

# **Namibia – an enabling environment for communities to take the lead**

## **A case study from Namibia**

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

In many aspects Namibia is a country of extremes and unusual conditions. It is one of the most arid countries in Southern Africa with a fragile ecology. It is also one of the least populated countries in the world, with a population density of 1.7 people per km<sup>2</sup> (du Toit, Karita, Sguazzin, 1994). Unfortunately 80 % of this rapidly growing population (3.1% growth per annum) is dependent on the limited natural resources. Namibia needs to come to terms with these realities that affect future development and environmental integrity. Namibia's Independence in 1990 has provided an opportunity to address historical inequalities and to integrate appropriate approaches which address these limitations into policies and ultimately legislation.

Prior to independence, the imposed system of separate development as the key to the apartheid policy created the template for separate resource management and land degradation in both commercial (mainly white owned) and communal (mainly disenfranchised black farmers) farming areas. Resources were managed by separate government entities, without appropriate co-operation among ministries, NGO's and communities.

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## **Namibian environmental and socioeconomic overview**

Namibia is the most arid country south of the Sahel, covering an area of slightly more than 800,000km<sup>2</sup> (Brown 1992). Aridity decreases from the west coast with less than 20 mm rainfall to the north-east where in the semi-arid climate over 500

mm of rain occurs per annum (Dealie *et al.* 1993). This spatial variation in climate means that livelihoods of people vary greatly throughout Namibia's landscape. The climate of Namibia also experiences great temporal variability with annual rainfall totals ranging from less than one quarter of the long term mean to more than twice this value (Dealie *et al.* 1993). Low rainfall in Namibia is accompanied by high potential evaporation such that overall it is more than five times the annual rainfall (Heyns *et al.* 1998). It is estimated that of the total rainfall in an area, 83% evaporates almost immediately, 3% is available for runoff and groundwater recharge while the remaining 14% is taken up by the soil and used for plant growth returning to the atmosphere by evapotranspiration. These basic characteristics of the Namibian climate have wide ranging implications for natural resource availability and resulting land use and management.

The natural resource availability is in direct relation with settlement patterns of the rural population. 70% of the population of 1.6 million is involved in subsistence agriculture. Over 60% of Namibians live in the northern regions where rain-fed agriculture is possible in some years but which comprise only 18% of Namibia's land surface. In contrast, just 7% live south of the capital Windhoek on 32% of the land that receives less than 250 mm mean rainfall. Livestock grazing is the only potential land use in these areas with cattle predominating in the relatively higher rainfall and goats in more arid areas. Rainfall varying geographically and temporally forces farmers to be flexible in their land management systems. Flexible practices include movement of livestock to emergency grazing areas and de/restocking from one drought year to another good rainy season. Such practices should be supported nationally by appropriate market opportunities and supportive institutions. Many Namibians only have limited opportunities to successfully practice flexible land management, due to financial and past political constraints. They often resort to income diversification through measures such as migrant labour, where family members move to towns in order to make an income, tourism especially in the more arid parts of Namibia and old age pensions, which are often the only cash income entire families depend on.

The current pattern of land use and natural resource management only partially reflects the prevailing aridity and climatic variability. It also reflects past and present political, economic and social influences (Summer Desertification Programme, 1994, '95, '96, '99, '2000). Existing land degradation and loss of productivity mirror the integrated effects of landscape types, land use and land management patterns (Kakujaha 1999). The manifestations of land degradation include deforestation (in the northern areas), deterioration of rangelands (throughout), widespread soil erosion, bush encroachment (in the central areas) and localised soil salinisation (Quan *et al.* 1994; Wolters 1994).

In addition the Namibian population is doubling every 20 years, putting an ever greater pressure onto natural resources. Namibia's population is very diverse with over eleven distinct languages or language groups existing in the country.

