



Communal Conservancies

NAMIBIA'S

# GIFT to the EARTH

One in five rural Namibians lives in a conservancy and benefits from rights over natural resources.

In recognition of Namibia's conservation successes, the WWF awards His Excellency President Pohamba, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Namibian nation the Gift to the Earth Award.



Over 15 years since the advent of the conservancy movement, wildlife has recovered dramatically.



# THE COMMUNAL CONSERVANCY MOVEMENT IN NAMIBIA

Namibia is internationally acclaimed for its approach to conservation. Protection of the environment is written into the constitution, almost half of the country is under conservation management, and close to 20% is managed by communal conservancies. These are self-governing entities that actively manage wildlife and other natural resources, conserving them and benefitting from them economically.

## From colonialism to conservation

Namibia, formerly South West Africa, was a German colony until 1918, when South Africa was mandated by the League of Nations to administer the territory "in the interests of its population". What followed was a history of dispossession. Indigenous Namibians were driven from their lands into barren 'reserves' by a South African government that applied the apartheid principle, to make way for South African settler farmers. In the arid Kaokoveld, now known as northern Kunene Region, Namibians and their livestock were forced to compete for land with wildlife that had roamed there for centuries.

The competition for grazing came to crisis in in the early 1980s when drought hit southern Africa. Wildlife and livestock died in large numbers. Rural Namibians had always hunted 'for the pot', but now many were forced to hunt to survive. Wildlife was also threatened from another source: government officials and the South African Defence Force hunted for food, profit and fun. Wildlife numbers in Kunene and other communal areas crashed.

It was in this environment that the first efforts at community conservation in Namibia began. The idea put forward by pioneering conservationist Garth Owen-Smith was to place wildlife in the hands of the very people accused of poaching by the government – local people.

## A pipe dream

Local chiefs and headmen all agreed that they wanted wildlife to survive, but did not see a way forward. Smoking pipes under shady trees, together with Owen-Smith, they conceived an idea that would revolutionize conservation and eventually lead to the establishment of communal conservancies. If conservationists would support community game guards appointed by the chiefs, then local communities themselves could patrol the vast reaches of Kunene to put an end to poaching.

The dream reached its conclusion after Namibian independence. Poaching had been all but eliminated in areas where community game guards patrolled. The stage was set for a new idea: communal conservancies. The post-independence government carried out socio-economic surveys in communal areas, showing that Namibians on communal land wanted the same rights as freehold farmers. In 1993 the LIFE Programme (Living in a Finite Environment) brought donor support from USAID and WWF, to build on the game guard system and move towards Community Based Natural Resource Management: CBNRM.

Finally, in 1996, pioneering legislation allowed for the formation of communal conservancies, and the first four conservancies were gazetted in 1998.

