

# The state of **community conservation** in Namibia



## **Annual Report 2021**

A review of Communal Conservancies,  
Community Forests, and other community-  
based natural resource management initiatives



# Acknowledgments

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The annual State of Community Conservation Report is a joint publication from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). It is a collaborative effort. Conservancies and other community conservation organisations gather data throughout the year. This is then returned to them in poster form and used in adaptive conservancy management. The data are also supplied to the MEFT and the NACSO working groups to enable evaluation and reporting on programme achievements and challenges at a national level. Only key data are presented in this printed report. The full data are shared with partner organisations working in conservation and presented on our website: [communityconservationnamibia.com](http://communityconservationnamibia.com)

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# Foreword

## From the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Honourable Pohamba Shifeta



The year 2021 was marked by the loss of life and losses to local and global economies as the COVID-19 pandemic raged, but it was also a year in which much was gained.

The collaborative work of all stakeholders within the Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme and how quickly they adapted to the situation on the ground is highly commendable. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), together with support organisations and communities living with wildlife, all played an important role in ensuring that conservation operations continued while finding innovative ways to build back a better and more resilient community conservation programme.

Three decades of work building a conservation economy in Namibia, which depends upon tourism and hunting, was threatened by the pandemic. This dependence on two income sources revealed some of the gaps within the programme, including the need to diversify revenue and livelihood sources to prevent exposure to external shocks and crises.

While there has been an improvement in the income generated by communal conservancies, community associations, community forests, and tourism businesses, the MEFT and its partners continue to provide financial relief and recovery support through the COVID Relief, Recovery, and Resilience Facility (CRRRF). The facility ensured the continuation of anti-poaching activities, monitoring and management of wildlife and other natural resources, and the mitigation of Human Wildlife Conflict, thereby facilitating medium to long-term recovery and resilience measures for the CBNRM entities to safeguard the environment and secure their tourism and other natural resource-based enterprises that pay for conservation costs and generates livelihood benefits.

The MEFT's Tourism Arrival Statistics for 2021 delivered a cause for optimism, highlighting a 37.3% increase in Namibia tourism arrivals in 2021 compared to 2020. Although the number of tourist arrivals is not at the level it was before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, an increase such as this gives us hope that the sector is on its way to recovery.

The Namibian conservation model, which has received international acclaim, is based on the premise that people living with wildlife are its rightful custodians. Our legislation and policies thus provide for rural communities to manage their wildlife populations sustainably and derive financial and other benefits from these natural resources. The National Policy on Protected Areas' Neighbours and Resident Communities (2013) made provision for the establishment of community structures for communities residing in National Parks, with the ultimate objective of co-managing

the natural resources and sharing benefits. The Ministry recognised the efforts of the communities living inside Dorob National Park and Namib Naukluft Park to organise themselves and establish the Aonin Community Association, which was officially launched in December 2021. This is the second community association in the country after the Kyaramacan Association in the Bwabwata National Park.

It has been said that true character is revealed during times of crisis. It is inspiring to see the resilience of communities and how they have managed to persevere through difficult times as they managed the effects of the pandemic on their personal lives while also advancing the community conservation agenda. This is the strength of character that drove the formation of conservancies at independence, and it is the character that will guide community conservation in pursuit of new gains that positively impact our nation and the global conservation community.

  
Pohamba Shifeta  
Minister





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# Who we are

[www.communityconservationnamibia.com](http://www.communityconservationnamibia.com)

Namibia's communal conservancies and community forests are self-governing entities legally recognised by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and receive training and support from the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). Each conservancy and community forest has a constitution and elects a management committee. Conservancies and community forests work to conserve and protect the environment, and to earn revenue from the sustainable use of natural resources.

The State of Community Conservation in Namibia website was created to share the CBNRM story more widely and in an accessible format. Visit [communityconservationnamibia.com](http://communityconservationnamibia.com) for more information.

## Communities

Namibia's communal conservancies and community forests are legally recognised, self-governing entities, each with a constitution and an elected management committee. They work to conserve and protect the environment and to earn revenue from the sustainable use of natural resources. There are also two community associations within national parks, and six regional conservancy associations which act as representative umbrella organisations for conservancies in their area.

## MEFT

The mission of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is to promote biodiversity conservation in the Namibian environment through the sustainable utilisation of nature resources and tourism development for the maximum social and economic benefit of our citizens.

## NACSO

NACSO is a networking organisation that coordinates the work of its members in partnership with the MEFT and other government ministries. Full and associate members give direct support to conservancies in the form of training, advice, technical and logistical support, and advocate for sustainable development and links to the tourism industry.

## Working Groups

Three working groups provide technical expertise: the Natural Resource Working Group (NWRG), the Institutional Development Working Group (IDWG), and the Business, Enterprises and Livelihoods Working Group (BELWG). These are flexible constellations of NACSO members and partners that pool expertise and resources to provide effective support to conservancies which are gazetted and fall under the legal responsibility of MEFT.

# A common vision

The Community-based Natural Resource Management programme focuses on the conservation of biological diversity and natural ecosystems benefits to communities living with wildlife and enhancing partnerships with key stakeholders to work towards delivering a more sustainable, resilient, and solution-driven future in conservation with people at its centre.

The challenges left by COVID 19 and other global phenomena such as climate change have given us a lot to ponder on how to build resilience, while evolving and finding robust ways of retaining and enhancing well-being and effectively delivering on conservation objectives for future generations. Creating resilience includes adding to the conservation community by building upon relationships with women and youth in conservation as they are important groups to consider when building a more sustainable Namibia. They are eager to learn, are tech-savvy, and they gravitate towards innovative ideas, which can help in solving some of the problems we are currently facing. The time also calls for inclusive and diversified livelihoods that consider domestic and regional markets while also better understanding the elements required to enhance well-being.



**Nabot Mbeeli**  
*Senior CBNRM  
Coordinator at Namibia  
Nature Foundation*

## Youth engagement

The Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), which is a member of NACSO, has worked with over 400 active youth, who are change-makers, in 26 registered conservancies and 43 registered and emerging community forests. As individuals and collectively, they are seizing opportunities and claiming their seats at the conservation table as emerging leaders and policy makers, advancing the interests of their communities and the greater nation.

While Namibia continues to tackle the issue of high youth unemployment, young people are contributing daily to the benefit of their communities, especially those in communal areas. They participate in annual general meetings and volunteer as game guards and/or Rhino Rangers. They also contribute by establishing income generating activities and initiating activities that provide platforms for voices to be heard.

Through one of our projects, we noticed a spike in community voices in media outlets, as young people used the tools provided to them to reach out to the media to share their successes and challenges. Additionally, the youth organised their own events in their communities, empowering more members within their conservancies and expanding the conservation community of practice.

NNF acknowledges with great appreciation the strong collaborations with our partners to enable knowledge and skills sharing through advocacy and communications support shared in training workshops, leadership coaching sessions, governance, etc. We continue this work with the youth in diverse areas of the country such as Otjozondjupa, North Central, Southern and Northern Kunene and Southern regions. These efforts inspire and influence more youth to actively participate in conservation and advance the sustainable development of our country.







