

**Conservancy an Arena of Power Struggle:  
A Case Study of Uukwaluudhi Conservancy in  
Namibia**



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## Table of contents

Acknowledgements .....	V
Acronyms .....	VI
Geographical location of the study area.....	VIII
Abstract.....	IX
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Environmentality approach to unpacking environmental policies .....	4
2.1 Putting local people in control .....	4
2.2 Policy, community and natural resources .....	10
2.3 Conceptual definition of community .....	11
2.4 Operational definition of community .....	12
2.5 CBNRM as an arena.....	12
2.6 Conservancies in Namibia: problem statement.....	14
2.6.1 General research question .....	14
2.6.2 Sub-research questions .....	14
2.6.3 Research objectives.....	15
2.7 Methodological considerations .....	15
Chapter 3: CBNRM in Namibia .....	18
3.1 Early attempt .....	18
3.2 Policy shift in post independent Namibia .....	20
3.3 How conservancies are formed.....	23
3.4 The approach .....	23
3.5 Type of rights to wildlife.....	26

Chapter 4: The Uukwaluudhi conservancy .....	28
4.1. Socio-political context.....	30
4.2. Socio-economic context .....	30
4.3. Livelihoods.....	31
4.4. Inception and operations .....	33
4.4.1 Wildlife re-introduction.....	35
4.4.2 Activities .....	35
4.4.3 How membership is defined .....	36
4.4.4. How benefits are managed, decided on and distributed .....	37
4.5 Community network .....	40
4.6 Relationship community members vs committee .....	41
Chapter 5: Conservancy committee .....	43
5.1 Composition.....	43
5.2 Decision making.....	44
5.3 Relationship committee vs government .....	45
5.4 Relationship committee vs NGOs.....	47
5.5 Relationship committee vs traditional authority.....	48
5.6 Relationship committee vs private sector.....	48
Chapter 6: The social dynamics at Uukwaluudhi conservancy .....	50
6.1 Part One: Implementers views .....	50
6.1.1 Government officials.....	50
6.1.2 NGO officials.....	51
6.1.3 Conservancy staff members.....	53
6.1.4 Committee members .....	53
6.2 Part Two: Members views .....	54

6.2.1 Close members..... 55

6.2.2 Distant members..... 58

6.2.3 Cattle posts owners ..... 59

Chapter 7: Community dynamics, power and distribution of  
benefits..... 61

7.1 Conclusion..... 63

7.2 Recommendations..... 64

References ..... 66

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**Acronyms**

ADMADE	Administrative Management Design Programme for Game Management Areas
AGM	Annual General Meeting
BGPH	Big Game Professional Hunter
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for indigenous Resources
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGG	Community Game Guard
CMC	Conservancy Management Committee
DBAD	Department of Bantu Administration and Development
DEA	Directorate of Environmental Affairs
ENP	Etosha National Park
EU	European Union
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HG	Hunting Guide
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRNDC	Integrated Rural Development & Nature Conservation
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LIFE	Living In a Finite Environment
MAWARD	Ministry of Agriculture Water and Rural Development
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account

MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
N\$	Namibia Dollar
NACOBTA	Namibian Association for Community Based Tourism
NACSO	Namibia Association for CBNRM Support Organization
NCCED	North-Central CBNRM and Enterprise Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRMP	Natural Resource Management Programme
OMRCLB	Omusati Regional Communal Land Board
PH	Professional Hunter
RF	Rössing Foundation
SADF	South African Defense Force
SARP	Southern Africa Regional Programme
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SWAA	South West African Administration
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TA	Traditional Authority
TAC	Traditional Authority Council
UC	Uukwaluudhi Conservancy
USAID	United States Agency for Development
UTA	Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority
WB	World Bank
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

[illegible]

VIII

## **Abstract**

Namibia developed a new Policy on Wildlife Management, Utilization and Tourism in Communal Areas and The Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996. The intent of the policy is to enable rural communities to gain the same rights of use and benefit from wildlife as commercial farmers and to gain rights over tourism concessions by forming a management institution called conservancy under a CBNRM programme. Namibia's CBNRM programme is widely regarded as one of Africa's most successful new conservation initiatives. It allows residents of communal lands-basically poor, black people who were previously denied access to benefit from wildlife by the apartheid system to share in the proceeds generated by wildlife utilization on their lands. This paper examines the extent to which the conservancy has devolved ownership to communities in the Uukwaluudhi conservancy. A key process that is addressed here and which emanates from the work of Agrawal (2005) is environmentality which examines whether and how governments conservancy policies manage disciplining people by promoting and creating environmental subjects.. Secondly the paper seeks to establish the extent to which the benefits generated have made wildlife a part of local people economy and not just benefiting the elites. This thesis then also addresses the problem of community, in particular what constitutes community in present day Namibia in the context of conservancies.

Key Words: Namibia, Wildlife Management, Communal Areas, Communities, Uukwaluudhi, Benefits, Conservancy, Ownership, Environmental Subjects.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is about natural resource management and rural development in Namibia in particular. Natural resource management is increasingly being seen as providing solutions to alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods. The Namibian natural resource management has much focus on wildlife. NACSO (2008) believes that starting the conservation programme with wildlife did not mean that other natural resources such as plant and fish are not important. But it is because wildlife drastically declined during the 1980s and it was the most resource that local people were deprived from use during the colonial era. Governments in less developed countries reckoned with the fact that, it is impossible to enable everybody gain entry into the formal economy and follow lifestyles not dependent on land or natural-resource based economies. Such opportunities are seen lying in Community-Based Natural Resource Management (hereafter CBNRM). This implies that the move to local control is crucial as Hulme and Mupfree (1999) argued: the new conservation should move from being a state-centric activity to being more based in society, and particularly in society at the local level.

Local level is usually conceptualized as the community and this has fostered ideas about community-based conservation and community conservation. As such, local people must not be seen as simply degraders of the environment but indeed the indigenous technical knowledge indicates they possess sophisticated understandings of the environmental processes (Ibid). Historians and ecologists emphasize that environments have histories from which humans cannot be excluded (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). CBNRM derives from this perception and premise that only if resource users have rights of access and the authority to determine how resources are used in the long term is there potential to nurture them in a sustainable manner. For this reason local people must be empowered by restoring their control over access and capacity and organizational structures to manage the resources in which the cornerstone is the present meets their needs without limiting the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.

Evidence indicates that community empowerment can enhance community management of a range of “common property” natural resources, improve cash incomes, create local jobs and reduce vulnerability to draught and other natural

disasters. The shift to CBNRM approaches in the 1980s and 1990s has prompted policy reforms and governments to evince their political will and commitment to the creation of policies and legislative framework that promotes community based management of natural resources. These legislations must encourage the devolution of power and authority to rural poor to develop alternative means of generating benefits from the natural resource base they live in. Most governments in the developing countries have adopted CBNRM as a national rural development strategy by entrenching it in their Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans. Namibia is no exception in this regard. Earlier recommended structural economic reforms and policies such as the market liberalization and export oriented trade by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have not yielded sufficient growth in many poor countries. This has resulted in very little progress against poverty (Reeds, 2004).

Therefore, the Bank and the IMF have encouraged poor nations to draw up their plans for poverty reduction through a process of national consultations. Being-self generated, it is hoped these strategies will better engage poor nations' poverty effort and provide a guide for development aid from the World Bank and wealthy nations (IMF, 2004).

### **The Structure of the research paper**

**Chapter 2** elaborates the theoretical framework used to conceptualize and analyze development interventions in community-based natural resource management (wildlife in this case) in Namibia. It also explains the underlying methodology of the research and the research questions as well as the research objectives.

**Chapter 3** provides background information to situate the research in the socio-economic and political history of Namibia. It explains the historical backgrounds on wildlife conservation, policy shifts and assumptions and their assumptions.

**Chapter 4** will give an insight into the study area, its location, land, people, climate and how they make a living to sustain their everyday life. It as well gives an overview on the community networks indicating how the community is structured and how it operates and its views with regard to conservation.

**Chapter 5** will focus on the composition of the conservancy committee, the issues of power and decision-making will be discussed and also look into how the committee relates to its members.

**Chapter 6** focuses on the social dynamics and iron out the perspectives of the different social actors and their interfaces in the conservation programme.

**Chapter 7** will focus on the analysis and discussions of the research results by using data gathered from the field and information explored from publications and other sources. This will be followed by discussions on conclusions and recommendations based on data analysis.

## **Chapter 2: Environmental approach to unpacking environmental policies**

*“If humans have shaped and used their environments in a sustainable manner for thousands of years, it may be possible to establish partnerships that accomplish the same results today” (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999).*

I adopted the notion ‘environmentality’ developed by Agrawal (2005) as the guiding concept for my analysis of the dynamics of natural resource management in Namibia. Environmentalism is an approach to understanding and studying environmental politics that takes into account issues of power and knowledge, institutions and subjectivities (Agrawal, 2005). I have employed this concept to track and understand how the shift of power from central government directly to communities have created a new centre of power within the community that takes decisions about the management of natural resources in a conservancy<sup>1</sup>. Environmentalism helps me to study and grasp the shift in the relationship between the state and social actors and the social and institutional space they create which allows them to operate, manage, benefit from and view the natural resource. My guiding hypothesis of this thesis is twofold. The first is that with any transfer of authority the danger of elite formation exists. Agrawal (2005) but also Platteau (2004) and Platteau and Gasper (2003) point at such phenomena that also takes place in the conservancy I studied in detail. Secondly, the notion of community turned out to be problematic as factions’ starts to emerge amidst the community studied. These will be elucidated later in the next chapters.

### **2.1 Putting local people in control**

The shift to put local people in charge of their natural resources is now well advanced and well accepted by governments and environmental non-governmental organizations (Jones and Mosimane, 2000 cited in Shackelton and Campbell, 2000:80; Hulme and Mupfhee, 1999 and a range of others). The CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe has for long been the champion and role model of CBNRM (Brosius *et al.*, 1998). Yet, studies by some scholars have proven it to be

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<sup>1</sup> A conservancy in Namibia is a local social structure that allows a group of people who share resources to plan and jointly implement their decisions. They are multiple-use zones, where residents continue farming but collectively manage wildlife in order to benefit from cash and non-cash benefits.

pragmatically difficult in reconciling the different interests, needs and aspirations of the different social-actors involved. For example, a study by Alexander and McGregor (2000) at Nkayi, Lupane and Gwampa district, revealed how CAMPFIRE kept on relocating people from their land to pave way for wildlife conservation without considering their livelihoods. In addition corruption and self-interests of councilors who are to represent their constituencies weakened the relationship between environmental subjectivities and their environment. Murombedzi (1999) pointed out that the ambiguous devolution of control to local districts authority failed the CAMPFIRE programme. This is simply because the decision-making authority over natural resources was not given in the hands of local people themselves. As a result local people had no say on the use and management of wildlife, which formed part of their land use pattern, leaving them with no choice but to continue to be antagonistic towards the resource.