## Post independence legislative framework

Since Independence several policies were rewritten, and they directly or indirectly support integrated land and water management and sustainable development. These include, *inter alia*, the Swapo Manifesto (SWAPO 2000), the draft Communal Land Reform Bill(2000) , the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act (1995), the Water Policy(2000) and draft Water Act (2001), the National Agricultural Policy (1995) and the Community Based Natural Resource Management policy and regulations(MET 1997).

Only some of this policy and legislative framework takes into consideration the aridity and variable climate of Namibia, often assuming instead that the productivity of the land is a constant. An example is the high priority placed on irrigated agriculture for job creation and growth, wherein the natural variability of Namibia's arid climate can be at least partially circumvented (Swapo's plan of action, 1999 [SWAPO 2000]). Three objectives of the Swapo policy include: to bring small-holder farmers into the mainstream of the Namibian economy; to redress past imbalances in the distribution of land as a resource; and to create employment through full-time farming. In view of the need for flexibility and quick response time to Namibia's arid and variable climate, at least two of these three objectives run contrary to current developments taking place in the country. For example, land is not a resource, it is the resources on the land that are important, a concept often misunderstood during land redistribution rhetoric and programmes. Moreover, full-time farming is neither a desired objective for most Namibians nor is it a reality for most farmers as absentee farming and urban migration is steadily increasing. While it is extremely important to redress past imbalances in distribution of land as a resource, it must be remembered that the condition of a variety of renewable and non-renewable natural resources is what gives land its value for people and land itself is not a resource. As in Zimbabwe, much of the productive commercial farming is still in the hands of predominantly white individual farmers. Resettlement of formerly disadvantaged communal farmers often involves a conversion from a commercial to a communal farming system providing resettled farmers with lower incomes than anticipated.

The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act (Act 6 of 1995) considers the varying rainfall and quality of farmlands throughout Namibia. Indeed, the pattern of acquisition of commercial farmland by the government in Namibia tends to confirm this recognition. The act itself, appropriately, does not take the next step of addressing farm management emphasising aridity and climate variability nor does it prevent absentee farm management, a common response to constraints in Namibia contributing to land degradation. Absentee farming is a growing phenomenon as farmers are unable to make a living solely from farming. As a consequence, the male head of household often takes on a salaried job in a distant urban area while maintaining decision making powers over the distant farm often leading to poor overall management of variable resources.

Environmentally sustainable land use is incorporated into the National Land Policy (1998) in both urban and rural contexts. However, some of the sections, e.g. that on land enclosure, ignore environmental considerations and focus on spatial planning and consultation with users. This document highlights the attention paid to sustainable development in policy development, however, to date these concerns are not backed up by regulations, training, capacity building or all the other aspects of integrated land and water management essential for sustainable development.

Similarly, the draft National Resettlement Policy (2000) addresses resettlement that is 'institutionally, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and which will enable settlers to become self supporting'. In some instances inappropriate land use has been promoted during its application. For resettlement and redistribution to be successful, political and social goals must be amalgamated with environmental realities of our arid and variable climate. This amalgamation is often hard to implement, however, as decision makers do not have sufficient information on the consequences of nor give adequate recognition to the variability of an arid environment in a country such as Namibia.

The National Agricultural Policy (1995) goes a long way toward supporting sustainable development in Namibia. Should the various components of this policy be implemented, agricultural development would be enhanced. Similarly, the National Drought Policy & Strategy (1997) specifically addresses the arid and variable climate of Namibia. It points out that dry times are natural occurrences for which planning and preparation are essential. This includes the flexibility, adaptability and rapid response essential for good land management. 'Disaster droughts', for which planning, preparation and ongoing integrated management are insufficient and which require external intervention, is an infrequent occurrence in Namibia (National Drought Policy & Strategy 1997).

