soils of the area tend to be saline. This inhibits crop cultivation and most farming in the conservancy concentrates on livestock.

The Cuvelai Basin is extremely flat and there is only minimal topographical variation within the conservancy, which lies at around 1,100 metres above sea level. Etosha Pan, stretching away to the south-east, is one of the largest pans in the world. Numerous smaller pans, fed only by local rain water, are sprinkled across the conservancy. Some of these have been an important resource for people throughout

the region for hundreds of years, as they have provided high quality salt, a sought-after commodity. Ngandjela Pan, a stunningly shaped salt pan in the south of the conservancy, is one of the best known. The convoluted watercourses of the Oshana system all meander across the land to the east and the only seasonal surface water in the conservancy collects in the many pans. The average annual rainfall of 300 to 450 millimetres falls in summer, mostly between January and March.



large, convoluted salt pans create fascinating focal points in the vast landscape — beautiful features in Sheya Shuushona's core wildlife area, to which game is returning, opening up potential for an exciting extension to Etosha, as well as a north-western gateway to Owambo

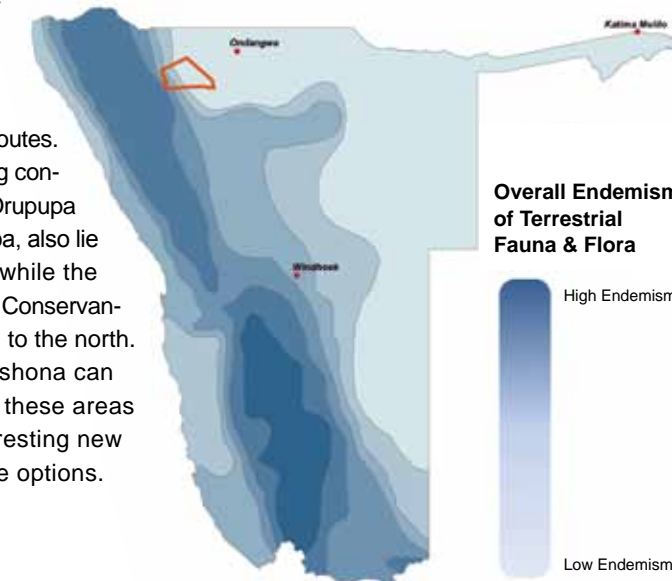
While the area is presently not known for its biotic richness, significant numbers of **wildlife** roamed the plains historically, including both white and black rhino, elephant, giraffe, Burchell's zebra and blue wildebeest. Many large mammals are now returning, often by exiting Etosha through breaks in the park fence which are caused by elephants. Wildlife now found in the conservancy includes ostrich, springbok, gemsbok, kudu,



red hartebeest, black-faced impala, duiker, steenbok, warthog, elephant and occasional black rhino. Predators include lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyaena, jackal and caracal. Birdlife in the conservancy includes a variety of migratory wetland species attracted by the seasonal pans, as well as diverse resident woodland and grassland birds.

Much of the conservancy is dominated by mopane shrublands, especially in areas of clay soil formed from sediments carried by water. Inhibited by the relatively poor soils, mopane generally does not grow higher than around three metres here. Nonetheless, mopane is extremely valuable as firewood and as timber for construction, as the wood is termite-resistant. Broad-leafed, deciduous woodlands and thorny acacias are found in the more sandy areas, while patches of open grassland surround the pans.

Around Sheya Shuushona... the conservancy stretches along the northern border of Namibia's foremost tourism attraction, Etosha, and is almost a quarter of the size of the national park. To the west, the attractions of the Kunene Region are the focus of many travel routes. Two emerging conservancies, Orupupa and Otuzemba, also lie to the west, while the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy is situated to the north. Sheya Shuushona can link some of these areas to open interesting new tourism route options.





LIVELIHOODS AND DEVELOPMENT

Conservancies
empower rural people...

Oshiwambo is the largest Namibian language group and the four regions north of Etosha embrace the most densely populated area of Namibia, with close to half the national population living here. Although farming is central to their culture, the Owambo have a long tradition as traders and entrepreneurs, and local barter rapidly developed into active regional trade during the second half of the 19th century. Today, this has evolved into a dynamic mixture of agriculture, trade and production.