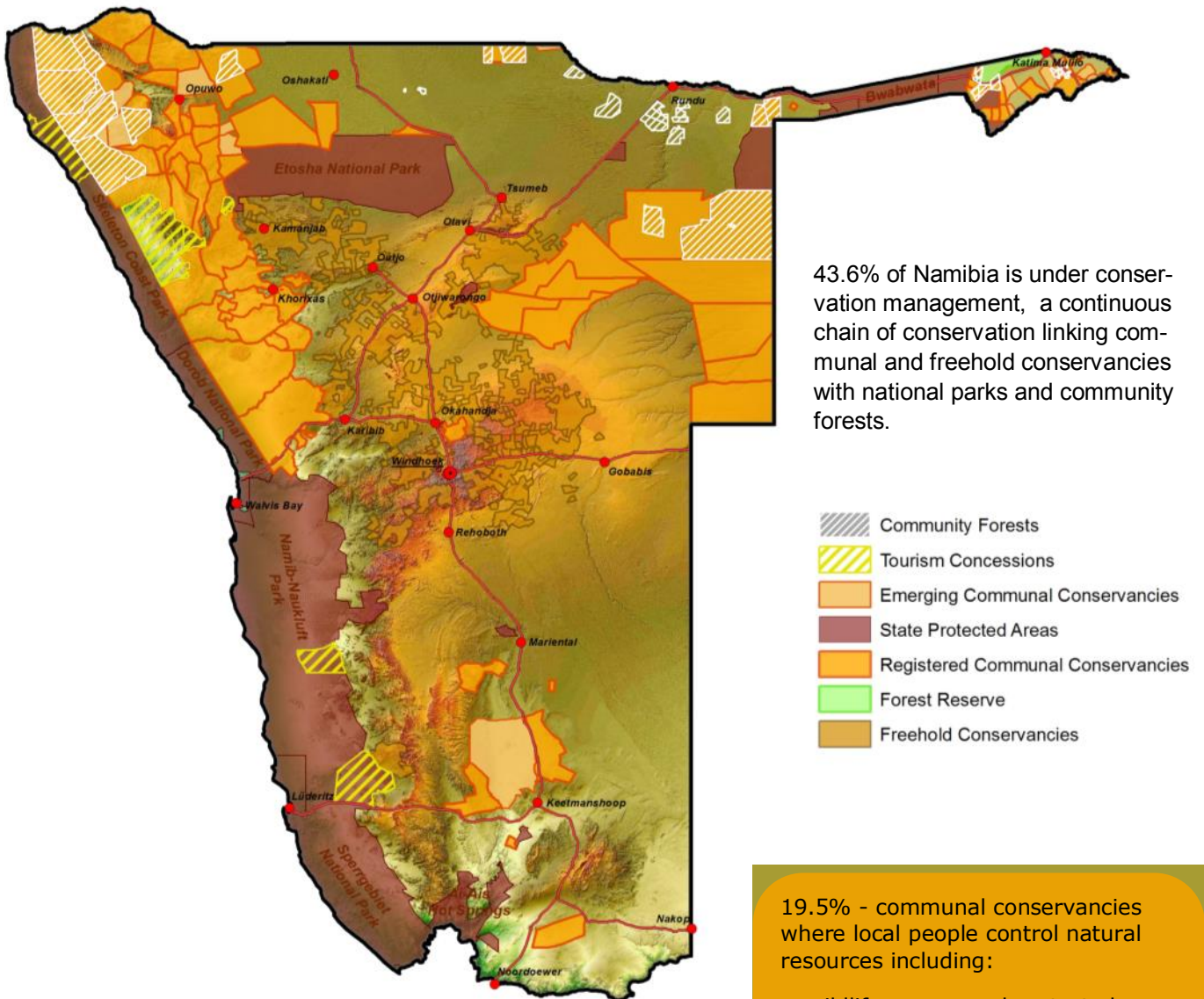


**Garth Owen-Smith with pipe**

Today, Owen-Smith and partner Dr Margaret Jacobsohn also act as tour guides for Conservancy Safaris Namibia, which is wholly owned by a group of conservancies in Kunene Region.

Today, the combination of communal conservancies combined with national parks, community forests, and freehold conservancies is assisting Namibia to apply conservation at a national scale that few other countries can emulate.

# NAMIBIAN CONSERVATION AT A GLANCE



Conservation NGOs, including the WWF in Namibia, work together with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism under the networking umbrella of NACSO, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations, to support conservancy development and to achieve conservation at a national scale.



Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations

19.5% - communal conservancies where local people control natural resources including:

- wildlife—game and protected species
- Plants such as devil's claw used for medicinal purposes and Commiphora, used in perfume

16.7% - national Parks including:

- the world famous Etosha Pan, teeming with wildlife
- the secret paradise of Mamili, with over 400 bird species
- Bwabwata, where wildlife and people mix as they did in the past

0.8% - tourism Concessions where tourists may be guided to free roaming rhino and other species

6.1% - freehold conservancies where farmers have taken down their fences

## A Gift to the Earth

With the advent of communal conservancies, rural residents on communal land could have the same rights over wildlife as private farmers, enabling them to operate tourism and trophy hunting businesses and to diversify incomes. In addition, sustainable trade in plant products began to develop, including devil's claw, used for medicine, and Commiphora, used in the perfume industry.

In recognition of the innovative legislation that devolved powers over the environment, the Founding President, Dr Sam Nujoma, was awarded the Gift to the Earth in 1998. The WWF Award is a public celebration of a conservation action which demonstrates environmental leadership and is a globally significant contribution to the protection of the living world.