While Balint and Mashinya (2008) found out that CAMPFIRE proceeds distributed to the wards by the district council in Nyaminyami landed only in the hands of local political elite. I see no analogy between what has happened at CAMPFIRE and the prevailing situation at Uukwaluudhi conservancy. The communities at Uukwaluudhi conservancy (UC) are left in the dark with regard to conservancy operations and proceeds. The chairperson has suspended all monthly and even quarterly planning meetings. He started to work in isolation and takes all major decisions alone without the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as provided for by the constitution. All financial proceeds from the conservancy are handled by the chairperson and he only makes unilateral announcements on the use during the AGM. He negotiates alone with trophy hunters and lodge operators and approves hunting of wildlife not in quotas and for the purposes only known to him. The chairperson also works in close relationship with the King of Uukwaluudhi and the Constituency Councilor and carries out any action on their demands. For example an oryx which was not part of a quota in 2007 was culled on the demands of the Councilor. 5% of the financial proceeds as well as meat from the Traditional Authority (TA) quota lands into the King's palace only as opposed to the Traditional Authority Council's (TAC) offices.

The approaches to community-based use and management of natural resources have been receiving considerable legislations, development and research attention in most developing countries. Greater emphasis has been placed

much more on issues of equity and benefit sharing. Contemporary and emerging policies with regard to natural resources conservation therefore, strongly articulate the need for involving communities within – and this is typical for the history of Southern Africa – so-called communal areas as well as on state owned land. Agrawal (2005) argues that the mechanism through which national and state institutions seek to effect this transformation is the decentralization of environmental regulations to the locality often through “community-based conservation.” Agrawal (pp. 6-7) outlines that the success of decentralized efforts to govern the environment depends on the simultaneous implementation of three strategies:

1. the creation of governmentalized localities that can undertake regulation in specific domains;
2. the opening of territorial and administrative spaces in which new regulatory communities can function and
3. the production of environmental subjects whose thoughts and actions bear some reference to the environment.

Environmentality being one of the approaches in governing the use of natural resources and their meaning in the daily lives of people in most if not all developing nations is a union of environment and Foucauldian governmentality (Agrawal, 2005). Governmentality as defined by Foucault (cited in Li, 2007:5) is about the ongoing efforts and means of government to govern populations, not by coercion, but by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs. It arranges things in such a way that people following only their self-interests will act and behave as they are expected to do. Three interconnected concepts and processes: knowledge, power and the subject are distinguished by Foucault as playing an essential role in the relationship between social structures and institutions and the individual. Central to these relationships is the way power operates within the everyday relations between people and institutions, for there to be a relation where power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists (Mills, 2003).

For a long time power has been looked at through a lens of a possession of groups of people or institutions to oppress or constraint others. The image has been of the powerless suffering with the powerful and closing down certain forms of behavior (Foucault, 1978, cited in Mills, 2003: 34-35). There is a shift on the way power is seen, Foucault (1980, cited in Mills (2003:35:47) argued that

power is relational and permeates all relations and interactions within society. He says power is not a property nor is it merely repressive and constraining, but is something that people performs, resist and can be productive and gives rise to new forms of behavior. It is therefore important to note that individuals should not be seen simply as the recipients of power, but as the place where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted. The state must not simply be seen as monolithic of political power as governmentality takes place within a variety of institutional context such as family, work place, and CBNRM projects. The symptoms of power relations became evident at Uukwaluudhi conservancy during community meetings since its inception. Informants narrated that, the current chairperson has always been disrupting meetings before he became chairperson. His presence at meetings became intimidating and he has been looking down on other people by not respecting their views and know-how. He always became too vocal and only wants his ideas to be followed. As one puts it *"every time that man attends a meeting, it always ends in disastrous"*. This implies that the chairperson uses his managerial position at the regional central bank to dominate others. Another person said *"he is a kind of leader who thinks he is too special to mix with ordinary mortals"*. In addition, the presence of the King and Councilor at AGMs also makes it difficult for members to air their views and concerns, plus the meetings are so designed that members are not given a chance to speak even if they wanted to.

Thus Agrawal (2005) proposes the use of subjectivities to allow us to, see overtime the dynamic transformation and the reproduction of peoples' selves through their actual involvement and practices in natural resource regulations. The changing position of individual in relations with resource management will impact the way the individual thinks regarding their surroundings and him/herself regarding such context. Given such a scenario, the way environment policies and government institutions are structured is crucial as it can be considered as technology of power in turning each actor to be an environmental subject.

Agrawal (2005) referred to policies aiming at greater decentralization and participation as new technologies of government and emphasized that to be successful, they must redefine political relations, reconfigure institutional arrangements and transform subjectivities. New environmental subjects' positions emerge as a result of involvement in struggles over resources and in

relation to new institutions and changing calculations of self-interest and notions of the self (ibid). In the study area (Uukwaluudhi Conservancy), the community is not organized in a homogenous way. What I will show is that this community being the new environmental subject which is the outcome of the formation of a new center of environmental decision-making 'the conservancy' at the community level, is a collection of networks struggling for the control of natural resources. The transfer of decision-making authority from the central government to the lowest level of community aims to create new environmental subjects by regulating the actions of their members-their fellow residents. This type of decentralization is to redefine relationships between central government and communities, redefine the relationship between the conservancy and its members and finally redefine the relationship between people and their environment. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 will explain in details how these relationships have unfolded.

Most of the primary natural resource management attempt by state machineries had a conservation focus that denied rights to communities living in areas with abundant natural resources to benefit from them. These fortress type of conservation has been resisted by local people in many countries where they have been practiced. It is precisely, because of the deficiency of centralized, exclusionary policies ("Communities should protect wildlife, stop cutting trees, stop overgrazing, leave protected area etc".) that much talk have now begun about community-based management. But despite its recent popularity, the concept of community is rarely defined or examined by those advocating community-based conservation interventions (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999). Leach *et al.* (1999) have also argued that the image of consensual communities so frequently presented in the literatures of CBNRM is a poor reflection of empirical reality and hence a misleading guide to practical intervention strategies.

Early development interventions as well as community-based conservations have viewed communities as small spatial units, as a homogenous social structure and isolated group with shared norms which if left to their own devices would manage resources sustainably and equitably (Agrawal, 1997; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Brosius *et al.*, 1998; Li, 1996; Watts, 2000). At community level social statuses exists and communities are not stagnant entities and unchanged. Immense constant changes has been noticed over time

as a result of internal and external relationships that kept people moving around altering and altered by new learning and exposures. The issues of trade, urbanization, in-migration, droughts and opportunity, relationships to the state and markets has contributed to the much changes attributed at local community level. Carlsson (2000, cited in Berkes (2003:623) believes it is more useful to think of communities as multidimensional, cross-scale, social-political units or networks changing through time.

Social science research has highlighted significant economic, cultural, gender and other differences within local communities that shape the not-necessarily equitable access to resources and other benefits (Gollin and Kho, 2002). There are divisions in all societies and cultures and relevant among others are male and female, those favoring a given course of change and those who do not, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, different ethnicities, the politically powerful or connected and those who are not, old and young, the multi lingual and those who only speaks their language, religious converts and non-converts, those with access to resources and those who have less or no such access, families, clans, lineages, the aggressive and the non-aggressive, old time residents and newcomers (Gatmaitan, 2000). For this reason Agrawal and Gibson (1999) call for the recognition of the divergent priorities, needs, attitudes and interests of these multiple actors within communities, the interactions or politics through which these interests emerge and different actors interact with each other, and the institutions that influence the outcomes of political processes.

Berkes (2003) as well as Agrawal and Gibson (1999) suggests that it is more likely to be productive and fruitful to focus not on the notion of “community” but on institutions as they offer the tools for understanding local-level processes and outcomes better. It also offers more concrete points of intervention and design than a general reliance on community. Since local institutions guide the daily consumption of natural resources, it is appropriate to keep them at the center of analysis concerning their use (Gibson *et al.*, 2000). Institutions are humanly devised constraints that structure (but do not determine) human interaction, made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behavior, conventions, and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics (Berkes, 2003). Institutions at local level are important as they can encourage people to take a longer-term view by creating common expectations and a basis of cooperation that goes

beyond the individual interest. However, we must be cognitive that not all local institutions are benign to produce practices in favor of the community. Some may use them to exploit local resources to their short-run advantage and others' loss (Uphoff, 1992). This is demonstrated by Uukwaluudhi conservancy committee members by not including their members in decision-making and in using revenues derived from wildlife in activities that are not in the interest and priorities of their members or residents.

## **2.2 Policy, community and natural resources**

As pointed out earlier in this document CBNRM came to the fore as an attempt to find solutions for the failure of top-down approaches to conservation. CBNRM rests on the recognition that local people must have direct control over the utilization and benefits of natural resources (wildlife, veld-products etc) in order to value them in a sustainable manner. CBNRM is both a conservation and rural development strategy engaging community mobilization and organization, institutional development, comprehensive training, enterprise development and monitoring of the natural base. New policies of decentralization, devolution and collaborative management increase the decision-making power and influence of local communities, households and individuals. Such policies encourage communities to become more involved in decisions affecting their own livelihoods and the resources on which those livelihoods are based. Although such policies are helpful for sustainable livelihoods, the successful introduction of greater power sharing among different groups is often challenging.

The formulation of policies today still follows the linear model, whereby a problem is identified by expert policy makers, information is gathered about the problem by expert researchers and a decision is taken about the solution for implementers who are usually bureaucrats and technocrats (McGee, 2004). In the case of the conservancy in Namibia for example, the formulation of policy and legislation was done following participatory community level surveys. However, the process was driven by a policy and planning directorate in the MET, the Directorate of Environmental Affairs (DEA) at their headquarters in Windhoek. The DEA have no field staff at regional level. Within the MET, the Directorate of Resource Management (DRM) is responsible for implementation and other actors are the NGOs and communities themselves (Corbett and Jones, 2000). As a result the MET produced a "Tool Box for Communal Area

Conservancies” to serve as a guide in ensuring that the different actors will share the same understanding and intentions of policy and legislations as policy-makers and central planners (ibid).