Development of this part of the country was sorely neglected during colonial times. What was then known as 'Owamboland' fell

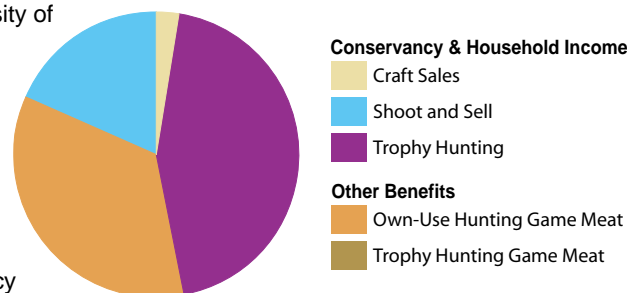
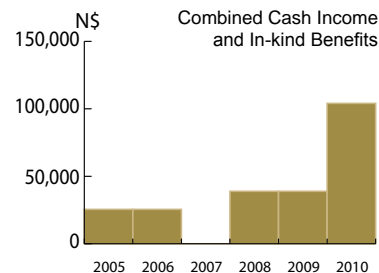


Sheya Shuushona can facilitate access to diverse training and capacity building, can empower individuals, especially women, to actively take part in decision-making, as well as instilling a renewed sense of pride in cultural heritage

outside the so called police zone during German rule and was largely ignored, a trend that continued during the South African administration of Namibia. The labour potential of the area was first tapped during the 19th century to supply Angolan plantations with workers. The use of migrant labour to mines and other industries in Namibia began in the early 1900s and became large scale from the 1960s onwards. The trend of leaving the region for employment in Windhoek and other parts of Namibia continues today, though of course voluntarily and under much better conditions. Since independence, a great deal of development has taken place in the four regions, with significant improvements to most aspects of infrastructure.

Sheya Shuushona lies in the south-western corner of the Omusati Region. Mainly due to the limited agricultural potential, population densities are lower here than in most other parts of Owambo, and development has thus been more limited. Most residents of the conservancy nonetheless have reasonable access to various facilities and services. Clinics at the larger settlements of Amarika, Onamatanga and Utsathima provide health services within the

conservancy, while the nearest hospital is in the town of Okahao, some 20 kilometres north of the conservancy. A network of schools in the conservancy puts most households within reach of primary and secondary education. Access to tertiary education is created by the University of Namibia's northern campus, around 120 kilometres east of the conservancy



Benefits to the conservancy and its members come from a variety of sources. Sources and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as agreements with private sector partners, and market fluctuations. The pie chart shows the main benefit sources in 2010.

at Ongwediva. Water for both people and livestock is obtained from underground sources. In some places, boreholes fitted with pumps supply water, but there are also thousands of hand-dug wells dotted all over the area. These generally reach depths of 20 to 30 metres, with 10 or more wells often dug very close to each other. The wells tend to belong to a number of different families, who graze their cattle nearby.

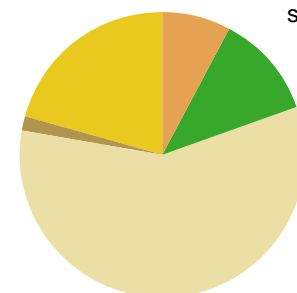
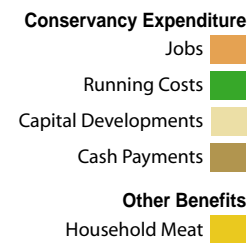
For many decades, the area now embraced by the conservancy was used mostly as seasonal grazing for livestock. Livelihoods for the majority of conservancy residents are still based mainly on livestock, as well as growing mahangu (pearl millet). The Omatambo-Maowe Quarantine Camp, which covers 32,000 hectares, is intended to enable animal movement across the veterinary cordon to central Namibia. Many of the previously temporary cattle posts have now developed into permanent settlements with a growing number of resident households. Most households supplement subsistence agriculture with some income from business earnings, pensions and remittances.