The draft Water Bill (2000) provides many tools in support of sustainable development of Namibia. It reinforces the Constitution of Namibia wherein it states that all water belongs to the state. Riparian rights (exclusive rights for people living along a watercourse) and the allocation of water rights with land rights are both excluded from the draft Bill. These elements could have negative implications for integrated land and water management if inappropriately applied. Decentralisation (Decentralisation Enabling Bill 2000) is promoted by the draft Water Bill through the appointment and training of Water Point Committees (WPC's) within communities, who have the responsibility to manage the communities' water resources. The concept of Basin Management Committees as primary planning and integrated management units is being explored.

In summary, concepts of environmentally sustainable development, explicitly or implicitly including land and water management, are found in many components of Namibia's legislative framework. Unfortunately the policies are not homogeneous

enough to ensure a desired outcome if they are applied in practice. Appropriate concepts and approaches are not developed strongly enough to overcome constraints such as the capacity, interest and willingness to change by farmers and land use planners. As long as long-term sustainable development, including by definition economic, social and environmental aspects, is seen in opposition to the immediate needs and development of the formally disadvantaged population, the current legislative framework will not address the outcomes all Namibians seek. More information adopted from relevant projects will be vital to address current policy shortcomings.

### **History towards integrated water and land management**

Independence provided an enabling environment to rewrite policies and to adopt concepts such as integrated resource management. It also opened up the doors to participate in international environmental conventions, such as Rio and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 (UNCCD 1996, UNCOD 1997). Namibia's Green Plan was presented in Rio de Janeiro (Brown 1992). Several big environmental projects, such as Napcod grew out of the Green Plan and Namibia's own needs while being nurtured by conventions such as the UNCCD.

### **Overall philosophy of many Namibian projects:**

Many different resource management projects grew out of this enabling environment and tend to follow an overarching philosophy that is found suitable to address the unique Namibian setting.

to ensure long term environmental sustainability and development opportunities, the people depending on natural resources for their livelihoods ultimately need to be able to manage their resources with the support and guidance of the government and relevant SO's.

In order to develop such a capacity and design a management approach, various stakeholders need to be involved, including the communities, government, SO's, NGO's and donors. International information sharing and following International Convention objectives are common (CCD, CBD, CCCF).

All involved stakeholders strive towards a common goal to ensure agreement, which is the **promotion of sustainable resource use**. In the past policies and approaches by the government and other SO's were often not synonymous with communal needs. To identify community needs, understand the parameters of environmental degradation and resource management, design monitoring tools that are scientifically valid and usable by the community, and ultimately empower the communities to manage their own resources, five aspects need to be looked at:

1. **Biophysical environment** - to understand the biophysical environment and select the appropriate working scale (e.g. catchment scale)
2. **Socio-economic environment** -- to understand the community needs and functioning on a CBO and household level
3. **Policy and management aspects** – ensure that policies address the needs of communities and the environment and that the policies are understood by all users. This means providing an information link between SO's and the community level through feedback and co-operation.
4. **Science** – physical, social science and traditional knowledge are needed to establish valid monitoring tools and formulate them in such a way that they are usable by the community and SO's
5. **Awareness and capacity building** – of communities to empower them to plan and monitor their resource use and SO's to offer the necessary advice.

The recency of Independence with all its opportunities, combined with this strong project philosophy resulted in the funding and establishment of many different projects, all addressing resource use from different angles. This has often caused confusion among communities who were involved in two or more projects each having their own point of entry and timeframe. Projects have learnt to link and build on another, to avoid unnecessary confusion and disillusionment.

### **Napcod**

An example of a national programme with such a philosophy is the National Programme to Combat Desertification (Napcod) which has been operating since 1994.

**The overall goal of Napcod** is *'to combat the processes of desertification by promoting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources suited to Namibia's variable environment for the benefit of all Namibians both present and future.'*

Napcod is a partnership programme between the government, public private service organisations (SOs), the non-governmental organisation sector (NGO), as well as the community-based organisations (CBOs) and individuals. The implementing government ministries are the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD) (Napcod 1997). Support for Napcod has been provided primarily by the German Government through the GTZ.