The top-down policy intervention has been criticized by Escobar (1995) who forges for alternative development interventions that are rooted in grassroots social movements. According to Escobar the motivation for the creation of ‘abnormalities’ such as ‘the poor’, ‘the underdeveloped’, ‘the malnourished’, ‘the illiterate’, ‘the land less’ and so on is to construct the third world as an appropriate target for interventions by Western development institutions (Escobar 1995 cited in Robins, 2003: 4-5). But development packages argue Robins (2003) are resisted, embraced, reshaped, and accommodated depending on the specific content and context. Communities are not just passive listeners and take anything presented to them, thus policies are redesigned by groups of social-actors including the elites to suit their needs and interest. Long (1985a) cited in Arce and Long (1992: 212) indicated that when a new idea is introduced into an existing system, it acquires new meanings and uses, often other than those intended by the planners or implementers. Social actors in their life-worlds filter and process information reaching them to suit their daily operations.

### **2.3 Conceptual definition of community**

The focus on ‘community’ started getting prominence primarily during the 1980s with the emergence of ‘participatory’ methods (Chambers, 1983 cited in Kumar, 2005:3). The popularity of ‘community participation’ is evident from the proliferation of community projects in the 1980s onwards. Government agencies, NGOs and even academicians now pervasively use the halo ‘community’ with impunity to legitimize project proposals (Kumar, 2005).

Community is an elusive concept and often a figment of imagination of planners and donors seeking for quick fixes (Fabricius *et al.*, 2001b cited in Fabricius and Koch, 2004:79). Bartle (undated) puts it in a sociological perspective and says community is not just a “construct” (model), it is a “sociological construct”. It is a set of interactions, human behaviors that have meaning and expectations between its members. Not just actions, but actions based on shared expectations, values, beliefs and meanings between individuals. Communities can be functionally identified in several ways

through the type of organizations representing them; ethnic or clan affiliations, geography, common interest, utilizing the same resource, or practicing the same type of land use (Barrow and Murphree, 1998 cited in Fabricius and Koch, 2004:31).

Often CBNRM-type policies premised on a homogenous notion of 'community' but working with communities requires flexible definitions and adaptability, as such entities constantly define and redefine themselves (Fabricius *et al.*, 2001 cited in Fabricius and Koch, 2004:31). Koch (2004) questioned whether the notion of community has indeed been romanticized. A common belief among donors and project managers is that it saves time to group people together because of simplicity of working with fewer groups. But practical findings suggests that if groupings within a community and the differences between groups are not well understood and taken into account, then conflicts emerge that are difficult to heal (Fabricius *et al.*, 2001b cited in Fabricius and Koch, 2004:79).

## **2.4 Operational definition of community**

The Namibian CBNRM legislation does not define "community" and leaves it entirely to the local people to define themselves, creating opportunities for manipulation and power relation abuse by a few elites for their personal interests and gain. My field experience would force me to understand a community as a locally specific configuration of various networks differentiated by power. Within the conservancy area there exist groups of people who have some leadership roles within the community such as civil servants, politicians, traditional leaders and other influential individuals. These people are often trusted by the ordinary members of community with the responsibility to take control and lead them given their educational and exposure background. Albeit the complexity of defining community, I will stick to the heterogeneous concept to further my arguments.

## **2.5 CBNRM as an arena**

Norman Long (2001) referred to arena as spaces in which contest over issues, claims, resources, values, meanings and interpretations take place. That is they are sites of struggle within and across domains. The fact that CBNRM seems to be plausible way to cut out public costs of managing resources it remains an arena of power struggle between the different social actors. Many poor people

depend on common property resources for their livelihood. These are resources that are shared and jointly managed by several groups. Highly stratified and differentiated communities with multiple interests pose a particular challenge in that varying incentive and disincentives for participating in CBNRM are created (Campbell and Shackleton, undated).

Locally based dominant actors tend to hijack community-based processes and forcefully occupying the political space created by decentralization (Agrawal *et al.*, 1999). In Uukwaluudhi Conservancy, some members of the committee have started to live their own lives, forming very close alliances with local politicians, and members of the traditional authority. They are also forming networks with others such as the army officials and safari operators. As a result the committee now stays aloof and losing touch with their members, whom they are to represent. This is as a result of a new found cash economy that did not exist prior to conservancy formation and joint venture ecotourism. The management of the UC is no longer in compliance with their constitution. Other committee members' stays mute and afraid to confront the chairperson of his wrong doing, due to his close ties to the King and the Councilor. This might be attributed to the fact that the King has appointed him to the seat and the Councilor chairs Annual General Meetings.

In Namibia a conservancy is an institution and is the highest authority at the local level below the region. In this case the conservancy committee is responsible for ensuring community involvement in conservation management, negotiating with NGOs, safari hunting firms and other external actors, receiving and disbursing revenues, prioritizing community development initiatives and promoting local co-operation with efforts to protect habitat and limit poaching. To this day there is very little evidence in the UC that indicate the involvement of local residents in the management of natural resources, but this does not necessarily mean they (communities) are not willing to partake. Instead of making and increasing environmental subjects, what is visible in Uukwaluudhi is the decreasing of interests of members in conserving wildlife due to malpractices employed in the management of the conservancy by the conservancy committee with specific reference to the chairperson. In this sense the devolution of authority in wildlife conservation at Uukwaluudhi cannot ever be taken as an accomplished fact but only as process in making (Kajembe and Kessy, 1999 cited in Kayembe and Monela, 2000:381).

## **2.6 Conservancies in Namibia: problem statement**

In general terms, Namibia's independence in 1990 did not only free citizens from the joke of apartheid but has also created more room and opportunities for the advancement of the well to do off people and groups through the implementation of a free market economy. The conservancy as an arena constituted by community people which is a locally specific configuration of networks differentiated by power has indeed created room for maneuver for the powerful ones to manipulate and abuse the devolution of authority. To perform environmentality, the legal ownership of rights over wildlife has been vested in the hands of the conservancy management committee (CMU) and not directly in the conservancy membership. Most members of the CMU are the local elite. In the rural communal area, teachers, health care workers, government employees, and successful business people form a local elite, though they are still closely integrated into their communities through kinship ties and obligations. Symbols of social stratification are distinguished by expensive cars, large homes in exclusive neighborhoods, a command of English, attendance of private schools, large numbers of stock and extensive travel. It is therefore, against this background that community members continue to be inactive with regard to conservancy activities and decision-making, which contributes to problems of improper distribution of benefits and genuine local governance.

### **2.6.1 General research question**

How is the conservancy as a new environmental subject constituted?

### **2.6.2 Sub-research questions**

1. What constitutes this community?
2. How is the conservancy committee constituted?
3. What is the relationship between the state and community?
4. What is the relationship between the committee and community?
5. What is the relationship between the community and their environment?
6. What are the network characteristics of this community?
7. Who are the actors involved in this conservancy?
8. What are the roles and responsibilities of the different actors?
9. How are the members of this conservancy defined and identified?
10. How does the conservancy contribute to the livelihood of this community?

### **2.6.3 Research objectives**

The objective of this research is to explore the social relationships within the Uukwaluudhi Community Conservancy by analyzing how social processes within these relationships contribute towards the livelihoods of communities within this communal conservancy.

### **2.7 Methodological considerations**

This research was carried out following an ethnographic approach for a period of 5 months of which 3 months were spend doing an internship with the Rössing Foundation (RF) a local NGO and the other 2 months at Uukwaluudhi Conservancy (UC). This method of research attempt to study the social life as it unfolds in practices of day-to-day life. Further it will allow a researcher to interact with informants and elicit responses through discussions and observations rather than to receive answers to set questions. Through all this one will get an insight to clarify what is happening around this development intervention (van Donge, 2006). An ethnographic study helps in understanding society from the inside and through language it tries to understand the life-worlds of people and their interpretations of the world that structures social practices (Berger and Luckman, 1996 cited in van Donge, 2006:7).

Uukwaluudhi Conservancy is regarded as one of the fast-track conservancy. This means the conservancy has potential to be financially self reliant within five years of operation, as a result of wildlife conservation. Because of its significant game population increase, this specific conservancy is expected to assist residents of other north central conservancies to understand the value of wildlife and tourism. Given this background, I felt it worth researching the interactions of social actors from the inside to understand how the new environmental subjectivities act, relate to each other and to their environment.

To be able to collect data at UC, I had to contact the headquarters of Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in Windhoek. MET is a line ministry responsible for CBNRM programmes in the country. At the ministry in Windhoek I was directly referred to the people in the field, both to the MET offices in the north-central and the conservancy committee members. As part of the customs and tradition in the study area, I first had to meet His Majesty the King of Uukwaludhi to obtain his blessings to work in his area of jurisdiction, a

process that took me 3 hours to get to the King as he is a busy man. During our meeting the King proposed to me to return to his palace after two days to introduce me to the traditional authority of the area as well as some members of the UC committee, who will have a meeting at the palace on that proposed day. I was given a go ahead to carry out my research in Uukwaluudhi. Most of my time was spend in the field at the conservancy observing and experiencing activities such as trophy hunting and the distribution of meat as well as discussing with various members of the community with no leadership roles, conservancy committee and staff members.

Data was collected mainly through informal interviews and conversations and observations. A total of 4 villages were visited of which 2 villages are situated some 30-60km away from the conservancy core-area to represent distant residents. Another 2 villages are 0-20km away to represent residents within the reach of the conservancy core-area and office premises, to represent close residents. In each of the villages 5 homesteads were visited and 2 adults were talked to, bringing the total number to 40 informal interviews with ordinarily people who are all eligible members of this conservancy. Other interviews were carried out with government officials and some cattle owners at cattle posts who are resource users and at the same time members. I also managed to talk to some cattle posts owners who are not from the area and are not regarded as members. The selection of these informants was guided by the situation I found on the ground (such as membership definition and resource users). Other information was gathered from MET policies and reports as well as from the conservancy documents such as agreements and constitution. I have also used the existing data from various CBNRM literatures in developing countries to have a general understanding of CBNRM projects. Because of my stay and the interactions with different people at this conservancy, purposive and snow ball sampling was used to reach to the different informants.

The Rössing Foundation (RF) where the internship was done is an NGO responsible for the facilitation of CBNRM program in the north-central regions. This is as part of an organizational arrangement of regionally-based facilitating NGOs for CBNRM agreed by all members of the umbrella body Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organization (NACSO) in support of conservancy. During my time with RF, I was able to get an insight on how issues of policies with regard to the use and management of natural resources and related development interventions are dealt with in terms of formulation

and implementation and respondent to by those who are to benefit from them. I was able to engage in discussions with the staff members of this organization, especially those dealing with different projects of natural resources and tourism activities. Some documents such as policies and reports were also availed to me for review. I was also privileged to get in contact with communities the RF is engaged with through field visits to 4 project sites both in conservation and small business enterprises. During these visits, I had ample time to discuss with project members to have their stories of how they view development interventions and their relationship with the RF and government officials involved in these interventions. This has been explained in details in my internship report.