The conservancy has the potential to create new jobs and options to diversify livelihoods,

the conservancy can enable a range of new livelihood options for its residents, including tourism, hunting, indigenous plant product use, craft production, and other sales and services based on the sustainable use of natural resources

as well as empowering people to become actively involved in natural resource management. Trophy hunting is currently the largest source of income for the conservancy, and also creates employment, as well as providing meat to residents. Meat from own-use hunting is another benefit, while shoot and sell hunting generates important income for the conservancy. Crafts are an increasingly important source of income, and baskets woven from makalani palm leaves, as well as a variety of traditional wooden items, are sold at the conservancy office in Okahao.

The caterpillars of the emperor moth (*Imbrasia belina*) – commonly known as mopane worms – are an important traditional food item. The caterpillars are harvested for both own use and sale. Harvests are



The conservancy spends money and provides community and individual benefits in various areas. Areas and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as conservancy income and priorities. The pie chart shows the main expenditure and benefit areas in 2010.



The C41 tar road from Oshakati to Okahao provides easy access for visitors to the area, but the road network within the conservancy is limited to often very sandy dirt roads and tracks. There is currently no tourism accommodation in the conservancy. A broad range of accommodation facilities are available in the Ondangwa-Oshakati area to the east, as well as in and around Etosha, but it is currently not possible to access Etosha National Park from the conservancy. Tourism is generally underdeveloped north of Etosha, as the potential of cultural tourism is often overlooked by the Namibian industry.



MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservancies
facilitate sustainability...

The **management structure** of the conservancy consists of a management committee of 19 people, selected from the six districts within the conservancy. The large committee ensures wide community involvement, while traditional authority representatives enable a positive relationship with traditional leadership structures. The executive committee of seven members oversees the day to day running of conservancy activities. All major decisions are made at annual general meetings. Employees include 14 community game guards, supervised by a coordinator. The conservancy receives technical support from the Namibia Development Trust (NDT).



the Sheya Shuushona Conservancy provides vital structures for managing the communal natural resources of the area in a way that enhances development and ensures sustainability

Activities... The conservancy has been zoned into a number of areas for grazing, forestry, wildlife and settlement land uses. An annual game count, carried out as a fixed route vehicle count, was started in 2010 in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and with the support of NGOs. The game guards actively patrol the conservancy to monitor wildlife, report poaching and accompany wood and mopane worm harvesters. Mopane worm harvesters are strictly forbidden to chop down trees or even branches

to harvest the worms, which may only be sun-dried or boiled. Harvesting periods are controlled to guard against over-exploitation.