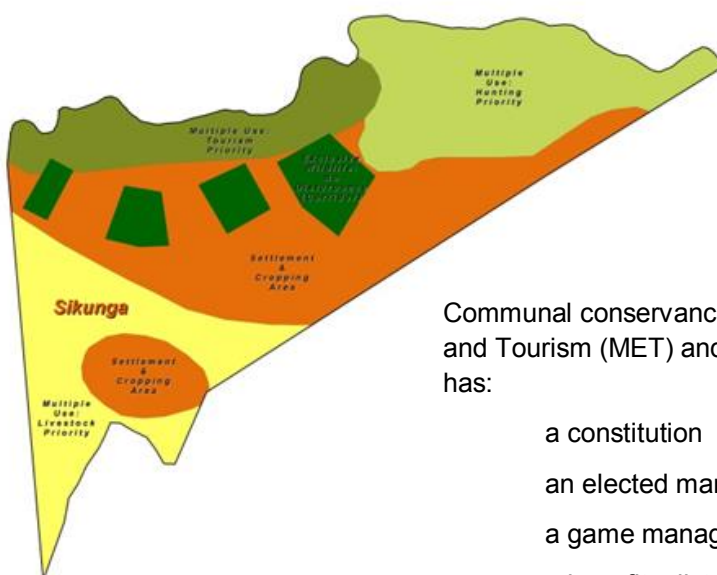
**Fifteen years after the first Gift to the Earth, there are now 79 communal conservancies covering 19.5% of Namibia's land, with one in five rural Namibians living in a conservancy. The empowerment of such large numbers of community members to benefit from wildlife and tourism resources across such a large scale is globally exceptional, and sets a standard that other countries seek to emulate. In recognition of this achievement, the WWF is presenting His Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba, on behalf of the Namibian nation and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, a second Gift to the Earth Award to celebrate the Namibian Conservancy Movement.**

The Gift to the Earth Award celebrates the extraordinary impact the Namibian government's vision has had on linking conservation with development. Namibia now boasts the largest free-roaming population of rhino in the world. Apex predators such as lion, cheetah, and leopard have expanded in both range and numbers as a result of communal conservancies. Namibia, in line with its constitution, is promoting sustainable use of its natural resources on vast tracts of land, with communal conservancies contributing to a strong synergy with Namibia's protected area network.

The award also recognizes the conservancy movement as a global model. The ideas and principles behind the Namibia Communal Conservancy Movement are being studied by over 20 countries from Africa, Asia, and the Americas with a view to similarly devolving environmental management responsibility and the benefits from wildlife and tourism to rural communities.

By recognizing this achievement at the Adventure Travel and Tourism Summit, the Award also reinforces the success and value of environmentally responsible and sustainable tourism.

## What is a communal conservancy?



A communal conservancy has a fixed boundary agreed between its founding members and neighbouring communities.

It is usually split into zones, integrating traditional resource uses with new income sources: tourism, the sustainable use of wildlife including trophy hunting, fishing and fishery protection areas, and exclusive wildlife conservation areas.

Communal conservancies are registered by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and adhere to Ministry regulations. A conservancy has:

- a constitution
- an elected management committee
- a game management plan
- a benefits distribution plan

## Three pillars of CBNRM (Community Based Natural Resource Management) underpin the conservancy movement

Natural resource Management	Governance	Enterprise Development
<p>Conserving wildlife and its habitat is achieved in three major ways:</p> <p>A Game Management Plan is developed to optimize the recovery of wildlife to integrate it with existing resource and land-uses.</p> <p>Game guards are the eyes and ears of the community. They talk to farmers on a daily basis and record wildlife and any poaching activity in event books.</p> <p>Annual quota setting at sustainable harvesting rates, conducted by the MET and conservancies, is a key contributor to wildlife management.</p>	<p>Conservancy constitutions are at the heart of governance. They are written by founding members with technical support from NGOs such as the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC).</p> <p>Annual General Meetings elect committee members, an increasing number of whom are women—currently, almost a third—some of them acting as treasurers and chairpersons.</p> <p>Greater rural democracy, and particularly the empowerment of women, are intangible benefits of the CBNRM Programme.</p>	<p>Economic diversity creates new income and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Many conservancies have created joint ventures with the private sector. JV lodges pay a percentage of income to conservancies, re-invested in community projects.</p> <p>Conservancy members are employed as waiters, cooks, tour guides, and increasingly find themselves in management positions in JV lodges.</p> <p>Crafts, community campsites, traditional villages, hunting operations, and other income enterprises arise with the increase in wildlife numbers in conservancies.</p>

### Conservancies and tourism

In conservancies wildlife populations have recovered and provided the basis for 34 joint venture tourism lodges, 44 hunting concessions, and approximately 200 enterprises that have generated over N\$ 361 million (US\$ 36m) in benefits to community members since 1998.