At the centre of my analysis is the Social-Network Analysis (SNA). According to Wasserman and Faust, (1994) the unit of analysis in social networks is not the individual but an entity consisting of a collection of individuals and the linkages among them. This study therefore, based on social network analysis as a way to map and measure relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations and information/knowledge processing entities, referred to as social relationships in terms of nodes and ties (nodes being people and groups and ties being links showing relationships between nodes). A network approach to this study would look into interactions among group actors in order to better understand the decision-making process. By looking specifically into how members influence each other in order to make a decision or fail to reach a consensus. This type of analysis helps to discover how actors really communicate and collaborate to get work done, which will lead to the interesting stories of communication, isolation, rivalry and power and helps to illuminate hidden relationship around actors (Cross and Parker, 2004).

### Chapter 3: CBNRM in Namibia

Historically, there was a sharp administrative divide between the protected areas, freehold farmlands and the communal areas of Namibia. This divide was by no means confined to the issue of wildlife protection and management, but importantly related to the provision of services by the colonial government. From the 1920s, until shortly after independence in 1990, the territory of what is now Namibia (then South West Africa) was administered by South West African Administration (SWAA). Protected areas and privately owned farmlands were dealt with by the SWAA in Windhoek. Matters relating to black populations were dealt with from Pretoria (South Africa) through the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (DBAD). This divide in terms of administration had implications for both wildlife management and conservation and for socio-economic development within the communal areas of Namibia.

The legislation associated with wildlife management and the forced resettlement of black populations into so called “homelands” by the apartheid government was the two key factors that contributed to differences in terms of both socio-economic development and wildlife conservation status between communal areas and freehold farmland designated to whites. Thus Namibia today has a dual land tenure system comprising freehold and state-owned land as a result of the apartheid legacy. It is importantly to recall that during the 30 years of colonial rule, the black populations were subject to apartheid policies. Apartheid seriously disadvantaged the black population in terms of their access to markets, to education, to basic political and democratic rights and to legal opportunities to benefit from wildlife in their areas. It is therefore, in the wake of this historical background that CBNRM in Namibia has been examined (Long and Jones, 2003).

#### 3.1 Early attempt

*“Unless game on private farms acquired a commercial value to farmers, they would undoubtedly hunt it to extinction”* (The Frank Commission, 1965 cited in Long and Jones, 2003:27).

In the years 1947 to 1976, the focus of conservation was on managing protected areas, game reserves and dealing with wildlife on commercial farms.

Communal areas remained distanced from wildlife regulatory and law enforcement policies of SWAA until 1975. During this era of apartheid, various administrative and regulatory initiatives were made to deal with the management of wildlife (Aribeb, undated), but with an emphasis to the decision to implement the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1967, which gave commercial farmers ownership rights over certain wildlife species (Long and Jones 2003). The Frank commission based its recommendation on the premise of the competition between wildlife and livestock of basic resources such as water and grazing and the fact that predators pose a threat to stock. This legislation recognized, for the first time, a distinction between huntable-game<sup>2</sup> and bird species, in contrast to protected and specially protected species (Aribeb, undated). The introduced regulations permitted commercial farmers to utilize wildlife in a controlled manner, enabling them to hunt, sell, capture and relocate wildlife according to their needs and economic interests. The effects of this legislative change led to a massive increase of wildlife in freehold farms (Barnes and Jager, 1996).

This trend contrasted sharply with the continuing decline of wildlife numbers in communal areas, particularly desert-dwelling elephants and black rhino. Some contribution factors noted for the acute decline in these precious natural resource are such as the increases and relocations in human and domestic stock populations of these areas, the accompanying loss of habitat, the absence of appropriate legislation promoting local-level management and utilization, heavy poaching, periods of drought and above all the presence of the South African Defense Force (SADF) as the war intensified (Long and Jones, 2003).

As a result of the rapidly deteriorating ecosystems in the communal areas, an anti-poaching programme was developed in mid 1980s, by two Namibian conservationists Garth-Owen Smith and Chris Eyre. This initiative provided an early template for community-based conservation. The two won the hearts of the traditional leaders in the Kunene region (then Kaokoland) , who agreed to establish a network of local people as community game guards (CGG) and work with local NGOs to promote an increased sense of stewardship over wildlife. The involvement of local people in the management of wildlife in the then Kaokoland has demonstrated the viability of community-based approach to natural resource management (Jones, 1998; Long, 2001). These two models

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<sup>2</sup> Huntable-game are such as kudu, oryx, warthdog, buffalo, springbok and bushpig.

formed the bases of government action at independence to extend the same use rights that farmers in the freehold land enjoyed for years to those who lived in communal areas (Long, 2004).

### **3.2 Policy shift in post independent Namibia**

The Government of the Republic of Namibia developed strategies to deal with its national development since independence in 1990. It started with the National Development Plans, the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Namibia (GRN, 2002a), and lately Vision 2030 (GRN 2002b), together with other policy documents and statements such as the Drought Policy Strategy of 1997, the Agricultural Commercial Land Reform Act of 1995, the National Land Policy of 1995, the Communal Land Reform Act of 2000 etc. All of these aim to address social, economic and sustainable development and poverty reduction. CBNRM is recognized in several of these policies as a mechanism to support sustainable rural development. Enhancing livelihood opportunities, building human resource and institutional capacity, and the sustainable utilization and management of resources, are the main focus of the national development objectives and priorities of rural natural resource sectors (NACSO no date; Jones *et al.*, 2003).

Under the Poverty Reduction Action Programme of Namibia (GRN 2002a) the role of CBNRM, tourism and conservancies is explicitly recognized as a means to meet its targets. There is also explicit support for the continuation of conservancies' registration. The Namibian Country Report to the World Food Summit in 2002 (MAWRD 2002b) suggests that CBNRM should be pursued as a means to promote improved food security. In the wildlife sector, CBNRM is recognized as an explicit strategy to deal with the sustainable utilization of wildlife, leading to economic development. In other sectors, for example forestry agriculture, water and tourism, the strategies identified to achieve development objectives echo many of the strategies of CBNRM programme. These include: community involvement; collaboration between the Government, private sector, NGOs and resource users; improving sustainable resource management; and the need to review and implement policy. The national CBNRM programme explicitly shares these objectives (NACSO undated; Jones *et la.*, 2003).

### **Key events in the life of CBNRM and conservancies**

During 1990-92 the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) carried out a series of “socio ecological surveys” with the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) and other NGOs with local experience. These studies determined key issues and problems from the community perspective concerning wildlife and conservation. This also led to the development of several pilot community-based conservation projects, supported by foreign conservation NGOs to address the identified issues and problems. The latter helped the government and Namibian NGO partners to realize that the earlier policy which is the Nature Conservation Ordinance No.4 of 1975 would have to change to allow success. Throughout, the pilot projects led the process of a new policy development. In 1992, the MET prepared the first draft policy giving rights over wildlife and tourism control to communities that form common property resource management institution called a “conservancy”. In 1993 Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Programme brought in major donor support USAID and WWF and CBNRM programme started to evolve as a partnership between NGOs and rural communities in the country (NACSO, 2008).

This enabled a national approach involving a partnership between national and local government, NGOs and local communities to begin drafting legislation to put the policy into effect. The country today has a policy called ‘Wildlife Management, Utilization and Tourism in Communal Areas: Benefits to Communities and Improved Resource Management’, approved by Cabinet in March 1995. In 1996, Parliament passed the new legislation for communal areas. The amendment to the Ordinance No.4 of 1975, which makes provision for communal areas conservancies was gazette on June 17, 1996 and its regulations were gazette on November 18, 1996 (NACSO, 2005).

In 1998, the first communal area conservancies were gazetted and a workshop was held to plan and launch a national CBNRM coordinating body. By the end of LIFE project, the country has 52 registered communal conservancies and another 20 more emerging. The 52 registered conservancies are found in 9 of the 13 regions covering approximately 12,231,800 hectares of land in five different biomes<sup>3</sup> and benefiting a population of approximately 230,160. Of this total, 10

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<sup>3</sup> Biomes: Woodland, Desert, Savanna, Shrub Savanna, Thomveld Savanna

were registered during LIFE I timeframe, an additional 21 during LIFE II and the remaining 21 during LIFE Plus. Therefore it is likely that 1 out of every 7 Namibian will soon be a resident to a communal area conservancy. (LIFE Plus End Year Report, 2008).

During the period from 1999-2008, game translocations were used to support an accelerated recovery of wildlife population in conservancies with high potential habitat, but low densities of game. A total of 6,207 head of wildlife comprising a mix of 12 species were translocated to the different communal conservancies. In this regard LIFE I and II focused in three anchor conservancies to promote the reintroduction recovery of game in various regions of the country. These three conservancies include: a) the Salambala Conservancy of the eastern floodplains of Caprivi; b) the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy for north-central Namibia and c) the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of the Nyae Naye/Kaudom National Park combined complex. In addition, smaller translocations were supported for the strategic regions in newly registered conservancies elsewhere in the country for example; Oskop in the south, Tsiseb in Erongo etc. The LIFE Program worked closely with the MET, private sector and donors (World Bank, New Zealand High Commission, EU etc) to support and sponsor the translocations. The LIFE II phase provided funds to prepare for the translocations (e.g fencing, water development etc.), capture costs and in some instances to pay for game. The MET often donated game and the equipment to move the captured game (i.e initial Nyae Nyae and Uukwaluudhi translocations) while many donations were made by the private sector, if LIFE paid for capture and transport costs involved (LIFE Project End Year Report, 2008).

Wildlife population increases has been noted widely across the communal area conservancies as a result of introductions of a wide range of species, cession in poaching and immigration movements of Zebra from Botswana to Namibia for the first time since the 1970s. Elephant numbers have swollen from approximately 7,500 in 1995 to an estimated 16,000 in 2008. Others such as Springbok, Oryx, Kudu, and Mountain Zebra has increased over 10 times between 1982 and 2000 and are said to have stabilized recently (NACSO, 2008; LIFE Project End Year Report, 2008).

By the closure of LIFE, 15 conservancies, plus the Kyaramacan Association<sup>4</sup> were financially self-reliant, while an additional 4 were self-financing within a month after LIFE support ceased. The average yearly cash income per conservancy is US\$38,343 at current rates of US\$1=N\$8.2860. However, the highest income received was US\$284,197 by Torra Conservancy. Funds received are used to cover conservancy staff costs, equipment operations and maintenance, meeting fees, general operation costs and to support benefit distribution. By the end of year 2007, cumulative CBNRM incomes rose from US\$139,003 in 1998 to US\$4,722,180. The program is estimated to support 946 full time jobs and 6,236 part time jobs countrywide (LIFE End Year Report, 2008).