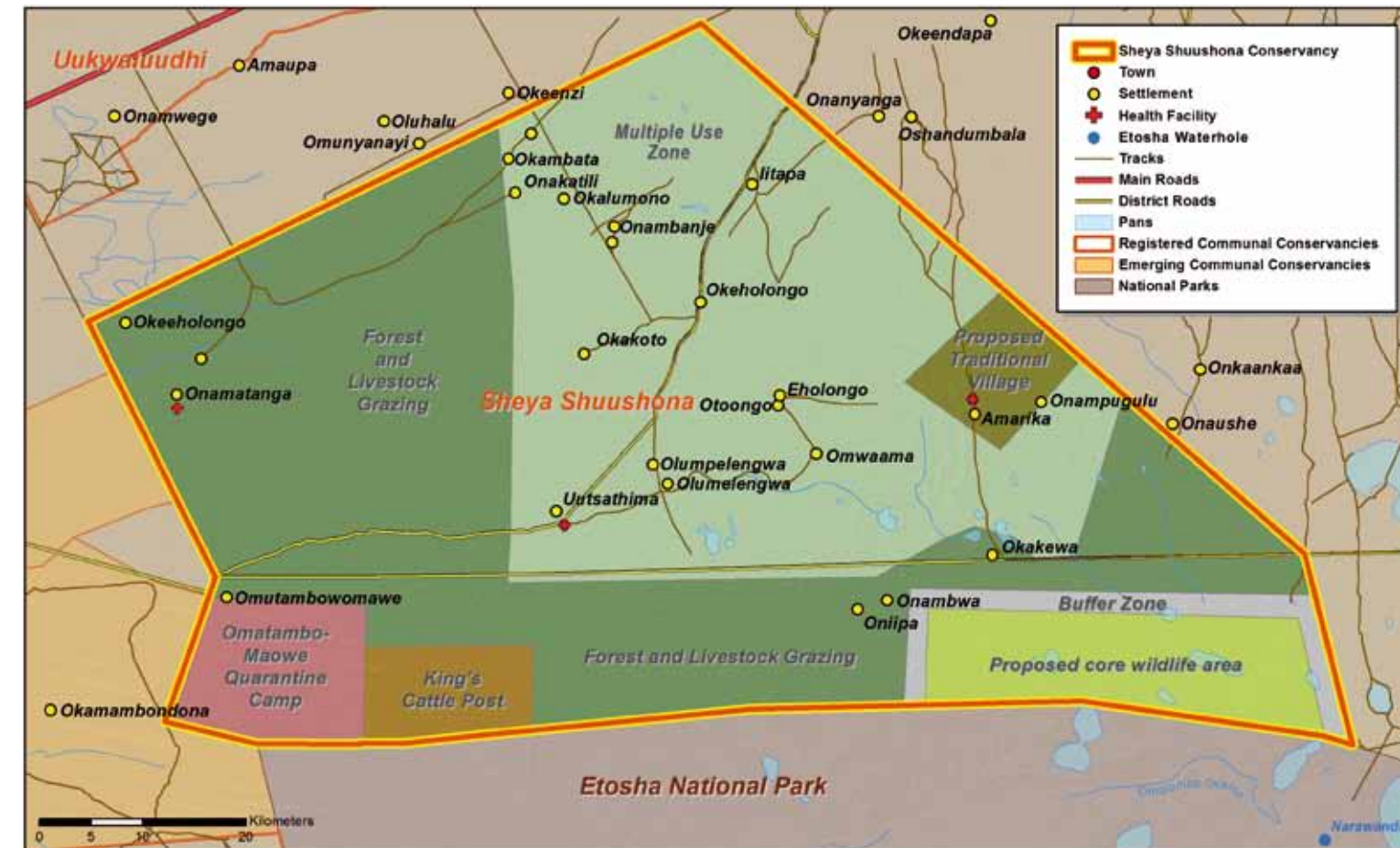
The management committee of Sheya Shuushona actively promotes integrated natural resource management. This is based on the Forum for Integrated Resource Management (FIRM) approach, which enables a community to establish its own vision and objectives so that support and services from government, non-government organisations and donors are coordinated. The conservancy intends to broaden and integrate its natural resource use options by applying for community forest status, as the conservancy legislation only provides rights over wildlife and tourism.

Ongoing active natural resource monitoring through the Event Book monitoring system is done by the game guards according to planned schedules. A variety of data is recorded, including game sightings, human wildlife conflicts, poaching incidents, game utilisation and any other data deemed important by the conservancy. All data is aggregated into monthly and annual reporting charts that facilitate sustainable use and adaptive management. Based on the game count and Event Book information, the MET sets annual quotas for using wildlife.

the conservancy uses a mix of modern technologies and traditional knowledge and skills to enable healthy wildlife populations, a productive environment, and the effective management of natural resources

The conservancy strives to actively mitigate human wildlife conflicts and receives financial and logistical assistance from the MET to achieve this. Through the National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management, a system of providing financial offsets for losses is being implemented. The conservancy receives a fixed lump sum from the

MET and is responsible for paying out offsets to residents upon receipt of a claim. This must be accompanied by a report completed by game guards investigating the incident. All claims are reviewed by a panel before any payments can be made.





CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES...

Conservancies are full of opportunities...

The mixture of environmental and cultural resources provides largely untapped potential in Sheya Shuushona.