# Namibia Community Conservation

## Terminology of Income, Benefits and Returns

For clarity, the following terms are consistently used in this report:

**INCOME** – indicates cash income received as payment for goods or services, either by organisations or individuals.

**BENEFITS** – indicates benefits distributed by a conservancy as dividends or social benefits, or by the private sector as fringe benefits and donations; these go to communities or individual households and can be divided into three types:

- in-kind benefits include meat distribution and fringe benefits from tourism employment such as staff housing, etc.
- cash benefits are dividends paid to conservancy members from conservancy income
- social benefits are investments in community initiatives including education facilities, health services, etc.

**RETURNS** – combine income and benefits and indicate overall returns, either to individuals, communities, or conservancies.

## 2021 • Community Conservation *at a Glance*

- Community conservation covers **180,122 km<sup>2</sup>** which is **58.8%** of all communal land with an estimated **238,701** people directly involved
- of this area conservancies manage **166,179 km<sup>2</sup>** which is **20.2%** of Namibia
- **86** registered conservancies
- **2** community associations
- **43** registered community forests
- **10** community fish reserves in **6** conservancies
- **90** conservancies using the Event Book monitoring tool (**84** registered and **6** emerging conservancies)
- **748** game guards working in conservancies
- **57** conservancy management plans in place
- From 1990 to 2021 community conservation contributed about **N\$ 11.913 billion** to Namibia's net national income
- Community conservation facilitated **3,548 jobs**
- Conservancies generated total cash income and in-kind benefits to rural communities of **N\$ 91,745,778**. In 2021 this represented:
  - Conservation hunting generated **N\$ 25,952,651** with **326,295 kg** of game meat worth **N\$ 9,267,048** distributed to conservancy residents
  - Tourism generated **N\$ 53,838,083**,
  - Indigenous plants and other income generated **N\$ 1,029,191** and **N\$ 1,658,805** respectively
  - **N\$ 11,572,810** in cash benefits was distributed to conservancy residents and used to support community projects

## New in 2021

### Establishment of the ≠Aonin Association

Indigenous communities reside in some national parks in Namibia. This allows communities to maintain their cultural links to the land and its natural resources while being active participants in the conservation of these areas.

As per the National Policy on Protected Areas' Neighbours and Resident Communities, the MEFT assisted the Topnaar community that resides in the Namib Naukluft Park and Dorob National Park to form an association, which led to the creation and launch of the ≠Aonin (Topnaar) Community Association in December 2021. The Association has a committee elected by the community, which is the representative body dealing with tourism and natural resources matters and ensuring equitable benefit distribution.



### New Community Forests

The establishment of community forests aims to create joint responsibility between the government and communities to conserve forest resources, which are under threat from population pressure and poverty, the conversion of forests to cropland, and through harvesting of wood resources at unsustainable levels.

In November 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism and the United Nations Development Programme jointly inaugurated new community forest and conservancy offices at Otjiu-West in the Kunene region, and in the Oshaampula Community Forest in the Oshikoto region.

To date, 15 communities have received assistance from the Sustainable Management of Namibia's Forested Lands (Namfola) project, a collaboration of the Namibian government and UNDP, with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The Namfola project also assisted the Otjiu-West community with an assessment of marketable forest and non-forest tradable products and other income-generating options, which contribute to efforts in eradicating poverty and hunger.

# Responding to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic was a learning curve that brought out the need for more resilient strategies in conservation to withstand external and unexpected shocks. Diversification of economic opportunities remains a priority in the CBNRM Programme. While it is envisioned that conservation tourism and hunting will remain the core contributors to income in conservancies for the foreseeable future, there is a need to advance value additions in the fields of conservation agriculture, arts, and crafts, plant products, and develop products and services, such as Wildlife Credits, that can be supported by other external markets.

## CBNRM and the National Economy

Over the years, community conservation has contributed to the national economy through tourism, conservation hunting, and other enterprises. In 2021, the net national income (NNI) contribution made by CBNRM was about N\$ 583 million. Between 1990 and 2021, the cumulative value of the NNI contribution amounts to an estimated N\$ 11.913 billion. Since 1990, the programme has had an economic internal rate of 18% and has earned an economic present value of some N\$18,09 million, this indicates a highly positive economic return for a program investment.

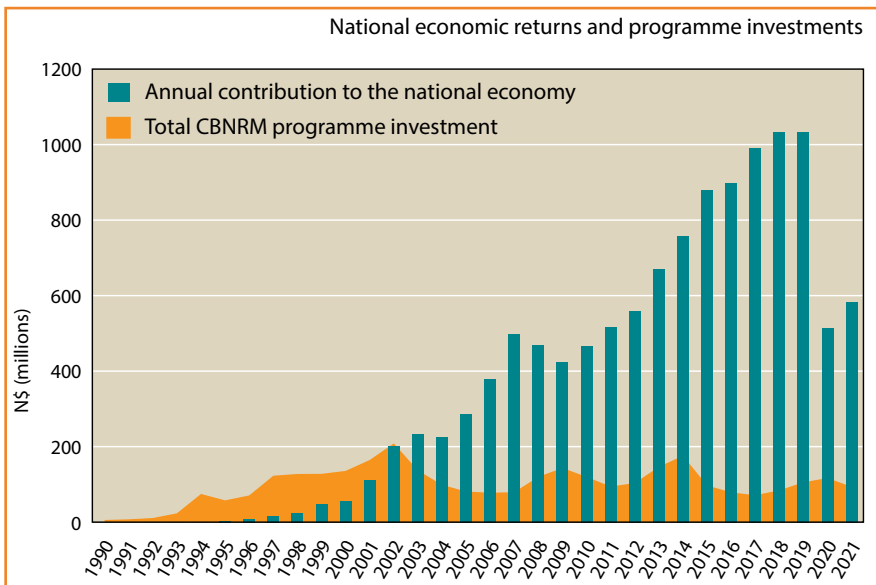


Figure 2. Estimates of the yearly national economic returns from the CBNRM programme. This cumulatively adds up to about N\$ 3.2 billion of investment between 1990 and 2021. The contributions are made up mainly from Donors, MEFT and NGOs.

