

This publication was made possible through support provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under terms of Agreement No 623-0251-A-00-3135-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

Communal Area Conservancies in Namibia

..... A Simple Guide



The Ministry of Environment and Tourism
The Republic of Namibia

Conservancies in Namibia

For nearly 30 years, most commercial farmers have been allowed to manage and benefit from the wildlife found on their farms. Communal area residents, however, received few benefits from wildlife but have suffered the costs caused by problem animals such as elephants and lions. Government realised that this was discriminatory, and recently amended legislation to allow communal area farmers to receive benefits from wildlife and other natural resources through the establishment of conservancies.



What is a conservancy?

A conservancy consists of a group of commercial farms or areas of communal land on which neighbouring land owners or members have pooled resources for the purpose of conserving and using wildlife sustainably. Members practise normal farming activities and operations in combination with wildlife use on a sustainable basis. The main objective is to promote greater sustainable use through cooperation and improved management. Conservancies are operated and managed by members through a committee.



How communities will benefit from conservancies

Conservancies seek to increase local responsibility and ownership over wildlife. Rural residents can benefit financially from wildlife and tourism through a range of activities. These include harvesting quotas agreed to by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), trophy hunting, sale of live game and from tourism concessions.



Conservancies will be able to decide how to spend income from wildlife and tourism. They can pay dividends to individual households or use income for community development projects. Conservancies give communities new economic opportunities which can help them in times of drought. All conservancy members should have equitable shares as benefits will provide incentives for people to manage the wildlife for the future.

Through conservancies, resources will be more carefully managed. Game populations, habitats, biodiversity and the environment in general stand to gain from the establishment of conservancies.



Rights under the new legislation

The new legislation enables conservancies to:

use, manage and benefit from wildlife on communal land;

propose recommendations for quotas for wildlife utilisation and decide on the form of utilisation;

enter into agreements with private companies and establish tourism facilities within the conservancy boundaries.



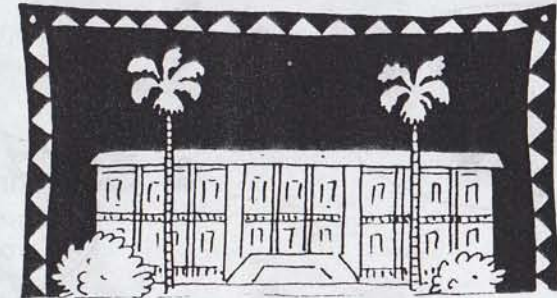
Registered conservancies will be given ownership over huntable game and game birds, being bushpig, buffalo, oryx, kudu, springbok and warthog. Applications can be made for permits to use protected and specially protected game.

A conservancy which also registers as a hunting farm will be able to allow trophy hunting on its land.



Requirements for registering a conservancy

Once a community has decided it wishes to form a conservancy, it must apply to the Minister of Environment and Tourism to become registered. A formal application must be completed - this can be obtained from any MET office.



For a conservancy to be registered with Government, the following should be included in the application:

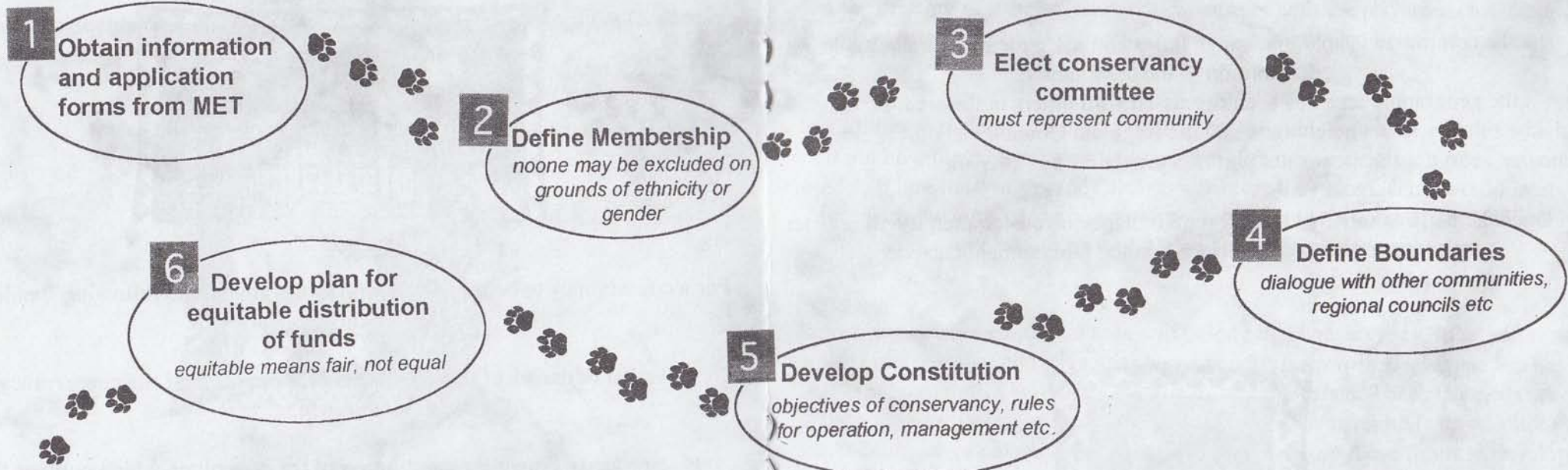
- ✓ a list of names of the people who are members of the conservancy committee;
- ✓ a properly drawn-up constitution of the committee which outlines the goals and objectives of the conservancy;
- ✓ a statement setting out the boundaries of the conservancy;
- ✓ other documents or information as required by the Minister.