Many visitors to the lodges found in the vast landscapes of Kunene Region or nestled by a river in Zambezi Region may not realize that the lodge forms an integral part of a communal conservancy. In fact, conservancies offer eco-services to private sector tour operators. Game guards patrol to minimize poaching, the result of which is a sustained rise in wildlife populations – a major attraction for tourism. In return, private sector lodge operators pay a percentage of income to conservancies where they have negotiated an agreement. These payments are re-invested in the conservancy via wages to staff and community benefits.

A conservancy distributes benefits in accordance with its members' wishes, as agreed at an annual general meeting. For those conservancies with a strong income from a joint venture agreement with a private sector lodge operator, benefits can be substantial. Cash distribution is rare, with conservancies usually opting to use its proceeds for a mix of investments in the community. Examples include donations to schools, bursaries for students, food distribution to pensioners, diesel to pump water for livestock and wildlife, and repairs to infrastructure damaged by elephants.

### What about hunting?

The sustainable use of wildlife is essential for conservancies to survive and for wildlife numbers to increase. With game guards in place and reliable monitoring of wildlife numbers and trends, communal conservancies provide excellent conditions for wildlife to prosper as part of a sustainable eco-system.

In the early 1980s Namibian wildlife was threatened by two forces: drought and rampant poaching. Wildlife belonged to the state, and locals who shot for the pot were considered to be poachers. In addition, commercial poaching was also carried out by government officers and the military.

With the advent of community game guards, before the first conservancies were formed, poaching became socially unacceptable. In 1996, after Namibian independence, legislation allowed for community control of wildlife that included sustainable use. For the first time, residents on communal land had virtually the same rights as farmers on private land: they could hunt for meat and earn an income through trophy hunting.

Sustainable harvesting of wildlife is premised upon MET-approved game management plans in conservancies, and annually reviewed quotas for meat harvesting and trophy hunting. The result has been an increase in wildlife numbers.

### Wildlife quick facts:



Hartmann's Mountain Zebra in northwest Namibia have increased from around 1,000 in 1982 to over 27,000 today.

Similarly, the estimated 1,000 springbok present in northwest Namibia in 1982 have grown to around 93,000.

Elephant numbers in Namibia have increased from approximately 15,000 in 1995 to over 20,000 today. Desert adapted elephants have increased from an estimate of 150 in the early 1980s to approximately 750 in 2012.

Namibia has the world's largest cheetah population.



The black rhino population is the largest in the world. Although rhinos are increasingly threatened by poaching in other southern African countries, the MET is translocating black rhino out of national parks into the safe keeping of communal conservancies.

Lions have increased in range and number. In Kunene the population has expanded from an estimated 20 in 1995 to an estimated 150 in 2012. Such a recovery has been possible due to an increased tolerance of farmers and a rapidly increasing prey population.

For full information on wildlife numbers, visit Coninfo online at [www.nacso.org.na](http://www.nacso.org.na)

### Lodges and locals

There are 34 lodges and over 30 camp sites that have a working agreement with a conservancy, providing around 700 full time and at least 1,600 part time jobs that help to support families in rural areas.

#### A lodge in Kunene Region



Grootberg Lodge is wholly owned by #Khoadi-//Hôas Conservancy, thanks to a grant from the EU. A grant from the Millennium Challenge Account, combined with conservancy-secured loans, has enabled the lodge to build more rooms. The lodge is run and marketed by a private sector company engaged by the conservancy. Grootberg provides a strong income stream to the conservancy, which pays the salaries of management staff and game guards, office and vehicle expenses, and for community benefits such as student bursaries, diesel for water pumps and soup kitchens for pensioners.