# CBNRM and National Development

Namibia's fifth National Development Plan consists of four pillars. Community conservation makes a significant contribution to each of these pillars in the following way:

## ECONOMIC PROGRESSION

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION:



generates cash and in-kind benefits to conservancies and members



promotes economic development and poverty reduction through livelihood diversification and private sector partnerships



facilitates new jobs and income opportunities in rural areas, especially within the tourism, hunting, natural plant products and craft sectors

## ECONOMIC PROGRESSION

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION:



promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women through equal access to employment and governance, resources and economic opportunities



increases household food security and reduces malnutrition through livelihood diversification and the provision of game meat



promotes cultural pride and the conservation of cultural heritage through responsible tourism and the development of living museums and other cultural tourism activities



## ECONOMIC PROGRESSION

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION:



makes significant contributions to environmental conservation, funded through tourism and conservation hunting income



promotes equal access to natural resources through formal management structures and participatory processes



encourages a sense of ownership over natural resources and responsibility for development



facilitates the reduction and reversal of land degradation and deforestation through mandated, structured and sustainable natural resource management



facilitates integrated land-use planning through formal management structures and collaboration with other community, government and private sector stakeholders



promotes sustainable practices and increases agricultural productivity through land-use diversification, structured and sustainable management, and activities such as conservation agriculture and community rangeland management

## ECONOMIC PROGRESSION

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION:



promotes democracy in rural areas through community participation and democratic election of office bearers



emphasises accountability, transparency and good governance through performance monitoring and evaluation



emphasises the equitable distribution of returns



enables significant capacity enhancement through on-going training in governance, natural resource management and business, as well as in-service training in the private sector





# Community Conservation Governance

## New in 2021

### New ways of working

Adaptation was key to delivering on governance in 2021. The Institutional Development Working Group (IDWG), field-based NGO partners, MEFT and communal conservancies all adapted to the situation on the ground caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Conservancies adapted to smaller, decentralised, village-level meetings while IDWG and others were flexible in holding virtual meetings and seminars together with field-based technical staff despite the limited access to internet connections in some regions.

### Results

In adapting to external factors, conservancy governance structures proved resilient. Smaller annual general meetings were held in different centres meaning more community members were reached and involved in decision-making. MEFT was able to regularly engage with the conservancies on the ground through the disbursement and reporting of COVID relief grants from the COVID Relief Recovery and Resilience Facility.

### Gender Mainstreaming

The Gender Mainstreaming support strengthens the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to CBNRM-related policies, programmes, and projects by advancing the principles of empowerment, non-discrimination, inclusivity, equity, transparency, and accountability.

The Institutional Development Working Group (IDWG) formed part of the Poverty, Rural, and Economic Development Cluster that participated in an online focus group discussion aimed at reviewing the current National Gender Policy (2010 – 2021) and the development of the new National Gender Policy (2021 – 2031) and its plan of action.

## 2021 • Governance *at a Glance*

**57** management plans in place

**26** sustainable business and financial plans in place

**65** annual financial reports presented

**73** annual general meetings held

**11%** female chairpersons

**45%** female treasurers/financial managers

**33%** female management committee members

**22%** female staff members

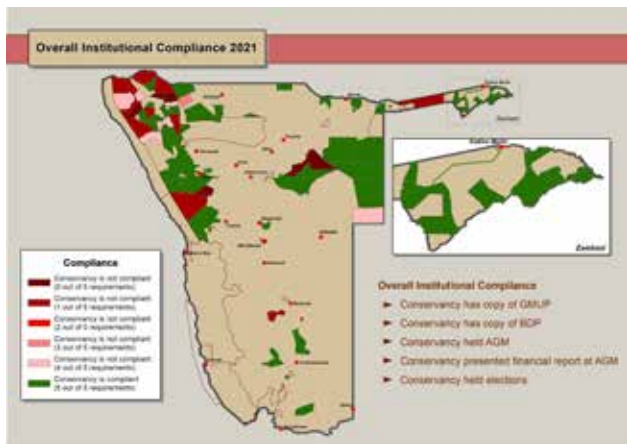
# Conservancy Commitment

The programme continues to develop various tools to promote good governance in conservancies, one of which is the MEFT’s Guidelines for Management for conservancies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Conservancies are required to report on all 5 key compliance requirements annually; these include: member engagement, benefit planning and distribution, accountability, stakeholder engagement, and financial management.

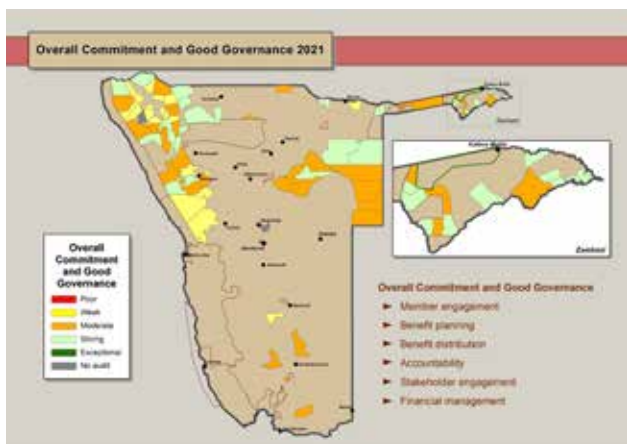
Conservancies are required to submit reports a month after their AGM. The MEFT is not just looking at whether the required documents were submitted, but also evaluates whether plans are being implemented. When conservancies submit reports after the communicated period, this delays the compliance evaluation and the conservancy will end up being non-compliant.

In 2020, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, MEFT made exceptions to the standard reporting procedures because of the challenges with having AGMs under the COVID lockdown regulations. The MEFT thus allowed conservancies to report on two compliance requirements (financial reporting and game management & use reporting). In 2021, conservancies returned to reporting on all five compliance requirements.

Annual general meetings were still impacted by COVID restrictions; however, conservancies, with support from the MEFT and field based support NGOs, adapted to ensure that decision-making platforms still occurred.



**Figure 3.** Institutional compliance of conservancies



**Figure 4.** Commitment to institutional management and good governance

The governance commitment and performance review are an assessment of conservancies by conservancies together with their field partners. Performance evaluations are based on questions specific to member engagement, benefit planning and distribution, accountability, stakeholder engagement, and financial management.

**Table 1.** Governance indicators for 86 Conservancies and the Kyaramacan Association (≠Aonin Association is not included). \*Number of conservancies reporting are those that have been audited.

Category	2021		
	Status	Number of conservancies reporting	Percentage of category
<b>Registered conservancies (incl. Kyaramacan Assoc.)</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Conservancies generating returns</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>79</b>
<i>covering operational costs from own income</i>	48	81	59
<i>distributing cash or in-kind benefits to members, or investing in community projects</i>	54	81	67
<b>Conservancy management committee members</b>	<b>1008</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>female management committee members</i>	333	84	33
<i>female chairpersons</i>	9	84	11
<i>female treasurers/financial managers</i>	38	84	45
<b>Conservancy staff members</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>female staff members</i>	227	84	22
<b>Conservancies management plans</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>68</b>
<i>sustainable business and financial plans</i>	26	84	31
<b>Conservancy AGMs held</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>87</b>
<i>financial reports presented at AGM</i>	65	84	77
<i>financial reports approved at AGM</i>	64	84	76
<i>budgets approved at AGM</i>	59	84	70

From 2020 to 2021, 41 more conservancies were able to hold AGMs. This was possible because of the mitigation processes that were put in place to ensure that information is shared with their members and for the support provided through the working group for pre-AGMs and AGMs. Due to this, financial reporting improved by 40%. The CRRRF also contributed to conservancies working and reporting back better. Those conservancies that were not making an income but were given support through the CRRRF, were motivated to perform.