Napcod is implemented in three distinct phases. Napcod Phase I, implemented in 1994, constituted a one-year planning and awareness raising phase. During Napcod I questions were posed first, regarding desertification in Namibia, the relevant stakeholders and the needs to be addressed, before designing an appropriate, dynamic programme, rather than a static plan. The phase highlighted wide participation by all identified stakeholders during a workshop, ranging from

government, NGO, private organisations, farmers unions and community representatives.

Phase II, extending from 1995 – 1999, focused on eight objectives derived during Phase I encompassing awareness generation and the initiation of full community participation. Phase III, currently in progress, is addressing national and local level monitoring and enhancement of capacities of service and community-based organisations to combat desertification.

As part of Napcod II a study entitled 'policy factors and desertification – analysis and proposals' (Dewdney 1996) was initiated. The aim of the study was to inform decision makers of the impact of policy instruments on desertification and make recommendations for reform. Key target audiences included politicians and senior/ mid-level public servants.

Napcod also served as the secretariat for the development of Namibia's Drought Policy and Strategy. Many aspects from the policy analysis and from implementation of Napcod were incorporated into the drought policy process and final document (Namibia Drought Policy and Strategy 1997). These national level actions, incorporating Napcod's field experience, are thought to be amongst the most important of the Napcod programme.

As part of the capacity building efforts and the strengthening of existing structures and institutions, Napcod, together with other related projects, was involved in the publication of resource materials and handbooks addressing ILWRM in Namibia. Many books targeted decision makers in SO's, to help their role as facilitators, executors and advisors between Namibia's policies and the communities.

On a local scale, Napcod in its third phase is mainly operating at pilot sites that have been involved in the Sustainable Animal Range Development Programme (Sardep) of the MAWRD since the early 1990s. Sardep seeks to bridge the gap between community- based organisations and service organisations in support of sustainable agriculture. Napcod continues to support this objective and builds on the successes of Sardep, to avoid unnecessary repetition and confusion for the communities.

From the beginning, Napcod was guided by a Steering Committee with wide representation from government and civil society. Early in the process the Steering Committee took the principle decision that Napcod would assume an 'umbrella' function welcoming interaction with or providing support to a variety of other projects and programmes. This approach has had great influence on Napcod's implementation, from its wide representation and many cooperating partners to a lack of clear definition of who and what the 'essential' Napcod is. For many small scale projects involved with desertification issues, Napcod is playing a facilitating role, providing a vital link between communal needs, identified by such small projects and the national scale advisory role for relevant policies. In the

north, two regional networks, supported by Napcod and others, bring together all regional environmental organisations, political and traditional leaders and decision makers around one table. One of these is called the Forum for Integrated Environmental Management (FIRM).

## **FIRM**

Initiated on a pilot basis, four national scale funded projects attempted to synergise their inputs and support to and interactions with one already well developed, organised and active CBO, the Grootberg Farmers Association (GFA) in the Grootberg area. The GFA had voiced the concern that these projects were unable to address all the identified needs, while operating in the area simultaneously without direct co-operation. These projects were Napcod, the Sustainable Animal and Range Development Programme (Sardep), the Communal Area Water Supply (Caws) project and the wildlife-oriented community-based natural resource management programme known as the Living in a Finite Environment (Life) programme. These initiating bodies, following the growing demands of the GFA, called together the numerous institutions that were at that time involved in the area. Finally all relevant partners, including traditional leaders of the communities, community-based organisations such as the #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy, government institutions, such as Rural Water Supply and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism as well as NGOs, including WWF and the Namibian Nature Foundation (NNF), came together for the first time and agreed on the idea of "pooling projects and programmes that have a common philosophy and approach to focus on developmental issues in the Grootberg area with the GFA as the local structure" (SARDEP book). Thus, the FIRM concept was born.

The overall goal of FIRM is to improve the welfare of rural Namibians by promoting the sustainable management of renewable natural resources.