### 3.3 How conservancies are formed

Establishing a conservancy is on voluntarily basis. The legislation does not define a 'community' but leaves this to communal area residents themselves. It also does not prescribe who should represent a community on the conservancy committee, except that it must at least include one traditional leader (Corbett and Daniels, 1996). MET and/or NGOs provide information to communities about conservancies and a community informs MET if it would like to form a conservancy. MET and community carry out a brief inspection. Community identifies members and selects committee. Conservancy defines its boundaries and it develops a constitution that cover the following: objectives; rules for operation in the conservancy; decision-making; benefits distribution; elections; appointment of committee members; definition of members; ways of enforcing rules (Ostrom,1990), annual report and financial reports as well as commitment to developing a management plan. The Conservancy applies to MET for registration on the prescribed form. Upon MET satisfaction it is then gazetted and becomes operational.

### 3.4 The approach

*"The basic hypothesis within the southern Africa CBNRM program is that "for a community to manage its natural resource base sustainably it must receive direct*

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<sup>4</sup> People living in game reserves (such as Western Caprivi) cannot form a conservancy as the latter by legislation is only allowed on lands that are formally registered as communal. They have to form a Residents Association and a Trust to represent the members so they can be awarded similar rights to those of a conservancy.

*benefits derived from its use and these benefits must exceed the perceived costs of managing the resource” (Steiner and Rihoy, 1995).*

The funding of CBNRM in Southern Africa by USAID began in the early 1980s under the Southern Africa Regional Program (SARP) in Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 1992 authorization was extended to the Namibia CBNRM program ‘LIFE’ as an amendment to the SARP Natural Resources Management Project (NRMP) funding and as a result, the Namibia program is based on lessons learned and experiences of the CBNRM programs in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Zambia’s 1979 Administrative Management Design Program for Game Management Areas (ADMAGE) enlisted local communities to reduce rampant poaching and address problems of elephant management and protection whilst Zimbabwe’s review of its policies started in the early 1980s, and in 1986, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management created the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) Program.

Consistent support for CBNRM in Namibia has been provided by USAID since 1993 through the LIFE project for a period of 15 years (1993-2008). This support seems to have created stability for those in the sector, and allowed CBNRM supporters to enjoy the legitimacy of an international backer and the funding to implement innovative ideas. Apart from just bringing social actors together, LIFE assisted to build the capacity of the parties to represent their constituencies, develop common goals, and implement common plans. For instance, this required the creation of new organizations such as Namibia Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO) and Namibia Community-Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA). In the NACSO instance, there was a need for an umbrella organization based in Windhoek to represent and coordinate the work of support organizations, whereas NACOBTA was required as an umbrella organization for community-based tourism enterprises. Currently NACSO is a recognized NGO coordinating forum for CBNRM in Namibia and has played and continues to play an instrumental role in national level planning and coordination for CBNRM.

However, the formal withdrawal of MET from NACSO in 2002 somewhat disjointed this coordination as the full engagement of government staff is not seen at NACSO meetings. But the MET’s position on the withdrawal is based on government’s understand and stand point that it cannot be part of an NGO

forum. Nonetheless, the MET feels that this should not be seen as a lack of support to NACSO as the MET still attends the forum meetings and utilizes the NACSO secretariat to converse and match up with the broader CBNRM-NGO community. In other cases, the thinking is along educating community conservancies about their rights, providing reasonable returns on partnerships, and helping to instill a sense of empowerment when dealing with the private sector to negotiate a lease for a lodge or a concession for professional hunter. Bringing actors just together would have been insufficient as negotiations were likely to be biased by imperfect information and historical power relationships that did not favor local communities (LIFE Program Review April 2008). LIFE project was implemented in three phases to carry out activities as described below:

*LIFE Project I:* This phase was primarily a pilot CBNRM effort designed to test CBNRM approaches in Namibia. The target areas were mainly Caprivi and eastern Otjozondjupa regions in the north-east areas of the country.

*LIFE Project II:* This phase provided continuing support for earlier conservancy development efforts and built upon the lessons learned during LIFE I. Program support was expanded to Erongo and Kunene regions. During this phase support was also provided for the development of an effective national-level CBNRM program management structure intended to build up Namibian capacity, both governmental and nongovernmental, to fully manage the program as the WWF involvement was scaled down and pulled out.

*LIFE Project III (Plus):* The focus in this phase was on institutional support to the MET to build its capacity to implement CBNRM. It will also continue to build the capacity of NGOs to support the conservancies with emphasis to their institutional capacity to manage their own affairs. In addition to this, the goal is to help them build sound governance systems and procedures that ensure accountability and transparency in decision-making and financial management. Harmonizing and possibly integrating sector policies that promote CBNRM, and coordination between sectors, are essential. LIFE Plus has strong emphasis on small business development by conservancies and individuals and will continue to support conservancies in their management of natural resources, particularly in wildlife monitoring and exploring options for sustainable use. This phase will end during the year 2008 and USAID will discontinue funding

for the Namibia CBNRM program as a result of a shift in strategic realignment of programming within USAID (USAID Namibia LIFE Review Program April, 2008). This move will then pave way for the program to tap and benefit from the US\$ 300million development aid grant from the US government known as the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) compact with the government of Namibia (LIFE End Report, 2008; The Namibian, 2008). The MCA is part of the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact funding community-based tourism, indigenous natural products, and livestock sectors.

### **3.5 Type of rights to wildlife**

Namibia's legislation defines wildlife into three categories mainly; specially-protected species—globally significant game such as elephant and rhino, protected game-less common, but valuable species such as roan antelope, sable, eland, red hartebeest etc. and huntable game-common plains game such as kudu, oryx and warthog etc. and common game birds. The legislation also lay down rules and conditions when and by whom wildlife may be utilized (Weaver and Petersen 2008). When conservancy becomes registered, they then gain clout to sustainably utilize and benefit from the areas wildlife. Ownership is conferred for huntable-game for own use and the right to apply for permits for the use of protected and specially protected game. One of the most important rights that conservancy provides is the right to acquire a wildlife off-take quota from government, of which portions can be tendered to safari companies as trophy animals, sold as live capture or used for local consumptive purpose. However, there are still challenges in respect of consistency with policy interpretation and application. Conservancies in communal areas are required to apply for permits to utilize huntable-game on their lands, yet farmers in freehold lands need not to apply (Skyer and Saruchera, 2004).

Hunting has to be performed under the guidance and supervision of a number of registered Namibian hunting guides, who must be certified by the MET. The entry level is a Hunting Guide (HG) who is an individual that have passed his/her hunting examination and may guide clients his/her farm. Following 2 years of successful hunting operations and 12 hunting safaris, a Hunting Guide may apply for registration a Master Hunter (MH), which will then allow him/her to hunt on a number of properties. After an additional 2 years and a further 12 hunting safaris, a MH can take theoretical and practical examinations

to become a Professional Hunter (PH). The final and highest category is a registered Big Game Professional Hunter (BGPH). This category can only be reached after two years of employment under a registered BGPH and a passing mark of 80% in the hunting guide examination. Additionally, before being permitted to take such examinations, the candidate must also provide proof of experience in dealing with big and dangerous game (Weaver and Petersen, 2008). Namibia has suffered the lack of involvement and ownership by black population in the hunting industry. Therefore, communal conservancies are not in possession of the above-mentioned professionalism like their counterparts in private farms. They have to rely on the private sector to guide hunting on their enterprises. However, the New Era newspaper of April 28, 2009 has announced the existence of the first black Namibian Big Game Professional Hunter, who through perseverance had passed his theoretical and practical examinations to register as a Professional Hunter 10 years ago. He only attended school up to grade 6, but because he grew up hunting with the bow and arrow and later mingling with safari hunters, managed to breakthrough. He is said to have acquired his skills in tracking and knowledge of the veldt over many years. His partners and affiliates of 30 years at Savannah Safari described him as a natural marksman and a better tracker than the San—"he can track a mouse over a tennis court" says the paper.

The meat from animals hunted for trophies remains the property of the conservancy. However, if this meat is transported outside the conservancy by anyone other than the professional hunter the conservancy committee must issue a letter to certify the meat was obtained from the conservancy and is transported and donated to a specific person. Conservancies can also gain tourism rights and can enter into contracts with the private sector tourism operators as a legal entity. Any permit issued contrary to the approved quota or the Nature Conservation Ordinance is invalid and the conservancy should not allow such hunt to proceed until confirmed with the MET.

## **Chapter 4: The Uukwaluudhi conservancy**

### **Location**

Uukwaluudhi is a district located in the north-central of Namibia in what has been referred to in former years as Owamboland –the “homeland” established during the 1960s for the Owambo ethnic group (just like any other black tribes in the country) by the apartheid South African Government. A large percentage of Namibia’s inhabitants live in the Owambo regions of Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto. Owamboland is nowadays referred to informally as the Four O regions. Uukwaluudhi district which is at the same time the conservancy is situated in one of the above-mentioned regions mainly; Omusati region. It is also worth mentioning that Uukwaluudhi’s political boundaries overlap with two regional constituencies Ruacana and Tsandi constituencies.

### **Climate**

The area is generally grass and woodland covered, and dispersed clusters of baobab, palm and wild fig trees are commonplace on it. The mopane woodland dominates the vegetation landscape with an average annual rainfall of 300-400mm. The best time of the year to visit this area is April to August, after the rains. By this time the roads are suitable for driving on, the heat of the summer (September to March) has abated and the wetlands are still host to many water birds, such as cranes, storks, ducks, herons and small waders.

### **People**

One of the unique features of Uukwaluudhi is that the area is not only inhabitant to the owambos, but has multicultural people from different ethnic groups such as Herero, Himba, Dhemba and San peoples scattered around villages within the conservancy. There are a lot of myths around wildlife within these ethnic groups, thus many people carry totem names of animals. The rule of descent in Uukwaluudhi is basically matrilineal. Kinship is determined through the mother, and consequently children are affiliated to the lineage and clan of their mother only. This matrilineal system has been and still is practiced especially in matters related to inheritance and succession. But with new laws coming into play in recent years, the system is slowly shifting towards patrilineal

society. The latter however, is only practiced by those who are aware or have family members and/or associates who can advise them of new indiscriminately laws. Otherwise the matrilineal practices still remains to our shore, until such time those new laws are known by all and adapted. The crafts works of these ethnic groups includes basketry, pottery, jewelery and ornaments, wooden combs and wood and iron spears, arrows, and richly decorated daggers, musical instruments, fertility and Victorian style-dress dolls, skin and leather products, copper-wire neck-bands and bracelets, girdles and aprons etc. Most of these crafts works are very popular curios for visitors.