## Gender Mainstreaming

The unique roles men and women play in their communities lead to differences in knowledge about their environments. Gender mainstreaming is an approach to policy-making that considers both men and women's interests and concerns. Good standards and practices in governance and mainstreaming gender, ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are included in the decision-making processes not just for benefits, but also for safeguarding the continuation of conservation and creation of livelihoods for various groups. Therefore, it is important to integrate gender mainstreaming into CBNRM-related policies, programmes, and projects.

The IDWG formed part of the Poverty, Rural and Economic Development Cluster that participated in an online focus group discussion aimed at reviewing the current National Gender Policy (2010 – 2021) and the development of the new National Gender Policy (2021 – 2031) and its plan of action. Reflecting on the previous policy, participants mentioned that climate change and its effects on women were not integrated and moreover women in rural areas were not consulted. To ensure ownership and implementation of the new policy, women groups such as the Namibian Rural Women's Assembly and the Women for Conservation group participated in providing input on challenges and recommendations based on their experiences.

The gender mainstreaming support also strengthens the Human Rights Based Approach to community conservation by advancing the principles of empowerment, non-discrimination, inclusivity, equity, transparency, and accountability.



While gender mainstreaming work is relatively new, there is a focus on empowering indigenous and marginalised groups in CBNRM. The interest of the youth in conservation activities is also escalating, and young people are being elected into management structures, which not only adds fresh voices but also helps to secure the continuation of conservation for another generation. Women's groups are taking the lead in organising themselves so that their voices are heard at key decision-making processes, such as AGMs. More women are occupying leadership positions and are encouraging fellow women to join them. On the ground, the number of females taking up roles such as game guards and rangers, positions typically held by men, has also increased.

## **Strengthening Community Voices**

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When decisions are made that impact the lives of rural community members and how they co-exist with wildlife, local voices must be a part of the conversation. Communities come together to share best practices at platforms such as bi-annual planning meetings where progress and challenges related to planned activities are discussed, a resolution is sought on cross-cutting issues, and recommendations from meetings may be used to inform policies development.

For community voices to be amplified, community members need to know their rights and responsibilities. There is a need to raise awareness on human rights and have grievance mechanisms in place, both of which add strength to the power of community and individual voices.

At a national and regional level, the three NACSO working groups have learning and reflection sessions to improve service provision to conservancies. During the pandemic, these platforms were critical lifelines that enabled partners to voice their concerns about current challenges and for communities to know that they were being heard by the relevant stakeholders.

**“In order to conserve natural resources, people need to benefit from them. This is why benefit distribution is important so that people become more interested in conservation.”**

*Ester Petrus, King Nehale Conservancy*

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# Business and Livelihoods

## New in 2021

### Business Planning

The NACSO BELWG are facilitating the Business and Financial Sustainability Plans (BFSP) to targeted conservancies. The process identifies the business opportunities of the conservancy, as well as conducting the financial planning of their long-term costs and investments. Conservancies are assisted in developing five-year plans that align income opportunities with the expenditure needs. BFSP can be used to build resilience, i.e., to set aside current year funds for the following year and thereby build a buffer. With these plans in place, conservancies will know where they stand in terms of finances and where they would like to be in the future. A behavioural change can also be observed on how conservancies allocate, use, and reserve their funds, while building resistance to shocks.

For example, Wuparo conservancy's BFSP was approved at their AGM, and at the end of their financial year, they used the tracking tool to assess whether their performance was within the targets. Currently 26 conservancies are using the BFSPs. However more work needs to be done to get more income earning conservancies to implement these plans.

### Tourism Resilience

COVID-19 highlighted the need for a stable local tourism market. Several conservancies' joint venture lodges worked to develop a foothold in the local market by offering specials to attract Namibian and SADC residents. For example, Gondwana Collection, Wild Waters, and Ultimate Safaris are three of several tourism operators that tapped into the local market and created packages that would match the Namibian public's desire to explore with their financial means. This was a great way to continue operations and retain jobs in joint venture lodges while giving Namibians an opportunity to explore community conservation tourism establishments.

### Homegrown

The Homegrown product is a new initiative that encourages travellers to experience communal conservancies through the eyes of local guides and community members. The premise of Homegrown is to develop a new market for local conservancy-based tour guides and provide training that ensures the safety of guests and community members alike in the post-COVID-19 world. Although Homegrown's pilot project was stalled due to funding, there are plans to revive the initiative.

## Collaboration

The work of the Conservation Relief Recovery Resilience Facility (CRRRF) led by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is a great example of collaboration between stakeholders, which rallied support for the communal conservancies when COVID struck. This facility contributed by providing relief to conservancies in the form of grants to the CBNRM program. CRRRF also proved to be an opportunity to share skills, build capacities, grow networks, save costs, and share workloads at various levels during a challenging time.

Going forward, the diversification of income streams will be key to the continued success of conservancies and the wildlife economy model. Conservancies need to rethink the reliance on tourism and hunting as primary income sources and re-examine the impact of conservation on their livelihoods. For example, building smaller economies at a local level and creating macroeconomic businesses that integrate sustainable practices could have an impact in conservancies that isn't reliant on global travel. Participation in approaches such as Wildlife Credits also provides income at a conservancy and/or individual level, rewarding wildlife stewards while at the same time reinforcing the importance of continued conservation efforts.

The total returns to conservancies are divided into cash income to conservancies including the Kyaramacan Association (mostly through partnerships with private sector operators), cash income to residents from enterprises (mostly through employment and the sale of products), and in-kind benefits to residents (mostly the distribution of harvested game meat). The cash payments to conservancies and their residents, and the monetised value of in-kind benefits increased in 2021 after a stark decrease in 2020, which indicates the resilience of the programme.

### 2021 • Business and Livelihoods *at a Glance*

- **64** joint-venture tourism enterprises with **774** full time and **62** part time employees
- **47** conservation hunting concessions with **130** full time and **188** part time employees
- **8** small/medium enterprises with **10** full time employees
- **998** conservancy employees
- **1008** conservancy representatives receiving allowances
- **378** craft producers
- Conservancies generated total cash income and in-kind benefits to rural communities of **N\$91,745,778** in 2021. Of this:
  - conservation hunting generated **N\$35,219,699**;
  - tourism generated **N\$53,838,083**;
  - indigenous plants **N\$1,029,191**, and
  - other income generated **N\$1,658,805**
- Conservancy residents earned a total cash income of **N\$54,435,785** from enterprise wages:
  - Of which **N\$25,966,819** was from joint venture tourism, **N\$26,492,704** from conservancies, **N\$1,877,262** from conservation hunting and **N\$99,000** from SMEs
- Conservancy residents earned a total cash income of **N\$1,029,191** from indigenous plants and **N\$708,900** from crafts
- **326,295 kg** of game meat worth **N\$9,267,048** was distributed to conservancy residents
- **N\$11,572,810** in cash benefits was distributed to conservancy residents and used to support community projects