The purpose of FIRM is to develop a replicable model of inter-sectoral co-operation by implementing integrated management practices in a manner that ensures renewable natural resources are producing sustainable and equitable flows of benefits to communal area resource user groups. (minutes of the WCG meeting: Windhoek, March 1996) NEED FULL REFERENCE IN LIST

For ultimate efficiency with so many stakeholders, the GFA makes the decisions on when meetings need to be held and all stakeholders will adjourn in the Grootberg area. The meetings are facilitated and chaired by an elected community and GFA representative.

FIRM is run in the Grootberg communal area in the North-west of Namibia, which is declared as the #Khoadi //Hoas conservancy. In 1998 it became one of the first four communal areas to be named a conservancy area in Namibia (Jones 1999). Conservancies were formed under an amendment to the Nature Conservation Ordinance, which allowed a geographically defined community to establish a governing body for the management, conservation and utilisation of its



wildlife and other natural resources on previously open-access, state-owned lands (Turner 1996). The rights and responsibilities of these conservancies were modelled after similar legislation for the conservation of commercial (freehold tenure) farms. Conservancy management complements traditional farming, allowing income diversification and better coping strategies in the face of droughts. The declaration of conservancies is part of a government activity to return resource management rights to people in accordance with an approved constitution (Barnard, 1998).

The #Khoadi ||Hôas (or "Elephants' Corner") Conservancy consists of some 362 000 hectares of semi-arid rangeland. The key biophysical characteristics of the area are its overall aridity and the high temporal and spatial variation in rainfall. The average annual rainfall varies between 240 and 300 mm and drought is a common occurrence. The average annual potential evapotranspiration rate is 3m. Water resources are mainly subsurface, although two ephemeral rivers, the Hoanib and the Huab, pass through the area. The aridity makes the area totally unsuitable for crop farming and even large-scale livestock farming. The area is predominantly a mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*) savanna and grasses are mainly annual and ephemeral (NRSC 1974). The area is home to a significant wildlife population, including an estimated 200 elephants. Available natural resources (including water points) are shared among human, wildlife, and livestock populations (Jones, 1999).

The conservancy area used to be 223 farms which were previously held by European farmers under freehold tenure; these were bought by the South African government and redistributed as part of the Damaraland Native Reserve under the recommendation of the 1963-4 Odendaal Commission (Kamwi 1997). REFERENCE IN LIST Since then it has been state-owned land used primarily by Damara and Herero farmers for subsistence pastoralism. The Conservancy is home to some 3 000 - 3 500 people many of who were forcibly settled in this area under South Africa's apartheid administration. This population is scattered in small settlements of around 2-5 families clustered around the water points of the previous freehold farms. Some fencing and many of the buildings, boreholes, and farm dams from the freehold farms are still standing, leaving the area partially demarcated and the infrastructure partially intact. The two largest population centres are the towns of Anker and Erwee, which have several hundred semi-permanent residents each. Each of these two towns has a clinic, a primary school with hostel and several small shops. One major untarred road circles the area, linking a few of the settlements with the larger towns of Kamanjab and Khorixas, while most farms are linked by poorly maintained tracks. Water is supplied through numerous boreholes. When water quality declines to a dangerous level or the source is tapped, a new borehole is drilled by the relevant government agency.

The main economic activity in the area is subsistence-level livestock farming, which is supplemented with a variety of alternative income sources, including

small businesses, old-age pensions, selling of garden or wild food products, and part-time and temporary labour at such tasks as building houses or repairing cars. Remittances from wage-earning family members in larger towns are also a minor source of income. Very few people keep savings accounts, and only minimal amounts of cash are kept on hand for basic purchases. Livestock are sold only when cash is needed, usually for weddings, funerals, school and hostel fees and medical care. Nonetheless, if livestock are accepted as a financial resource, many Conservancy residents could be considered quite wealthy. Wealth is mainly stored in goats around Grootberg (with relatively few cattle and sheep), and a given household may own several hundred goats. This kind of wealth is nonetheless extremely unevenly distributed. By one estimate, approximately  $x\%$  of communal area farmers control  $y\%$  of the total wealth.