## **Land**

Uukwaluudhi district is headed by a King who is assisted by several headmen. Land remains a state property and allocation is just for use rights. Land is allocated by the headman at village level and endorsed by the King at Traditional Authority (TA) level before it is for mapping, verification, ratification and registration by the Omusati Regional Communal Land Board (OMRCLB). Two broad categories of land rights in communal land are stipulated in the Communal Land Reform Act (2000) namely; customary land rights and rights of leasehold. Under customary land rights, the rights to residential units and the rights to crop farming units are allocated. The leaseholds cover all rights that can be allocated for commercial purposes. The remaining land is used for common purposes such as grazing by local people. The headman and the land board are only allowed by law to allocate and approve land of 20ha only in the communal area. Any size of more than 20ha can only be approved by the Minister of Lands and Resettlement upon which a thoroughly explanation is given for this excess. However, before the act came into force, the traditional authority has allocated huge tracks of lands that are now fenced off by the elites. This situation is now proving difficulties to undo as the owners are up in arms to keep these huge lands, while ordinarily people in the area are crying for grazing space.

The setup is that each family lives in its own kraal or in the vernacular (eumbo). Inside the kraal round or squared thatched structures are found as well as granaries and a place for the family sacred fire. Outside the kraal are the families' lands (where they cultivate). The Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority (UTA) is also at liberty to allocate grazing rights to people from outside the area. This is evident, due to the area's good grazing condition as many other

people from other areas either moved to live permanently in the study area or have acquired land for cattle posts for cropping and grazing purposes but not necessarily live there. They mostly employ other people to work and take care of the properties. In Namibia, it is clearly evident that excluding community members living outside boundaries from using resources is not possible under CBNRM or people-centered approaches. Plus article 21 (h) of the Namibian constitution makes provision for Namibians to live at any place of their choice.

#### **4.1. Socio-political context**

Before independence, the existence of half a million Namibians on the border with (socialist) Angola seriously perturbed the South African administration. By investing money into the region (with army camps, erecting the fence at the border and making a one kilometer cleared area at the border), the administration hoped to establish a protective buffer against Angola to protect the areas in the interior. The policy backfired and the area became the heartland of SWAPO during the liberation struggle. The area today is the main support-base for the ruling party, SWAPO and opposition parties enjoy no support. There is no any opposition party present in the regional council, which leaves little chance for ideological conflicts, bringing a degree of political stability and continuity.

#### **4.2. Socio-economic context**

Omusati region is one of the poorest and most densely populated regions in the country characterized by low levels of infrastructure, high dependence on natural resources dominated by mixed subsistence agriculture, with 99% of the population classified as rural. The north of the region where the majority of the population reside is characterized by small scale subsistence cultivation and to the east is affected by the seasonal flooding (well known in the vernacular language as efundja) vast flat plains known in the local language as Oshanas. Further south, cultivation gives way to grazing and on the southern boundary, the Etosha National Park (ENP). Sporton *et al.* (2006) revealed that the region has the joint highest proportion of pensioners (9%) and at 22%, the highest household livelihood dependence on pensions. Female headed household predominate within the region (62% of all households in 2001) largely as a result of history of male out migration. The study which included Tsandi Constituency which is part of Uukwaluudhi further indicated that over half (58%) of all household surveyed in this region are elderly headed with an

average age of 75 years. The elderly therefore play an important role in taking responsibility for the livelihood of the households. These elderly who head the households are most likely to have had no formal education (66%) with a few only partially completed primary level education and as such many of them are unable to read and write. Within the elderly headed households' grand children constitutes the largest group of household members followed by sons and daughters. The practice, I am familiar with in rural Namibia, is that elderly in most parts of the country not only in omusati region has always played an important role in caring for children whose parents live away or are orphans of HIV/AIDS, and other causes of deaths. Therefore, the result of this study does not catch any one by surprise. The 1997 Labor Force survey put the unemployment rates at approximately 50% in Omusati and indicated that unemployment in this region is higher among women than among men. The survey also indicated that 10% of the population in the region derived their main income from cash wages and salaries and internal migration is driven primarily by the desire for employment. Historically, the north-central regions supplied labor to political-economic activities (e.g. mining, railways, farms etc), in the south of the veterinary cordon fence (so-called Red Line) by means of migrant labor system (NCCED 2000).

#### **4.3. Livelihoods**

People's livelihood in this area are embedded in subsistence practices upon which sorghum and mahangu (finger millet intercropped with beans, water melons, pumpkins and mbambara nuts) and cattle farming are the dominant activities, supplemented by fish from the shallow pools (flat shallow depressions, many of which light up with copious growths of white lilies soon after they have filled with water) brought with by the flood waters from the Angolan highlands during the rainy seasons. This in turn also provides drinking water to humans and animals and a habitat for large numbers of aquatic birds. The staple food is finger millet, which is processed (by wooden mortar and wooden pestle) to flower and is used for making porridge and for brewing. The area is rich in sporadic stands of the tall makalani palm trees used to tap sap from the growing tip of the stems of these palms and left to ferment into a potent drink called omalunga (palm wine). The fruit of the makalani palm takes two years to mature and has a white bony kernel. Referred to as vegetable ivory, the hard kernel is suitable for carving small ornaments, jewelry and curios, which local people can sell to contribute to their patterns of

incomes. Although almost every household participate in agriculture, the main contributor is cash income directly from formal employment or by way of cash or non-cash remittances from absentee members, but rising unemployment and social breakdown of the family have shrunk the amount and frequency of remittances. The extended family is also an important network for food distribution through food gifts, such as bags of millet grains (normally in 50kg form) enable poorer relatives and their households to survive food shortages and to defer the impacts of drought or other crises. However, contemporary trends show a shift in nuclear family patterns, increasing the prospects for joint management of household on one hand and eroding the social and economic support system of the extended family on the other.

The district of Uukwaluudhi has gained popularity in recent years for its richness in Mopane worms and because, harvesting is not only restricted to the people of Uukwaluudhi, the traditional authority decided to lay rules governing the harvest of mopane worms in their forests. This is done in an effort to ensure that the worms in the conservancy are not over harvested but utilized in a sustainable manner as the majority of collectors do this merely to supply what is called informal markets in urban centers. This came into their wake that people were collecting worms as early as February month when the worms are still immature and did not yet lay eggs for the next season. This is what Akpalu *et al.* (2007) referred to as restrictive harvesting period regime, which simple means the collection of the worms has a limited instantaneous harvesting time put to it by the TA.

Today communities can only harvest the worms when they are ready (usual time March to April) for a fee to be paid to the UTA and with a written permission. An announcement to do so is made by the UTA through the national radio program and other traditional authority's communication channels. The harvesting of Mopane worms plays a big part on the livelihood of this community as well as that of its neighboring districts as it is used as a source of food and also for the market. Some people are bitter that what has been a source of food for a household has been commoditized and excludes those that may not be able to pay the collection fee.

Since the beginning of 2008, there have been difficulties in accessing meat (cattle, and goat meat) in the area due to the influx of the Angolan market. The Angolan livestock buyers buy in hard currency and pay up to US\$ 250/goat

(over 2000 N\$), prompting many livestock sellers to push for their offers and thus under-cutting local buyers. Although this trend could be good and lucrative for local farmers who spend years taking care of their animals, it is also disadvantaging small business entrepreneurs who make a living from selling meat to others and in turn depriving communities from this protein diet, making the conservancy the only institution to supply meat to the community during trophy and own-use hunting. Other sources of livelihood is from the local people owned businesses small and large scale such as cuca-shops (small bars and groceries shops), vehicle repair, tailoring, meat vendors (widely known as okapana), butcheries and large super markets. The business owners also employ people from the area, who in turn help members of their households with incomes they earn from their employment. People here eke out a living also from doing odd jobs.

#### **4.4. Inception and operations**

The formation of this conservancy was driven by political forces. Early 1990s, former President Sam Nuuyoma, who is also now titled the Founding Father of the nation, extended the idea of establishing conservancies in communal areas to various traditional authorities in the country. He informed the TAs who wish to engage in this venture to identify land within their areas of jurisdiction. He (the former President) also indicated to the TAs that his office was ready to link them to organizations that will assist with financial and technical support in this regard. In the north-central regions, the King of Uukwaluudhi was first to declare that the forest and pan that once carried abundant wildlife before they disappeared by army poaching, drought and the liberation war will become a conservancy.

Registered in 2003, the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy (UC) spans an area of 1,437km<sup>2</sup> with small hills and dotted flat landscape of savanna woodland. Approximately 6000 hectares of this land was developed (fenced off with an electrical fence) where small and large wildlife can be kept. But some small animals and elephants are also found on the outer part as the fenced area is too small house all wildlife found in the core area. This conservancy is the second largest of the 52 in terms of population, representing approximately thirty thousand (30,000) eligible members of the Uukwaluudhi community. Activities such as cattle herd, mopane worms harvesting and wood collecting are also allowed in this protected area. The area is historically popular by its abundant

in wildlife and was referred to as the King's Hunting Paradise during the colonial era. It provided quality wildlife for the King's likes such as Eland, Giraffe, elephants and lions, claimed the senior community game guard who was born in this area and at the same time a son to a late senior headman who led this community before independence and whose younger brother succeeded their father. He further went on to relate the milieu they grew up in and says, *"wildlife has always been under the protection of the King and hunting for own consumption for the residents was only performed during winter seasons (May to August) following the King's announcements"*.

The administrative center for the conservancy is at Omakange village, where there is a combined school from grade one (1) to ten (10), a small satellite police station, two (2) churches, a few very small scale retail shops (widely called cuca-shops), and several homesteads. The conservancy staff includes an administrative secretary and two conservancy game guards (otherwise known as community game guards (CGG) or community rangers. 2-3 temporarily people are also used during hunting and AGMs. They are to perform tasks such as cutting meat into pieces for sales and for preparing meals for AGMs or for very special meetings if any. The conservancy has a one room office made out of fabricated materials, furnished with very basic office administrative essentials and also used as storage for many of the conservancy assets. At the office compound are also a slaughter and first leg processing room for wildlife trophies and a shower and flushing toilet adjacent to it. The conservancy runs a vehicle donated by the Rössing Foundation, which they use for much of their transportation needs including bringing hunted game from the veldt to the conservancy butcher for skinning and salting as well as for meat distribution. This conservancy is adjacent to Etosha National Park (ENP) and also neighbors another conservancy called Sheya Uushona of Ongandjera district. During the formation process of this two conservancies a dispute over boundaries erupted forcing the two to pragmatically leave out a disputed area from their conservancy applications pending a later settlement. There is currently what is called a buffer area between the two conservancies as the boundaries are disputed and a solution to this effect is yet to be found<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> This would mean that the two conservancies are to share the benefits of wildlife that is killed in the disputed area (buffer area) both cash-income and meat.