Mariane !Guims is a waitress at the lodge. She lost her mother when she was five, and her father left home to work at the coast. Her husband's story is similar, having lost his mother at age 12. He is a rhino tracker. The couple have a small boy and want to do the best for him. They have a farm, but no livestock yet. A goat will cost N\$ 500 and a cow around N\$3,500. With savings from two lodge incomes they can start to buy livestock and to build a future for themselves.

The conservancy helps too. Its annual hunting quota provides meat that is distributed to members. "It's not a lot, but you can make biltong", says Mariane. The conservancy also helps with fuel for the water pump at the homestead and future farm. The money for diesel comes from income from the lodge and from trophy hunting.

## A lodge in Zambezi Region



Nkasa Lupala Tented Lodge is joint venture between Wuparo Conservancy and private sector investors, the Micheletti family. Typically, investors bring start-up capital, and over a period of time – 10 to 20 years – the lodge infrastructure will be transferred to the conservancy.

The lodge agreement was carefully negotiated with support from WWF and IRDNC, the local conservation NGO. It ensures that almost all the staff come from nearby villages, and that adequate training is provided. Tour guides are trained to the highest standard. Inevitably, some staff will leave to work elsewhere and new ones will be trained to take their place, creating new skills in a rural area.

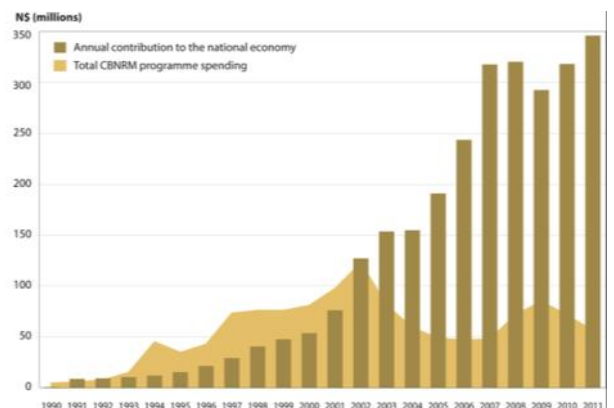
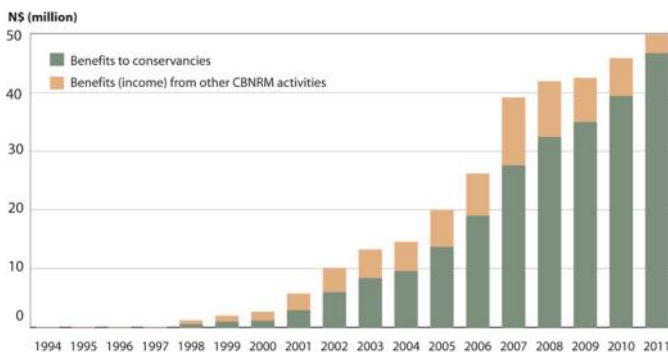


Bertha Lunyazo comes with a smile. And with good reason; after starting as a waitress with Wilderness Safaris, she moved up to the position of assistant manager at Serra Cafema Lodge. The company was the first to begin joint ventures with local communities. Bertha moved back to the Zambezi Region to become assistant manager at Nkasa Lupala, and now she has moved on to become the manager of nearby Lianshulu Lodge

## Benefits

A quick glance at the table below shows that benefits from the CBNRM Programme grew from almost nothing in 1994 to nearly N\$ 50 million in 2011 (US\$ 5m). The incomes are shown in two categories: benefits to conservancies and benefits from CBNRM activities outside of conservancies, such as crafts and the sale of thatching grass. In 2012 the estimate was again at least N\$ 50 million, amounting to cumulative benefits of over N\$ 279 million (US\$ 27.3m) since the programme began.

The contribution to the national economy of the CBNRM programme is equally impressive. The graph below shows that investment by donors and government in the conservancy movement and CBNRM peaked in 2002, and now has declined to the 1997 level. The contribution to the national economy has grown strongly, reaching almost N\$ 500 million (US\$ 50m) in 2011, a seven-fold return on investment in that year.