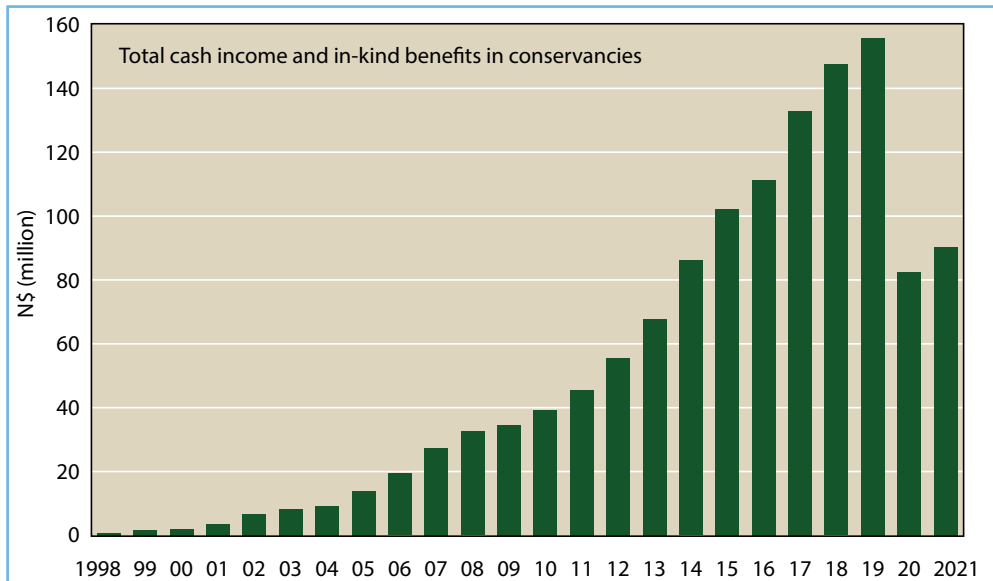


Figure 5. Total returns to conservancies and members excluding relief grants

Table 2. Sources of returns to conservancies and their members

Category	Amount (N\$) 2021	%	Amount (N\$) 2020	%	Amount (N\$) 2019	%
JV Tourism (includes all cash income to conservancies and members)	52,871,581	46	46,453,579	48.2	96,895,376	61.8
Conservation Hunting (includes all cash income and meat to conservancies and members)	28,407,565	24.7	26,988,405	28	39,598,195	25.2
Grants	23,199,858	20.2	13,838,384	14.4	7,249,949	4.6
Game Harvesting, PAC, Live Sales	6,812,134	5.9	4,646,025	4.8	6,363,201	4.1
Miscellaneous	1,658,805	1.4	1,944,569	2	2,155,377	1.4
Indigenous Plant Products	1,029,191	0.9	1,482,160	1.5	1,974,239	1.3
Crafts	708,900	0.6	917,806	1	1,420,496	0.9
Community-Based Tourism	257,602	0.2	29,250	0	1,195,660	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>114,945,636</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>96,300,178</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>156,852,493</b>	<b>100</b>

## Impacts of tourism and hunting

Joint venture tourism and conservation hunting make the greatest financial contributions to communal conservation through game guard salaries, improved livelihoods, and support to farmers with human-wildlife conflict incidents.

Grants from CRRRF were disbursed to conservancies to assist with operations but some conservancies still received income from both tourism and conservation hunting, which are important sources of income for numerous conservancies.

Most conservancies are reliant on consumptive wildlife use for income generation. Without this option (map below) many conservancies that do not have photographic tourism potential will no longer be able to cover their operational costs.

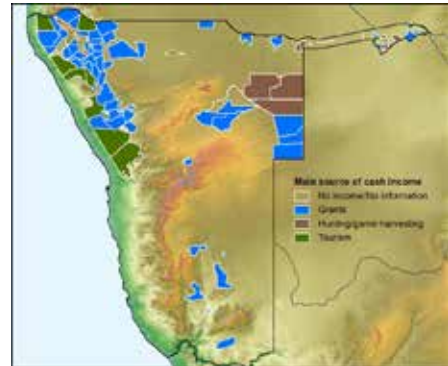


Figure 7. Reliance on conservation hunting and tourism

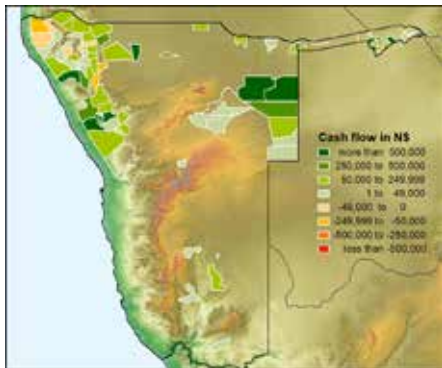


Figure 8a. Cash income generated by conservancies in 2021

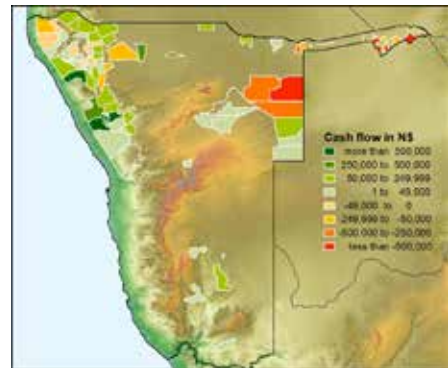


Figure 8. The status of cash income under a hypothetical scenario of a hunting ban

“When tourists visit Namibia, they get to see the different wildlife and landscapes found in Namibia, which is completely different from their landscapes and wildlife.”

- Poniso Dimba Wallen, Mayuni Conservancy

**Joint Ventures.** Despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, new joint venture partnerships were forged with the private sector in Impalila and Balyerwa conservancies in Zambezi. The BELWG continued to provide technical support such as legal advice, inductions, and JV contract negotiations and reviews for various conservancies. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions during the year, there have been shortcomings in the management of JV agreements, such as the lack of joint management committee meetings where during normal times most issues between the two parties could be solved through constant dialogue. These shortcomings will need to be resolved to re-establish good working relations between conservancies and the private sector.

**Income diversification** is crucial to withstand shocks and increase returns. COVID-19 highlighted the need for diversifying income sources to build more robust and resilient livelihoods. Business models need to be reworked, and there is a strong need to create additional opportunities beyond lodges and hunting operations to focus on local entrepreneurs, who can also derive benefits from a pro-conservation business.

It is increasingly important to ensure that benefits from natural resources flow to the household level. This creates a direct link to the value of natural resources, increases the tolerance of communities living with wildlife, and reinforces the importance they place on conservation as a significant contributor to their livelihoods. This may also lead to conservancy members holding themselves and their management committees accountable.

**Inspiration.** The CBNRM sector remains at the forefront of protecting biodiversity while strengthening conservation measures and ensuring that communities reap the benefits of living with wildlife. To be resilient, there needs to be greater emphasis on sustainability by building the capacity of communities to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. With the fundamentals of governance, accountability and natural resource management in place, Wildlife Credits a payment for ecosystem services, is a valuable nature-based solution (NbS) addition.