#### 4.4.1 Wildlife re-introduction

Because of the 1980s' presence and use of this pan for military training by the South African Defense Force (SADF) and heavy poaching by the army, wildlife disappeared to safer places around the country. This resulted in the reintroduction of some of the species under the newly established conservation program. Life End Year Report (2008) stated that during the period of 2002 to 2008, the Namibian government with the assistance of donors and NGOs donated 400 heads of wildlife to the UC such as Gemsbok, Zebra, Hartebeest, Eland, Black-faced Impala, Springbok, Kudu, Giraffe including 4 endangered Black Rhinoceros. According to the committee chairperson, the area now is inhabitant to over 1400 different species of wildlife.

#### 4.4.2 Activities

Current activities include trophy hunting, shoot and sell as well as own use hunting. As of Wednesday December 08, 2008 the conservancy signed a partnership and joint venture agreement with the Namibia Country Lodges for the construction of a lodge. The latter has obtained a 6 year tender from government of both hunting and tourism concession for the north-central and other regions and now partners several communal conservancies to carry out tourism activities. The sixteen (16) beds lodge will be built in traditional style with local materials and will be known as Uukwaluudhi Hunting and Safari Camp to be situated inside the fenced area of the conservancy. The lodge is expected to employ sixteen (16) people in total of which twelve (12) will work in the interior and four (4) will take care of the exterior activities of the lodge. According to the conservancy chairperson, the deal will be 40% share for the conservancy and 60% for the owner. The chairperson predicts expected rates per night to be between US\$ 84-97. The conservancy carries out game counting each year to determine the carrying capacity and also to be used during the quota setting period. The community game guards are to monitor poaching and stock theft, record rainfall, monitor fire outbreak and floods, monitor water facilities and fence, monitor if there are problem animals and predators, monitor if there are no dead animals and provide guiding to visitors. However, CGG expresses their difficulties in performing these activities, as they lack transport to patrol the enormous huge area. As one puts it *"you can't go close to people poaching. These people carry guns and we are not in possession of guns, so the best is to hide for your safety, if you come across them"*.

#### **4.4.3 How membership is defined**

Membership in this conservancy is determined by social elements such as kinship and marriage, cultural affiliations and social networks and clearly base on geographical location and residence. The conservancy as per the directions of the UTA regards a member as every man and woman from the age of 18 years, who was born in Uukwaluudhi or who lives permanently in a homestead within the boundaries of Uukwaluudhi district which (homestead) pays an annual administrative levy to the UTA as required by customs and tradition. This includes those who are forced to reside outside the boundaries due to the full-time jobs. According to the Rössing Foundation and Committee, the Traditional Authority realized the importance of being inclusive and did not want to discriminate its residents. But my surmise on this finding is that the TA only wants to sugarcoat its actions to be seen as sufficiently patronage and probably was so enthused by the conservation idea that all will automatically fall into their places, whilst pragmatically it is so difficult to put it to practice. Nonetheless, this is in contrast with the law as the Namibian CBNRM legislation (Amendment Act of 1996) requires that, to be gazetted, a conservancy must have a membership register. In addition the model constitution governing the conservancy operations require members to fill in an application form which they forward to the conservancy and the committee has to reply (accept) in writing.

In my opinion, these situations paradoxically places a limitation on the stated inclusive approach which forms the basis for developing CBNRM policy, as it is exclusive in nature. I am saying this simple because the premise of CBNRM in the Namibian context is the political commitment to include poor, rural areas in wildlife use. Given the scenario described above, membership is voluntarily and optional. Individuals can choose to be members or not, as long as they adhere to the rules and conditions of the conservancy such as attending meetings, refraining from poaching and one must prepare to live with predators and other problem animals. However, the conservancy has been and is still grappling to fulfill the registration of membership requirement to this day. In this case given the high population density in scattered in different 100 villages of the area, an exemption was granted and only the respective village headmen were registered to push the gazetting through.

#### 4.4.4. How benefits are managed, decided on and distributed

One of the prerequisite for conservancy registration is the preparation of a benefit distribution plan to be done in close consultation with conservancy members. Once a conservancy has a hunting quota the management committee enters into an agreement with a professional hunter. All revenues derived from wildlife and tourism is paid directly to the management committee's account and no portion of any of those monies is required to be sent to the central government. According to the constitution 5% of the revenue is to go to the Traditional Authority Council (TAC). Provisions are also made in the quota for the TAC to receive meat. But MET reports argue that all these benefits are given to the King by the chairperson instead of the Traditional Authority Council. Staff and some committee members are worried as to how the money exchanges hands. *"It is not clear whether the King receives 5% of revenue or more or less", says one staff member.* Constitutionally, members of the conservancy decide how revenues should be distributed at the AGM. But practically in this particular conservancy, the chairperson only informs about the income and expenditure and balances they have in the account and no further discussions are carried out about the future use of these funds.

Members are secluded from decision-making process of this project although Section 11.3.2 of Uukwaluudhi constitution states "decisions on the allocation of income earned will be made once a year at the Annual General Meeting". The management committee also decides how the overall quota can be used. The bottom line here is that decisions on how benefits should be distributed are a sole responsibility of the conservancy chairperson in juxtaposition with King. He is a dominant figure and has suspended all monthly and quarterly conservancy planning and decision-making meetings, citing it a waste of money. The committee currently strongly feels that, due to the high population, the conservancy is not in a position to distribute the generated cash revenue to individuals. A workshop facilitated by the RF and MET officials attended by some committees and members of the conservancy resolved to include the following as cash and non-cash in their distribution plan: salaries for workers; grants for projects; fees for schools in the field of conservation; bursaries/loans for studies in the field of conservation; donations; training for committee and conservancy members and others; meat distribution; employment; diesel and oil for water infrastructure and monitoring maintenance of water points due to

elephant damages. Although the distribution plan is in place, it is hardly followed.

The conservancy has so far made donations to the Omusati regional education fund, paid transportation costs for the King's livestock from the south to the north, assisted for the purchase of pipes for the connection of water to Omakange village, contributes to diesel/oil for water supply, donated meat to the army functions and meat to the TA functions and to the King. During the time of my stay there, meat was also donated to two schools in Uukwaluudhi, but it never reached these destinations, due to unreliable transportation channels. Those community members who came to the scene where the elephant was killed and had vehicles were entrusted to deliver the meat to the two school hostels and it turned out the following day that they never did. The result prompted the King to instruct the conservancy committee not to distribute the meat from the animals that are to be culled next, but to wait for him to send a vehicle to transport the meat to the Palace for distribution. It is not clear as to how the meat would be distributed from the palace.

However, the conservancy has managed to reach a point where it no longer needs exogenous help to cover its overheads. It now covers monthly salaries for 2 community game guards, 1 administrative secretary and 2 to 3 temporary staff used during the always busy hunting season. All staff members were employed on their own merits. Two were previous members (admin secretary and senior CGG) of the founding committee. Because they were not re-elected to the new committee, the current committee felt to employ them permanently given their hard working spirits and skills that they have and gained during their term of office. The senior CGG was also part of the earlier community game guard network of the 1980s and is a brother to the senior headman of this area. The junior CGG is just a young man from the area, who was identified while temporarily employed during the construction of the fence of the core-area, due to his well manners he portrayed. He also worked at one of the lodges in one of the wildlife resorts around okaukweyo and this experience was used to make this decision. The conservancy managed as well to cover costs for the audit they were forced to carry out by the MET as required by legislations towards the end of 2008. It also contributes to the fuel and oil and the maintenance for some water supply infrastructures outside the fenced core-area, as people and wildlife share water. Meat distribution is the major benefit to the members, but a challenging undertaking that the conservancy is

struggling with. Meat from each trophy animal culled, 70% is for sales by the conservancy committee to cover its running costs and 30% is to distribute to members. However, the conservancy seems to have difficulties in implementing this kind of arrangement and opted to sell all meat that is not from the problem animals as a result. Elephant and hyena meat is not for sale, it is distributed for free. The conservancy regards these two animals more problematic and in conflict with the residents and decided to have the meat distributed for free. Elephants are said to destroy water facilities and crop fields and hyenas are livestock predators' especially to small stock. Other problem animals are lions that intrude the area from the ENP. Revenues from a problem lion goes to the UC account. According to my observation in the field, there is no specific arrangement on how this meat is to be distributed nor are there records of who got what on which day. Meat is accessed on first come first serve basis. Although the distribution plan principle indicates that those who suffer the greatest costs should receive the greatest benefit, it is not the case in practical terms.

Most people who benefit from meat are those who live close to the conservancy. Given the remoteness of the area, with poor transport infrastructure to connect people to the conservancy, these close residents can easily access meat than those who live far from it. Buying meat is not only restricted to members but to any person who passes by or who have heard the announcements about hunting through the radio or was informed through a cell phone by friends or family members can come and buy or have a piece that is given for free. Mobile phones really play a role here in informing friends and alliances of committee members to come and grab the best and greatest chunks of meat. I was also able to buy meat and received a piece of elephant meat during my stay there. The most challenging issue at the UC is the absence of a cool room, leaving them with no option but to get rid of meat as soon as possible or else it will rot. Thus meat cannot be kept for days to enable distant members to access it. Because benefits do not reach everyone, there is a fear that those households that are more prone to elephant catastrophes and other predators that do not receive meat, will start growing negative attitude against wildlife conservation, said one community game guard. One example is a woman who fainted when she found her crop field tramped by elephants, after having worked so hard on it and expected good yields during 2007/2008 season.

The same goes to many others who experience damages by elephants with no compensation.

#### **4.5 Community network**

Communities are rich and complex network of social relationships. The community members in this area interact with community networks in various ways. Network terminal here are such as cucashops, church, school, community health programme, farming groups, community water meetings, conservancy office, family, kin, marriage as well as neighborhood. They are also connected to networks outside the village such as absent family and clan members living in other parts of the country. These kin groups provide a support network for their members and control joint properties; especially livestock. Most households are not only made of nuclear families, but contain other kin as well. Domestic finances are managed by the head of the family. As part of socialization, parents are helped do receive substantial support from other family members. In cases where parents have work obligations or a child needs to be closer to a school or a relative needs a child's help, then a child can live with other relatives. He/She makes crucial decisions and organizes productive activities. People here are also connected through everyday interactions with one another in the different domains. Almost everyone knows something about their neighbor. They use their human resources to assist each other during the cultivation seasons, a practice that is embedded in them. They socially work together because they enjoy it and believe in it. Some groups of cattle owners (not necessarily kin) own and manage water points privately and others even rear cattle together using common cattle posts. Social capital is seen especially when they give solidarity to each other by means of gifts in terms of items (however small) and labor during deaths and funerals and weddings and other occasions. Networks between individuals are further constructed through interactions at these types of gatherings.