Interviews and community meetings indicated that human capital is a relatively small but growing resource in the Conservancy. The bulk labour and initiative appear to exist, especially among young people, to address issues of environmental management and economic development. However, access to information, through both formal education and other methods is currently a constraint. Although a strong oral tradition exists through which most young people learn livestock and farm management, access to other locally relevant information is generally limited. In interviews and community meetings, many farmers complained of having no access to information on rights, laws and policies, particularly on the national level. Policies which have the potential to effect farmers' lives deeply, such as the National Drought Policy, National Land Policy, and Traditional Authorities Act, are generally unheard of. In many cases, even traditional authorities and Conservancy Committee members are unaware of legal issues; more importantly, they have no ready way of accessing the information to further their understanding. Disputes over use rights and access often occur that are beyond these leaders' legal knowledge; in these cases the disputes can remain unsettled indefinitely. The identification of this need for information access by the community has become one of the main issues to be jointly addressed through FIRM.

Natural capital, while scarce by most standards, is the most basic and necessary set of resources for most communal farmers. Most of their activities are directly dependent on the natural resource base, making them particularly susceptible to natural shocks such as drought. Key resources include westward flowing ephemeral rivers, underground aquifers, areas of higher quality soils and better grazing, uncultivated foods and medicines, and a relatively plentiful wood supply. It is important to remember, however, that these are among the most arid and marginal farms in an already arid country. The area is extremely susceptible to drought and has an inherently low biological productivity.

The greatest issue of natural resources, however, seems to be not availability but access. Especially for the poorer residents, the rules and laws concerning resource access and use are unclear. In many of the smaller and more physically

marginal communities (those separated from larger towns by greater distances, poorer roads, and a lack of transportation), one wealthier family has taken over a "patron" role, controlling land and water resource access on that farm. In these cases, confusion over tenure status and related resource rights has allowed one or a few people to take *de facto* control over large tracts of productive land, including exclusive rights to water points and grazing.

Any large shocks, including drought, large-scale cattle theft or the death of a pension- or wage-earning adult, are equally damaging to families who keep only a minimal financial safety margin. Strong informal social networks serve a number of purposes, and both kin- and non-kin-based relationships of reciprocity serve as safety nets for subsistence farmers in the face of these threats. Networks of strong social contracts exist for the provision of funds for funerals, for grazing of livestock, lending of stock (for breeding) and money, keeping and informing of lost cattle, urban and rural connections of money and food, transportation, securing salaried jobs and child care and adoption. Indeed, informal social networks seem to be one of the main assets these communal farmers have at their disposal and can be used not only as a last resort in emergency situations but also to build up other kinds of assets.

### **FIRM initiatives**

In order to operate efficiently, the GFA as the community mouthpiece addresses identified needs at FIRM meetings, where the stakeholders are approached to help with tasks relevant to their project nature and function. In case of financial expenditures, the projects, which act as executing donors to the community, critically assess the actual need of the investment and provide joint financing. The community is contributing to each investment in kind, for example through free labour and fundraising occasions. They slowly move towards paying 30 % of each FIRM investment. Through these agreements it has been possible to organise visits to other communities for sharing experiences, the installation of fax and telephone lines in one larger settlement, some solar energy, development of resource maps of the area and the payment of monthly salaries to community game guards, who collect all relevant data, necessary for the management of the conservancy.

Training programmes within Firm address livestock issues, such as improved goat production (Sardep), integrating wildlife and tourism into the livelihoods of the community (Conservancy, NNF, WWF), improved water supply management and more efficient information exchange as well as networking.