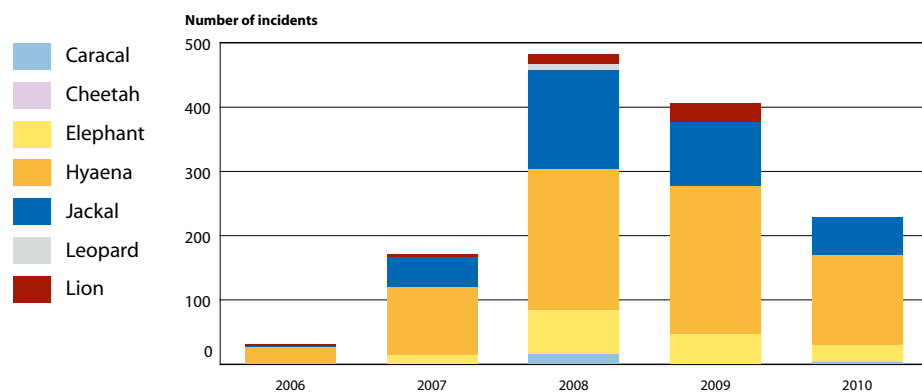
Challenges... One of the main challenges for the conservancy is to generate meaningful natural resource use benefits for a population of over 35,000 residents. Sheya Shuushona's location on the border of the Etosha National Park brings both challenges and opportunities. Human wildlife conflict is common, as game moves into the conservancy from Etosha and wildlife numbers are generally increasing. As most residents concentrate on farming with livestock, losses to predators are



strategic development that maximises the area's tourism potential while mitigating pressures on the environment can facilitate a bright future for Sheya Shuushona Conservancy

a significant challenge. Even though many residents attempt to mitigate conflicts by keeping livestock in enclosures at night, or by lighting fires and banging drums to frighten off large predators such as lions, incidents still occur. Hyaenas are responsible for the largest number of incidents, while jackals can cause considerable losses amongst small stock. Lions cause occasional incidents, and elephants cause damage to crops, fencing and water installations. Importantly, predators and elephants can be of great value, both to the ecosystem and to tourism, and in the long run benefits gained from them should outweigh the costs of living with them. Clear zoning can separate wildlife from people, and the planned buffer zone around the core wildlife area can further reduce conflicts. In areas of high human activity and low wildlife numbers, emphasis can be placed on mitigating pressures on the environment while promoting tourism and maximising other natural resource use options such as indigenous plants.

Opportunities for tourism in the conservancy will increase substantially if linkages with Etosha are strengthened. A gate at Narawandu in the north-western border of the park could be opened to draw tourists into the conservancy, an area that currently does not feature on any established tourism routes. Such a development would open up a circular route through Owambo, linking Narawandu with the



Human wildlife conflicts are monitored using the Event Book. Hyaenas are generally responsible for the largest number of conflict incidents.

... AND THE FUTURE

protected areas to neighbouring communities. Sheya Shuushona, Ehi-Rovipuka and King Nehale are currently the only conservancies which border Etosha National Park and concessions in Etosha could generate significant benefits for these communities.

Specific plans already exist to facilitate tourism development in Sheya Shuushona. Joint-venture negotiations are being held and developments could include a mid-range lodge. This would generate important income for the conservancy and create a variety of employment opportunities, as well as enhancing benefits from other sectors such as crafts. The conservancy also plans to develop a traditional village to enable further benefits from the cultural resources of the area.

A number of large private farms exist within the conservancy, and the



Sheya Shuushona Conservancy has great potential to become the north-western tourism gateway between the abundance of wildlife in Etosha and the cultural attractions of the north

King Nehale Gate in the north-eastern border of Etosha. This would enable considerable new tourism development opportunities that could generate significant benefits for the entire region. In addition, the conservancy has the opportunity to apply for a tourism concession in Etosha. Namibia's Policy on Tourism and Wildlife Concessions allows the Ministry of Environment & Tourism to award concessions in

Ministry of Lands & Resettlement plans to survey and allocate additional farms for private rather than communal use. The limited agricultural potential of the area inhibits benefits from this sector, and tourism could become one of the most important sources of income and employment for the conservancy and its residents in the future. By strengthening linkages with Etosha through a tourism concession in the park, through the development of a gate at Narawandu and through collaboration in the Sheya Shuushona core wildlife area, the conservancy can facilitate tourism opportunities for the entire region and can create a bright future for its residents.



Come to Sheya Shuushona — be part of the future...





Norad

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Lake Oponono

Etosha Pan

Okaukuejo

Ngandjela Pan

Amarika

Tongo

Okeeholongo

Utsathima

Onambandje

Akutsima

Omatambo-Maowe
Quarantine Farm

Onamatanga

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