Communities seeking to allow trophy hunting must apply at the same time to be registered as a hunting farm.



STEPS IN CONSERVANCY FORMATION

Once a community has decided it wishes to form a conservancy, the following steps must be taken:



- 7 Before submitting the application to the MET, CHECK the following:**
- ✓ Is the committee representative of the community?
 - ✓ Is a list of names of the committee attached to the application?
 - ✓ Has a proper constitution been developed and attached?
 - ✓ Does the constitution provide for sustainable management?
 - ✓ Can the committee manage funds adequately?
 - ✓ Has the committee developed a plan for the *equitable* distribution of benefits?
 - ✓ Have boundaries been identified and agreed upon?
 - ✓ Are you sure that the area is not subject to lease, or is in a game park?

If the answer to *any* of these questions is **NO**, then the application is not ready to be submitted.

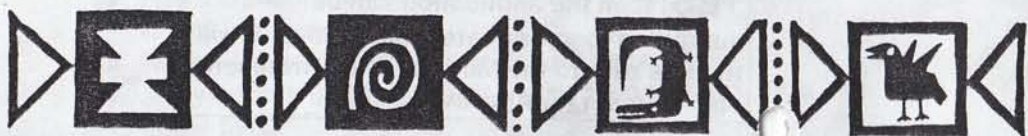
Once the answer to all of the questions is **YES**, then the application can be submitted to your nearest MET office. It will then be sent to the Minister of Environment and Tourism for Approval.

Conditions of acceptance

For the conservancy to be accepted, the Minister must be satisfied that:

- the committee represents the community living in the area;
- the constitution provides for sustainable management and use of game in the area;
- the committee is able to manage funds and has a method for equitable distribution to the community;
- the geographic area has been discussed with others in the area, such as neighbours and the Regional Council;
- the area is not part of a proclaimed game park.

Once the MET is satisfied that all requirements have been met, it will register the conservancy and declare it in the Government Gazette.

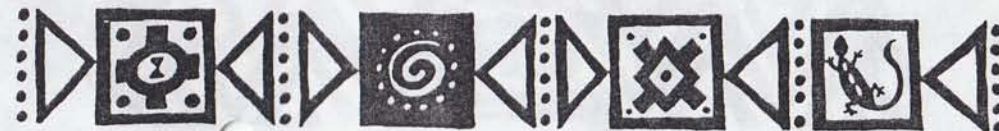


Conservancies and the MET

Although the community will have the responsibility and rights over wildlife in the conservancy, the MET has the legal responsibility for the nation's wildlife and must ensure that it is managed and used sustainably. The MET will, as far as possible, provide some logistical help in certain tasks, including advising on the drafting of a constitution or agreements with the private sector. Non-governmental organisations operating in an area can also be asked for assistance.

In addition to the constitution, conservancies should have a set of rules which spell out how the conservancy will operate. If there were no such rules, anyone could go into the conservancy and do whatever they liked. This would interfere with the aims of the conservancy. Conservancies can ask the MET to advise on developing its rules and wildlife management plan.

Not everyone in a communal area will belong to a conservancy. In an effort to give people outside conservancies some benefit from wildlife, legislation has made it possible for Wildlife Councils to be established. These Councils are only found in communal areas and will receive the revenue from wildlife located outside of conservancies. The councils will use these funds to develop projects within regions.



Differences between Conservancies and Wildlife Councils

Conservancies and Wildlife Councils are two institutions for managing wildlife in communal areas, but have different functions. Here are some of the differences:

CONSERVANCIES	WILDLIFE COUNCILS
Manages wildlife for the benefit of the residents in the conservancy	Manages wildlife for the benefit of people outside of conservancies
Represents specific communities	Represents a region
Community-level institution	Government institution, including community leaders and representatives of conservancies in the region
No government membership unless requested by conservancy membership	Government membership includes MET, and other ministries as appointed by the Minister of Environment and Tourism
Can enter directly into agreements with the private sector, among others	Cannot enter directly into agreements but coordinates tourism development plans in the region
Conservancy decides how to spend wildlife revenues	Wildlife Council decides how to spend wildlife revenue
Wildlife revenue can be used for projects and/or household distributions	Wildlife revenue is used for area development



For further information about conservancies, contact your nearest MET office

Other information can be obtained from:

Ministry of Environmental and Tourism
Directorate: Resource Management
 Private Bag 13306
 Windhoek
 NAMIBIA

Telephone (061) 263131
Telefax (061) 263195

Directorate: Environmental Affairs
 Private Bag 13306
 Windhoek
 NAMIBIA

Telephone (061) 249015
Telefax (061) 240339



Text by Linda Baker Illustrations by Helga Hoveka