Training courses in livestock and range management have been conducted and are still being undertaken as a combined effort by Sardep and Napcod. The experience exchange and sharing of lessons learned among the farmers are being fostered through farmer visits. Some of the key elements include:

- Increase of fodder, e.g. through supplements or enhancing local fodder production,

- Reduced fodder in- take during droughts through management actions e.g. shifts in water regimes, improved health and husbandry of well adapted breeds,
- Development of livestock movement strategies, including rotational grazing practices,
- Marketing of animals in an adaptive fashion, including interventions on the micro- and macro- economic levels to offer conducive opportunities and incentives to farmers,
- Diversifying and improving agricultural production on farm, especially in the communal farming areas,
- Complementing purely agricultural dependent livelihoods with off- farm economic opportunities e.g. through Small- and Micro- Enterprise development.

As part of the Conservancy and FIRM agreements, the #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy needs to be run according to an adaptive management plan, which ensures long term sustainable and integrated resource use within the area. Currently, the management plan is still in its developing phases. Before a management plan is accepted, the completion of base maps (roads, infrastructure, rivers, boreholes, vegetation, geology, habitats) and resource inventories (natural, socio-economic and land use) of the area are needed as well as Strategic Management and Land Use Plans, procedures, regulations and the institutional structures to implement the overall plan. In order to ensure flexibility and adaptability of the management plan, monitoring systems for all identified important information need to be established. The more technical tasks of mapping and resource inventories are performed by the relevant projects and stakeholders, while the appropriate training is provided for conservancy game guards to monitor wildlife and livestock conditions, environmental, relevant management and tourism events as well as any other aspects identified as important by the conservancy committee. Through Firm the community is receiving full support to establish their conservancy management plan, while selected community members are trained to ultimately take over and manage the plan on their own in the future. The relevant SO and government representatives who work in the area are also trained with the help of awareness materials of Napcod and other projects to provide the necessary support and advice to the community in the future. While the community game guards are required to record the data in a simple, yet scientific format, their knowledge of the area, the social structures and typical environmental conditions is a valuable contribution to the monitoring of events within the conservancy. Their daily monitoring results are overseen by a supervisor within the conservancy committee and an annual report is compiled by the chairperson.

The transfer to complete self-reliance is slow and mainly determined by the speed at which the community is comfortable. This requires considerable patience and flexibility from all other stakeholders, especially projects, who are confined to a certain timeframe of operation and rigid spending patterns. All other stakeholders

have come to realise and accept that the pace of progress does not reflect on donor or government performance, but rather the community need. There are time limits which the community is aware of, since Napcod, Sardep and LIFE do not have an indefinite lifespan. By the end of the programmes, however, the community is thought to have acquired enough skills and networking partners to approach new donors and advisors by themselves.

While the progress towards the conservancy management plan is mainly driven by the communities' urge for self-sufficiency, enabled through Firm, there are certain conservancy rules which limit the income opportunities within the conservancy before the completion of a good management plan. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism does not grant the right to profit from its hunting concession, which can be a major source of cash income. The timeous completion of a sound management plan is therefore also of economic interest to the community.

The enthusiasm of the community, the wealth of organisations and projects involved in the area as well as the overarching philosophy behind the projects has made the Grootberg area an ideal testing spot for Firm. The ultimate goal is to successfully apply the Firm approach in other areas.

## **Scale**

The first event enabling programmes such as Napcod was Namibia's Independence in 1990, providing the opportunity of rewriting the legislative framework, changing management approaches and getting access to donor money. The presentation of Namibia's Green Plan in Rio (1992) and the ratification to the UNCCD and CBD were important events to strengthen the overall philosophy of project approaches in Namibia.