## **Tourism and Community Conservation – the Future**

The Namibia CBNRM Programme has become internationally acclaimed. Conservancies are adding to rural development, employment and livelihoods and are making significant biodiversity contributions. The continued expansion of conservancies and community forests, linked to national parks and freehold conservancy areas, is countering habitat fragmentation and increasing the connectivity of biological corridors at large landscape scales.

Tourism is the fastest expanding economic sector in southern Africa. The Namibian model is one of sustainability based upon increasing wildlife numbers, habitat protection, and improving economic opportunities for local people. The model has energized other countries to emulate it, from Kenya to South Africa, from Mongolia to Nepal, and the USA. Closer to home, the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) is building a conservation model driven by sustainable tourism.

The five KAZA states of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe are centred around Namibia's Zambezi Region. Cross border tourism between Botswana and Namibia is growing, with tour operators owning lodges in both countries. Victoria Falls is an international attraction and World Heritage Site. A common visa to the SADC countries is under discussion, which will greatly facilitate tourism between the KAZA countries.

It has taken almost two decades to change national policies, catalyse wildlife recoveries, and promote a wide sense of ownership of the community conservation in Namibia. Now, wildlife and tourism are increasingly being recognised as economically sustainable land-uses that complement agricultural livelihoods. Much has been achieved, but the potential and promise of the conservancy movement still has great potential for growth.

## **Sustaining the conservancy movement**

Impressively, 26 of the established conservancies have attained financial self-sufficiency, while 23 others are earning income that is used to support conservancy operations. However, conservancies will require recurrent access to a range of critical support services, and the availability of these support services will be dependent upon the ability of the National CBNRM Programme to permanently provide such services as the training of new committees, assistance with management plans, brokering of new JV Lodge and trophy hunting agreements, enterprise development, etc. There is a need for a permanent CBNRM extension system for conservancies and community forests.

A National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy is near completion, including a Sustainable Finance Plan that recognises the need to reduce dependence on declining donor support to Namibia. New and existing income sources will be managed under the umbrella of a CBNRM Trust Fund which will be used to pay for critical support services to conservancies and for national level services provided by support NGOs on a sustainable basis.

## **Who supports CBNRM in Namibia?**

Private sector partners entering into joint venture agreements with conservancies provide significant support through the generation of employment, and of profits that are re-invested in the community. Joint venture lodge operators can be found at:

<http://www.namibiawildlifesafaris.com>

Trophy hunting operators provide a major income source for communal conservancies, especially those without tourism potential. The Namibia Professional Hunting Association exists to ensure ethical conduct and the sustainable utilization of natural resources.

<http://www.natron.net/napha>

MET (Ministry of Environment and Tourism) registers communal conservancies by government gazette and ensures compliance of conservancies to Ministry regulation, especially in areas of wildlife management and governance. The MET runs annual game counts with assistance from conservancies and sets quotas for game harvesting and trophy hunting.

[www.met.gov.na](http://www.met.gov.na)



NACSO (Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations) provides a network for CBNRM activities and conservancy support NGOs, the University of Namibia and the MET. NACSO produces the internationally acclaimed State of Conservancy Report which can be found on its website. Conservancy support services offered by NACSO members (below) focus on training in governance, financial management, and human-wildlife conflict.

[www.nacso.org.na](http://www.nacso.org.na)

IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation) is the largest conservancy support NGO in Namibia, which began and grew out of the work of conservationists in the 1980s. IRDNC is active in Kunene Region, where it assists 29 conservancies, and Zambezi with 13 conservancies and the Kyaramacan Resident's Association in Bwabwata National Park.

[www.irdnc.org.na](http://www.irdnc.org.na)

NNF (Namibia Nature Foundation) was formed before Namibian independence to work with South African Nature Conservation to raise and administer funds for the conservation of wildlife and protected area development. The NNF provides financial services to Namibian environmental NGOs and directly supports conservancies in the southern Kunene and Kavango Regions.

[www.nnf.org.na](http://www.nnf.org.na)

SRT (Save the Rhino Trust) monitors rhino movements in communal areas of Namibia and together with the MET keeps a comprehensive data-base of rhinos. SRT trains rhino trackers who offer tracking as a tourist activity in joint venture lodges, and trains game guards in tracking.