**Wildlife Credits** is a payment for ecosystem services where conservation performance payments are made to wildlife stewards based on verified conservation results. Wildlife Credits have evolved since its inception. Technology such as camera traps, satellite data and SMART apps are now being used to monitor wildlife and landscape conservation metrics within conservancies to show conservation performance. The Wildlife Credits verifications systems has 3 phases:

- **Phase 1** – Conservancy using smartphones, camera traps, and satellites to collect data on their wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- **Phase 2** – Data is transferred, analysed, and automated, using desktop computers, AI, and cloud data-based platforms.
- **Phase 3** – Includes the use of outputs from the data to produce bankable products, i.e., “credit” certificates that can attract payers willing to pay for conservation performance.

Wildlife Credits is being piloted in 6 conservancies but has been shared with 45 conservancies who are all interested in joining the initiative, particularly with the new product called Wildlife Zones. This product could potentially be applied by all conservancies that have set aside land for conservation and would include monitoring using platforms such as AI performance dashboards.

Also being piloted is the Kunene Lions product, which is currently in the development stage and focused on 11 conservancies in Kunene.



# Natural Resource Management

## New in 2021

### **MEFT Wildlife Corridors Strategy launched on 9 April**

**MEFT Wildlife Corridors Strategy** launched on 9 April - Strategy provides details on the area's corridors and their importance in reducing HWC, securing the wildlife economy, maintaining habitat connectivity and conserving wildlife.

### **Elephant National Management Plan launched in November 2021**

With support from the KfW, the MEFT developed a new **National Elephant Conservation and Management Plan**. The plan provides for new approaches to the conservation and management of elephants such as the creation of regional elephant management structures mainly in the areas identified as elephant conflict hotspots. These structures are designed to involve landholders in the management and mitigation of challenges associated with living with elephants. The Plan was launched in November 2021 by the Honourable Minister Pohamba Shifeta at Susuwe in Bwabwata National Park.

### **Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) Registers**

The **Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) Registers** were introduced by MEFT regional coordinators in most conservancies in 2020/21. Conservancies are using the registers to record more detailed data of HWC in conservancies, such as what type of livestock was killed by what type of predator, and how much was spent paying for damage caused by problem animals in each conservancy. The information in the register systems is also used in management plans and to inform the MEFT and conservancy members on the conflict mitigation measures for a specific species. The MEFT uses the data to determine whether conservancies are paying members the right amount for losses as stated in the policy.

# Wildlife Monitoring

Wildlife populations in communal conservancies are monitored through game counts, waterhole counts, and the Event Book monitoring system. Populations vary from year to year in response to changes in their environment such as the drought, rainfall, diseases, predation, utilisation, and poaching.

## Wildlife Trends

In preparation for annual game counts, the NRWG and the MEFT train conservancy game guards and staff on game count methodology. Game count training is used as an opportunity to cover broader wildlife monitoring techniques such as fixed patrols and the Event Book monitoring system.

Predator sightings index are produced by dividing the number of physical sightings recorded during the year by the number of event books (one book per game guard).

Observations of predator sightings reveal that populations in the north-west are stable or increasing, while in the north-east, wild dog sightings are increasing while lion numbers have come down.

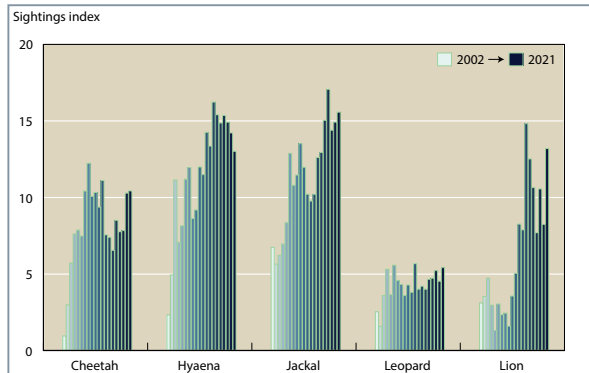


Figure 10. Predator sightings index for Erongo and Kunene regions.

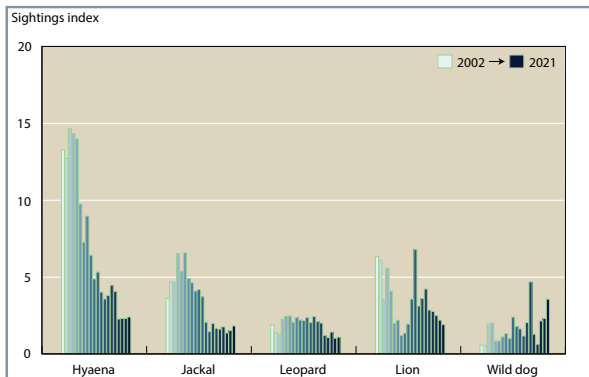


Figure 11. Predator sightings index for the North-East.

## 2021 • Natural Resources *at a Glance*

- 57 conservancies with a wildlife management plan
- 52 conservancies with a zonation plan
- 47 conservancies with conservation hunting concessions
- 38 conservancies directly involved in tourism activities

- 748 game guards working in conservancies
- 54 conservancies conducting an annual game count
- 74 conservancies with own use harvesting quotas

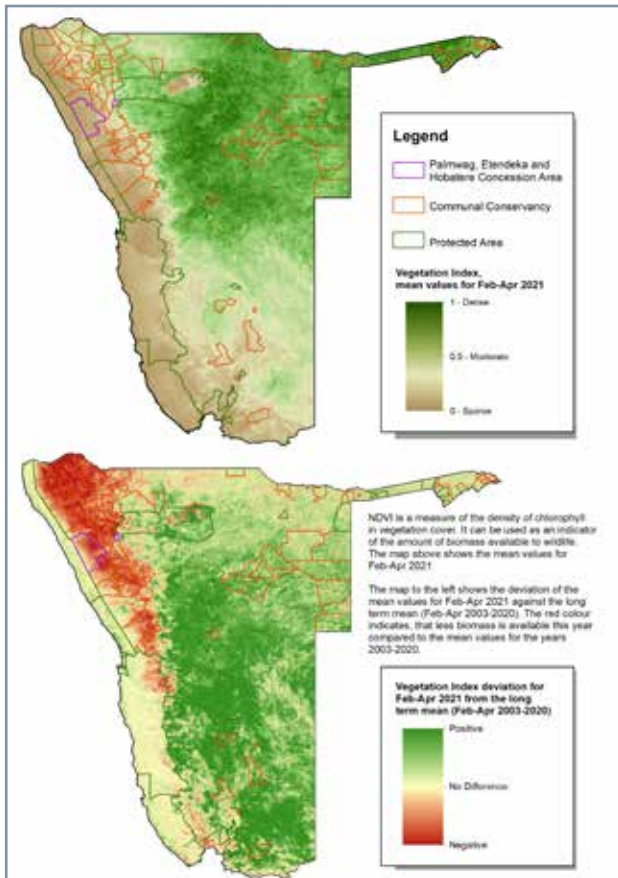
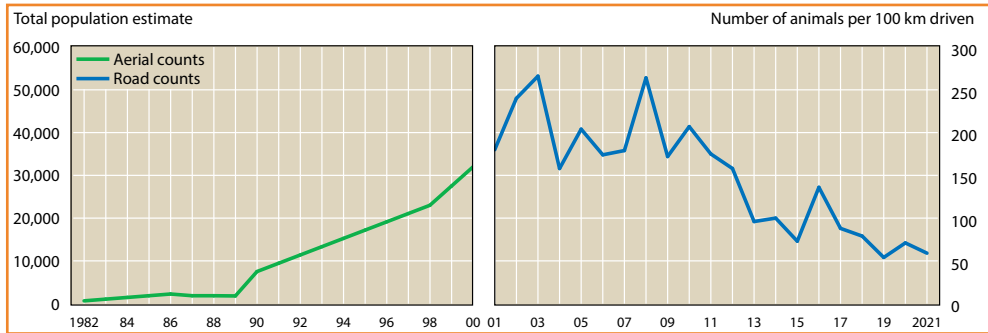
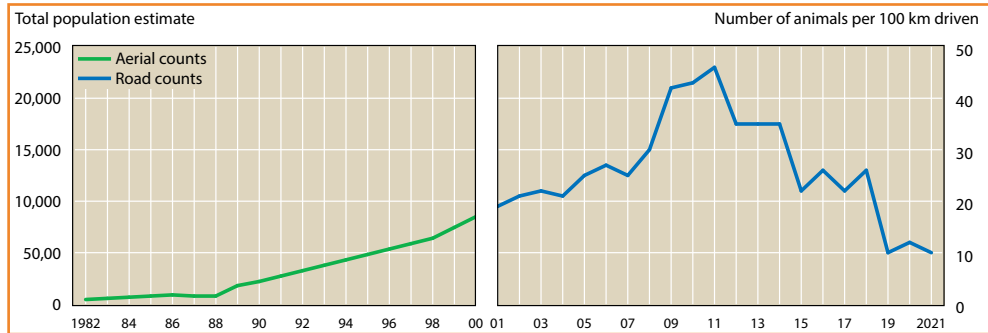