Namibia's efforts towards ILWRM are not achieved by a single project, since it is too complex to operate at the national as well as the local levels simultaneously. National programmes, such as Napcod are directly influenced by international conventions as well as national Policies and Acts, relevant to ILWRM. On the other hand Napcod has had the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Drought, Water and Agriculture Policies recently, so as to harmonise and fill the gaps in respect of sustainable resource management. Napcod, as a National Programme, takes on a facilitating role when addressing ILWRM issues on a local scale, for example as part of a forum, such as Firm in Grootberg. Such an interactive forum, facilitated by a well-established CBO, allows the community to identify their own needs and pool the resources of all stakeholders in order to achieve their goals of sustainable resource management. For the sake of convenience, the area of operation is defined by the conservancy boundaries.

## **Power and influence**

Several uncertainties exist, which may affect the success of ILWRM in Namibia by impacting on programmes such as Napcod and ultimately on community livelihoods. Due to the recency of independence and the rewriting of policies it is often unclear whether these uncertainties will have a positive or negative impact.

The aspects of sustainable resource use have been integrated into most relevant policies and the shortcomings are still under review. The question remains if and how an ILWRM approach within policies can actually be put into practice.

The political and economic stability of Namibia can have profound influences on the tourism market, which will directly affect the profitability of conservancies. Since independence the tourism market is the fourth largest and fastest growing sector of the Namibian economy growing at 6 – 9 percent per annum (Minister of Environment and Tourism, 1998). However, these promising figures are shadowed by occurrences such as the Caprivi unrests, where the tourism market, especially the established community tourism in the area has collapsed since 2000. Increasing inflation and recession rates make alternative income generation for poor Namibians less viable.

At Grootberg some influential farmers marginalise fellow communal families and keep vast amounts of livestock in areas with good grazing, around the more developed areas and waterpoints, denying other farmers the access to emergency grazing and water for their small herds. Such practices marginalise the poor even further, who are really dependent on the resources for survival.

## **Uncertainties**

Throughout the implementation of Napcod and other programmes, there is a high level of uncertainty. Ten years after independence, many of the promised developments, such as improved livelihoods for all in Namibia, have not materialised, so uncertainty concerning future livelihood possibilities remain. Long term commitment of government and communities to ILWRM after the completion of the programmes cannot be ensured.

While Firm has been very successful to date in the Grootberg area, it has not yet been tested for replicability in other areas of Namibia.

Even if Firm proves to be extremely successful at Grootberg, it is uncertain whether future donors and all relevant stakeholders of an area will be willing and able to operate flexibly and patiently at the pace of the community. Donors may be unwilling or unable to assign to such lengthy and slow projects where success is often not measurable according to typical donor terms.

The pace and rate of Firm is an uncertainty in itself, depending on issues within the community. Conflict within the community over power or resource use and access, the loss of a champion driving person within GFA, resettlement of other communities to the area and incidents, such as elephant damage to lives or infrastructure can confuse the entire decision making process and pace of the community. No outsider is able to solve such conflicts for them, which means that all stakeholders have to assume a non-interfering stance until asked for assistance.

### **Lessons Learnt**

The case study shows clearly that the implementation of ILWRM in Namibia occurs under unusual circumstances. The recent independence and political change has provided an enabling environment to link up with international conventions, have access to donor funding and to integrate resource management issues into the new Policies. As a policy review has shown, however, is that actual integration of environmental ideas into policies is often dependent on completely unrelated political and historical views. Programmes such as Napcod can play a vital role in convincing politicians of the importance of ILWRM and may even advise relevant policy reform. In order for Napcod to be successful, it needs at least tacit political and governmental approval and at best, full support.

The enabling environment for environmental and development work in Namibia has brought along a multitude of projects and organisations. Many of these have been developed according to a broader philosophy, yet many operate in one geographical area at once, confusing communities with different timeframes, objectives and activities. An approach such as Firm can help to pool and synchronise the efforts of all stakeholders according to the needs of the community at a pace they feel comfortable with.

This approach increases community power of decision making, opportunities of capacity building and level of control over developments, while all other stakeholders take a more passive role, helping only when approached. Donors, government organisations and SO's need to become more flexible in their implementation approach, timeframe and definition of success.

ANY MORE?

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