[www.savetherhinotrust.org](http://www.savetherhinotrust.org)

NDT (Namibia Development Trust) was founded in 1987 to channel aid from the EU to "victims of apartheid". It has since played an active role in community development, including governance of communal conservancies, and economic empowerment in the southern and north central areas of Namibia.

[www.ndt.org.na](http://www.ndt.org.na)

LAC (Legal Assistance Centre) was a campaigning organization against the South African occupation and its repressive laws. As part of NACSO it provides research on communal land issues and advice on conservancy constitutions, conflict mitigation, and contracts.

[www.lac.org.na](http://www.lac.org.na)

UNAM (University of Namibia Multi-Disciplinary Research Centre) provides research capability and support to the NACSO network.

<http://www.unam.na/centres/mrc>

CDSS (Conservancy Development Support Services) is a short term programme funded from the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia to provide infrastructural and training support to communal conservancies with a focus on future sustainability. CDSS operates within a consortium of Namibian NGOs headed by WWF in Namibia.

WWF in Namibia is a programme office of WWF US. It offers technical support to NACSO members and the MET in the three pillars of CBNRM: Natural Resource Management, Governance and Business and Enterprise Development. WWF in Namibia also leverages donor support for the CBNRM programme and facilitates international learning exchanges.

[www.wwf.org](http://www.wwf.org)

For a first-person story on the history of Namibian conservation by WWF in Namibia Director Chris Weaver, go to:

<http://worldwildlife.org/stories/namibian-communities-take-the-lead-on-conservation>

For a photo gallery reflecting Namibian conservation and CBNRM go to:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2n1wmj109fcrnyp/5Dj11BERn>

For stories on Namibian conservation go to:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wo16c9l2dn2zdyi/QDvtAbXRYC>

## For delegates, writers and journalists attending the Adventure Travel World summit

- Oct. 26: President Pohamba opens the Summit in Windhoek and is awarded the WWF Gift to the Earth on behalf of the nation and the conservancy movement
- Oct. 28 to 31: Adventure Trade Travel Association delegates meet in Swakopmund



Fast air travel and private charters link cities to the remotest air strips

Modern banking facilities including a wide network of ATMs in most towns

Wide cell phone coverage—many lodges also have wi-fi

Medical facilities including modern hospitals in all major towns, and med-rescue services

<http://namibian.org>

has information on Namibian travel and facilities

### How the summit came to Namibia

On Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> October, Windhoek will host the opening of the Adventure Travel World Summit – the first time the summit has come to Africa – putting Namibia firmly on the top of the world's travel agenda. Around 650 delegates from the adventure travel industry including 65 well known travel writers from around the world will arrive in Windhoek for the opening, and then depart for Swakopmund for the Summit itself, which takes place from the 28-31 October, beginning with an evening meal in the enchanting moon landscape.

Namibia's engagement with the Adventure Travel Tourism Association (ATTA) began in Aviemore, Scotland in 2010 with a talk to the Adventure Travel Summit by John Kasaona; how he had grown up as a goat-herder in Kunene in the days when wildlife was scarce due to drought and poaching, and how things have changed. John is now co-director of IRDNC – Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation – tasked with overseeing more than forty Namibian conservancies where wildlife has recovered and tourism is becoming a major industry.

A year later, in 2011, the then Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa took a high-powered team to Chiapas, Mexico, to lobby for Namibia to host the Summit in 2013. The delegation included Chief Mayuni from Caprivi – now Zambezi Region. He explained how wildlife numbers have grown in his conservancy, thanks to translocations of valuable species from parks into the Caprivi conservancies by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), and thanks also to the anti-poaching efforts of communal conservancy game guards.

At the Adventure Travel World Summit in October, 2012 in Switzerland, the groundwork had been done for Namibia to host the Summit in 2013. At the Summit, a choir from Doro Nawas Lodge, a joint venture between Wilderness Safaris and Doro !nawas Conservancy, sang in Damara-Nama. In the same way that the Olympic flame is passed on, a ticking clock was handed to the Namibian delegation to remind them that they had a year to prepare.

For more information on the Adventure Travel Trade association visit:

<http://www.adventuretravel.biz>

For more information on the Namibia Tourist Board and Team Destination Namibia visit:

<http://www.namibiatourism.com.na>