Figure 9. The Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI)

### Gemsbok



### Springbok



### Hartmann's Mountain Zebra

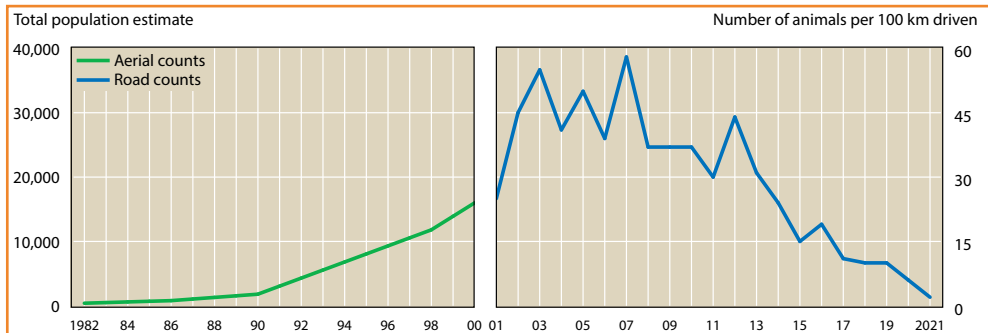
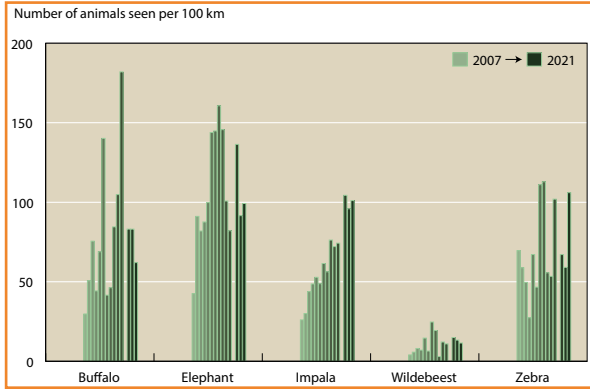


Figure 12. Wildlife population trends for three key herbivore species for Erongo and Kunene regions.

The figures from road counts show a continued downward trend in key game populations (gemsbok, springbok, kudu, and zebra) in the Northwest. This area of the country receives unpredictable rainfall. Drought conditions are a contributing factor in the decline in numbers, as NDVI map (Figure 9) indicates a decrease in biomass for wildlife. Offtakes may have contributed to the decrease in numbers. Poaching has also been commercialised in this area, where with no cameras or fences, access is easier.





In the past year there haven't been any significant changes in game count numbers in the Zambezi Region, yet the changes that did occur may be attributed to inconsistent rainfall and movement of animals across borders.

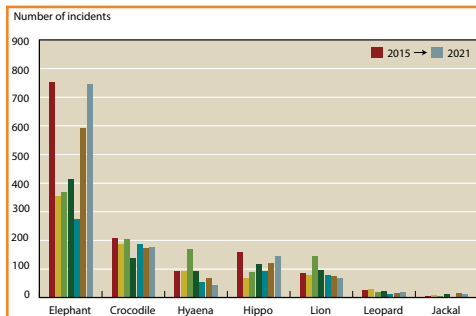
**Figure 13.** Wildlife population trends for five herbivore species in the north-east (including National Parks and conservancies).

## Living with wildlife

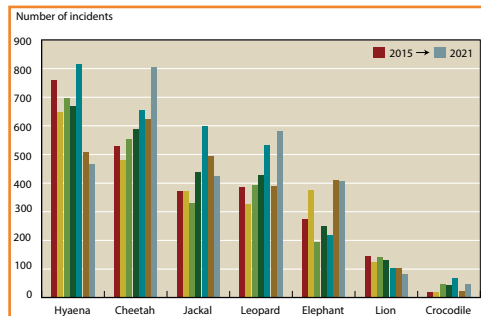
Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) is one of the pressing conservation issues in Namibia. Where people and wildlife live together, conflict will always exist. This means that it will not be possible to eradicate all conflict, but that conflict must be managed in the most effective and efficient ways possible. To deal with human-wildlife conflict, there needs to be a balance between long-term conservation priorities for the well-being of future generations and the short-term needs of people living with large mammals and predators.

In 2021, 79 conservancies reported HWC incidents which include crop damage, livestock attacks, human attacks, and other damage. Elephants were reported to cause the highest conflict in Zambezi by damaging crop fields. In Kunene, cheetahs caused the most conflict.

### HWC Species Zambezi



### HWC Species Kunene



**Figure 14.** Human-wildlife conflict species in Zambezi and Kunene

In some areas, such as the Kunene, the level of conflict is often indicative of drought. In other areas, such as the Zambezi, increase in human population which leads to encroachment of areas where wildlife can roam freely also contributes to the increase in HWC incidents.

## Community Game Guard Unit Standards

Community Game Guards (CGGs) play a crucial role in monitoring and protecting wildlife and other natural resources in communities. In 2021, a set of standardised core competencies or Unit Standards were used to train CGGs, helping to optimise and professionalise their role. Post-training assessments showed an increase in morale and commitment among CGGs who received this training. While the CGGs were the primary target for the training events, the Natural Resource Working Group (NRWG) has expanded the scope of the training to include the induction training of conservancy management committees, which encompasses all the components of resource management and protection in the conservancy. This ensures that conservancy management and CGGs have clarity on their roles and responsibilities in managing natural resources.



## Monitoring and Management of species

Monitoring of wildlife populations, including elephants and lions, is a crucial aspect of species conservation and management, and a prerequisite for adaptive management. Obtaining long-term population trends and population age structure are priorities for monitoring these species. Monitoring allows us to understand the dynamics of the populations, their seasonal distribution, range, and movement requirements. This information is important for adaptive management decisions that ensure the continued presence of these economically important species. For elephants and lions, it is particularly important to have sufficient scientific information on the current populations and population trends to make the required non-detriment findings for sustainable utilisation.

The MEFT Elephant Management Plan recommends the implementation of a structure that divides the elephant range into four geographical components: 1) Northwest, 2) Central North and Etosha NP; 3) Kavango East, Kavango West, Otjozondjupa, Khaudum NP and neighbouring conservancies; 4) Zambezi Region and Bwabwata NP. Each of these components is divided into Elephant Management Units, which will have participatory management arrangements through Elephant Management Unit Working Groups. This provides the basis through which communal conservancies can participate and inform actions related to elephant management in their areas.



Both lions and elephants require vast ranges to satisfy social and biological needs. Loss of range caused by anthropogenic changes is the most serious threat to both species. Although the two species are not necessarily responsible for the most HWC, lions and elephants are feared by people due to the potential personal danger these animals may pose.

The sustainable utilisation of wildlife, including from conservation hunting, forms an important component of the revenue streams for communal conservancies, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulates the international trade in hunting trophies of CITES listed species. Decisions taken by CITES member states during the Conference of the Parties to either support or block the science-based sustainable use principles applied in Namibia can therefore have a direct positive or negative impact on rural communities that live with wildlife.

## Combating Wildlife Crime

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Combating wildlife crime, particularly at a regional level, requires a multi-agency approach and the imperative of sharing information across a trusted coalition of law enforcement agencies. Several major combatting wildlife crime projects are being implemented by the MEFT, NGO partners and communities across Namibia. Significant result, has been recorded including:

- The number of known poached rhinos has decreased since 2018.
- Arrests of poachers, especially pre-emptive arrests, have increased.
- In 2021, there was zero-poaching rate of black rhinos in the north-west area of Namibia.
- 64,404 vehicle and foot kilometres were recorded in the NW rhino landscape and a total person-day effort of 10,724 days was logged during rhino patrols.
- The collaborative nature of rhino conservation in the north-west continues to act as a deterrent to poachers.

In 2021, partners who worked towards combatting wildlife crime found creative ways to continue their assigned activities, leading to a high number of scheduled activities taking place, despite COVID-19 travel and gathering restrictions.

Community pride and awareness activities improved local knowledge of the importance of wildlife and the value, both tangible and non-tangible, it brings to their lives. Community pride efforts built upon the conservation achievement of local communities and aim to create a sense of resentment when outsiders poach and steal wildlife from communities. This has led to communities being proactive in reporting suspicious activities to the relevant authorities.

## Community Forests

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Forests play a crucial role in mitigating climate change, fighting desertification and land degradation, preserving water sources, conserving biodiversity, food security and nutrition, as well as generating income and providing employment.

As part of the CBNRM programme, the community forest initiative empowers communities by providing rights over land and natural resources, building skills and capacity, establishing community decision-making bodies, promoting community advocacy, and enabling women to take up leadership positions. It contributes to rural development and poverty reduction by providing communities with income for social welfare projects or infrastructure development.

In Namibia forests and savannas cover approximately 22.8 million hectares of which a total area of 8.7 million hectares (38.2%) in 43 community forests is gazetted. Namibians in rural areas depend on forest resources for food and shelter, thus priority should be given to sustainable forest management through gazetted more lands under community-based forest management and increasing efforts to involve local communities in the ownership and sustainable management of forests and wildlife.

Eleven Community Forest office facilities have been constructed in Zambezi; Kavango-East; Kavango-West and Otjozondjupa Regions. The MEFT in collaboration with KfW(German Development Bank) through the Community Forest Namibia Phase II project has been supporting the construction of the community forests facilities. The facilities consist of offices as well as storage and craft shops in some areas. These amounted to a total infrastructure investment of N\$22,118,582. The facilities are vital for the sustainable management of forests and the upliftment of rural communities' lives.



## KAZA – Protecting wildlife corridors

Landscape conservation is important for the co-existence of people and wildlife; therefore, it is important to have approaches in place that help to secure wildlife movements, implement conservation measures, encourage socio-economic development, and manage human-wildlife conflict.

Protecting wildlife corridors is one of these approaches. A wildlife corridor is an area of wildlife habitat connecting wildlife populations across different parts of their distribution range. Wildlife corridors are like roads for wildlife, allowing animals to move freely.

In the Zambezi Region, wildlife corridors occur at the international and conservancy levels. They provide critical links through the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), the largest transfrontier conservation area in the world, which allow for the movement of 100 species of mammals, including the world's largest population of elephants, buffalo, hippopotamus, lion, and rare and endangered antelope species, including lechwe, roan, sable, puku, and sitatunga.

One of KAZA's objectives is to re-establish seasonal wildlife migration routes and improve the interconnectivity among protected areas in the TFCA's five countries: Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Wildlife corridors in the Zambezi Region are essential in making this possible.

The MEFT has drawn attention to the importance of corridors and provided a blueprint for their protection in the Wildlife Corridors Strategy, published in April 2021.

The Strategy provides details on the area's corridors, connectivity factors, and ways in which communities can secure corridors for the future. At the local level, 5 major and several smaller wildlife corridors (or pinch points) are critical to the maintenance of wildlife as a land use option. Many of them intersect and connect to each other and are interdependent on each other.

Three main reasons why it is important to maintain wildlife corridors are to reduce HWC; to protect and increase the wildlife economy; and to maintain habitat connectivity. Protecting wildlife corridors and conserving wildlife are especially important as communities are threatened by climate change that might reduce their ability to maintain traditional farming systems, making them more reliant on wildlife for their livelihoods.



Figure 16. The Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA)

Challenges to the protection of wildlife corridors include:

- Wildlife do not recognise man-made borders. For much of the year, wildlife in Zambezi travels between parks, open land, conservancies and even country to country, following ancient migration routes, searching for food and water.
- Registration and mapping of existing Customary Land Rights
- Linear developments along roads
- Encroachment of villages and fields into wildlife corridors

The management and protection of wildlife corridors are mandated in the Zambezi Integrated Regional Land Use Plan, Game Management and Utilisation Plans, and as a directive of the 2018 Second National Land Conference.







**Community conservation in Namibia grew out of the recognition that wildlife and other natural resources are vital in communal areas, and that the value of these resources can be unlocked if local communities are empowered to manage and utilise resources themselves.**

**For more information go to:  
[communityconservationnamibia.com](http://communityconservationnamibia.com)**