#### **Reactions and responses**

There have been hostile attitudes among residents of this area towards government conservation efforts before and after the conservancy formation. According to the MET officials, there have not been direct benefits to the people and they were not compensated for any loss of crop or livestock to wildlife. All the money collected by culling wild animals went directly to state coffers. Communities felt that government game rangers barely did nothing to protect

them from animals but if illegal poaching is detected you are in no minute in prison. The conservation idea was met with mixed feelings during the formation processes some eight years back. A group of wealth cattle farmers opposed the formation fearing loss of grazing. Some members of the community felt it to be another land dispossession by the new government and saw no analogy between the old and new government in this regard. This is because the feature of the conservancy has been the demarcation of land to be used for wildlife re-introduction leading to a loss of access to land by various users. A series of consultations at political level with the farmers had to be contacted and the conservancy could register. Two years back an elephant was killed by farmers in protest to the conservancy of not contributing to diesel. Farmers felt that the conservancy was treating them unfairly, because they are the one footing the water bill for both wildlife and their livestock, while the conservancy only collected the money from trophy hunting. One says *'yes, we had to teach them a lesson, so they can listen'.* *If they want us to conserve then a reciprocal approach by the conservancy committee in addressing our concerns will be most welcome".* This action prompted the conservancy committee to now meet farmers on the way to purchase diesel. One NGO staff indicated that, although they have been trying to persuade and advice the chairperson to invest in the community's overarching needs, such as water infrastructure development, their advice always ends on deaf ears.

#### **4.6 Relationship community members vs committee**

Struggles of communities to cope with the existence of the conservancy are still prevailing in the area. Although communities in this part of the country are said to have a homogenous culture, there is always social, political and economic differences in their midst. The community complains about the committee staying aloof and secluding them from decision-making processes. Phrases like, *"we were only contacted during the awareness meetings and the decision to form a conservancy and now that the committee is in place and activities has commenced, we are no longer of importance".* The danger currently is that the committee has become self-serving and do not involve local residents in decision making. Communities are not informed of anything and they do not know what is happening. Most of them do not know what their role is with regard to conservancy activities except that individual hunting is prohibited. The levels of relationship by close and distant members differ. Some community members who live closer to the conservancy speaks highly of it

saying it has potential to bring development to the area (*"we see a lot of white people coming to hunt here. We would not have seen them here if it was not because of the conservancy"*). Some are happy that they access wildlife meat for free and one they buy makes a difference in the diet of their households in the absence of meat in the area. Some say, the conservancy contributes to the knowledge of children, simply because pupils have an opportunity to see wildlife rather than seeing them on posters or text books at school.

On the contrary, distant community members have no clue of what is happening, some have heard about the conservancy and some not and the only thing they can say is, it is the wildlife garden for the Government and/or for the King. Due to the fact that the committee has failed to remain responsive to members and to keep them informed of conservancy activities, the relationship is very low and the tensions in that relationship might run very high. There is hardly any communication between the committee and the community and the only time community members come around the conservancy office is when the hunting season commences or attending the AGM meeting. Some members indicated that their expectation was that the conservancy will be a nexus of the community and will bring them together and bring good things to their shore, but now think that it remains to be seen. Some feels the conservancy is detached from the community and therefore, it cannot be a community network. Those who are employed are very happy to receive a salary, be close to their homes and families and continue to carry on with farming.

However, some members decided to approach the LAC offices in March 2009 to report their grievances and unhappiness about the behaviors on the conservancy management. The report indicated that about US\$24,137 has not been accounted for, and the unfair and unconstitutional election of committee members and appointment of the treasurer at the UC is of great concern to the members. The LAC is currently working on modalities to look into effective ways of helping the community members in resolving this situation with stakeholders involved (New Era, 2009). This move is a sign that people are becoming really worried about the situation and have lost hope in the MET staff. The fact that government officials are well aware of the situation and do not do anything about it, leaves no option for the community to turn to legal organizations for help.

## **Chapter 5: Conservancy committee**

The conservancy is the highest authority at community level below the regional council. The central government has devolved the decision-making authority to the conservancy management committee (CMC) for the use and management of natural resources–wildlife. The CMC consists of elected representatives of people residing from the area. The elections take place during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the elected members in turn choose a chairperson amongst themselves. The election of the committee and its term of office are spelled out in the conservancy constitution, which is developed and approved by the members. However, the process is left to the community to decide who they want to represent them, giving a significant leeway in everyday management. Through the process, the committee is learning to manage the generated funds on behalf of its members and include them in decisions on how to use these funds. In turn members are learning how to hold the committee accountable as their representative body and replace them through the AGM if necessary. The key stakeholders in the conservancy management are the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy Management Committee, the community and the Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority. Other support agencies and business partners are the MET, the RF (main local NGO) NACOBTA, NNF, LAC, USAID, WWF and Namibia Country Lodges. The CMC deals directly with the relevant departments in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) regarding the management and utilization of natural resources as well as other agencies.

### **5.1 Composition**

The committee consists of 18 elected members with an office term of 3 years. Nine of these form the executive. The latter is responsible to put up plans for the conservancy in collaboration with their members. As per the constitution they are to sit at least once or twice a year and receive a sitting allowance. The committee is composed of the chairperson and deputy, the secretary and deputy, the treasurer and deputy, the traditional authority representative and other community members. Most people in the committee have multiple identities (they are farmers, workers, headmen, leaders in the community in one way or another). A few key positions will be explained below.

The conservancy chairperson works at the Bank of Namibia in Oshakati, approximately 200km away from the conservancy. He occupies a managerial position in the Bank. He also worked in the army before he came to the bank. His work related position earned him the trust from the King. As a result the King appointed him to the chairmanship position during the AGM of 2006 and was again reappointed by same during the 2009 AGM. The deputy chairperson is a retired teacher and a village headman. The secretary was a Police Officer and was replaced by the King during the 2009 AGM as a result of his transfer from Omakange office to another area. The move has left many questions than answers. This is because there are also other committee members who are working outside the area but still occupy their positions. The deputy was the former chairperson. She resigned during the 2009 AGM and was also replaced by the King at the same AGM. She resigned, simple because she is not happy with the way the conservancy is currently managed.

Like many other committee members, she does not see her role and responsibilities as there are no meetings or any work relation interaction within the committee. However, she made sure that she informed the AGM that the conservancy is not run in compliance with its constitution and legislation in terms of committee and staff selection (staff selection referring to the treasurer in this case) and the reporting system of financial income and expenditures. Her statement was quickly dismissed by the King who answered by saying there was no need to follow a constitution, because it is just confusion. The information of the new replacements was not known at the time of writing this paper. The treasurer is a CEO at a local electricity company, who was appointed by the chairperson, contrary to the constitution. The senior headman of this area represents the traditional authority in this committee. Other committee members are farmers, retired civil servants (mostly teachers) and literacy teachers.

## **5.2 Decision making**

The chairperson is the main figure in this conservancy and enjoys the full support from the King and from the constituency councilor. The King informed the meeting that he prefers the current chairperson because he works at the Bank and he can source funds for the conservancy. He prefer to have people in the committee who are connected to the outside world and have the capacity to

market the conservancy and bring development to the area, says the King to cement his decision at the 2006 AGM.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the committee does not hold meetings and not even with their members as per the provision in their constitution, the chairperson sites it as a waste of energy, time and money. At the 2009 AGM, the chairperson again emphasise on his believes that meetings are not needed and are still a waste of money. This situation, members of the community, NGOs and the MET staff members say is a new chairmanship management style. All major decisions concerning the operations of the conservancy are done by the chairperson in juxtaposition with the King. He runs the conservancy on remote control and he does all the plans himself. He rather, prefers to use his mobile phone to give directions and orders of what is to be done, than sitting in meetings. One staff member indicated that, the conservancy was popular when it was led by a woman, receiving as many visitors as possible. Information meetings around villages about the activities, plans and finances of the project use to be conducted.

One committee member said, *“our chairperson does not like to discuss matters or ideas in a meeting. You can inform him of an idea just informal and if it is good he will implement it if not he leaves it”*. Another committee member said I do not know really why you are here (referring to me) or what you are looking for but I want to tell you that- *“this project owes me close to N\$1000 (US\$121), because I dedicate my work to it, put fuel in the car, do some minor repair, leave my house to come and stay here for days to assist in the activities and so on and I do not know when they will refund my money and no one is saying anything”*. And he went on to say, *“the chairperson will be here today, perhaps he will say something about it”*. While observing the skinning and distribution of elephant meat at the scene, two committee members were chatting to each other and one said *“we do not have a functioning committee, if people do not come to this type of activities (hunting) who will do all this percentage calculations of meat. When people sit in offices, they do not know how tuff the work on the ground is and they just come in white shirts and ties and ask you what you did with the meat. Things are not as easy as they think they are”*.

### **5.3 Relationship committee vs government**

The rights allocated to the conservancy are limited and conditional. Some set conditions have to be met for conservancy to be registered; committee must persuade residents to become members and then register, conservancy do not

set quota numbers for huntable-game unlike their counterpart in the freehold land; boundaries must be successfully negotiated with neighbors, must adopt a constitution, have limited rights to deal with problem wildlife. The policy also says government can withdraw rights but does not make it thoroughly clear. Officials say the withdrawal is when there is malpractice on benefit distribution and if quotas are not followed. Although malpractices are known and reported in black and white, nothing serious has happened to rectify the situation. The relationship between the MET regional officials and the conservancy committee are not so healthy, although business goes on as usual. Some officials who are suppose to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the program on the ground are no more in good speaking terms with some conservancy committee members. According to the officials, hell broke when they try to advice the committee to follow procedures as set out by the law and the constitution such as convening committee meetings and AGMs, using the right quotas and permits, not to hunt without the MET officials.

Officials also indicated their frustrations of being less informed on the happenings in the conservancy as the conservancy in most cases leapfrogs them and report matters directly to the MET headquarters in Windhoek. An example was given about a problem elephant that was killed in the buffer area. The officials said the regional office was not informed to verify this problem elephant as per procedures. The chairperson only talked to the Director in Windhoek and permission was granted. Officials say the problem is with the chairperson and it has got nothing to do with the rest of the committee members. One official said *"he is everything, he is the chair, he is the secretary, he is the treasurer, he is the sole decision maker, and he even goes to the extended of negotiating wrong prices alone with hunters"*, it makes everything difficult. Another official says, *"I stopped going there and getting involved in much of this conservancy's activities, because they want to do things their way and also not in the interest of the community"*. A third MET official says *"this conservancy is always out of line. They start hunting without our presence and we need to keep control and verify animals to be culled. They might harm animals in the process that are not supposed to be hunted and a harmed animal just disappear unnoticed and is not good. They can even hunt animals that are not in the quota or use permits that are not for this specific conservancy. Last time they just called in the police and went to kill animals without permission. The police had to be arrested for shooting the animals, but later the case had to be dismissed because it is not their fault, they were instructed by the*

*conservancy committee. Meat distribution is also not done properly, leaders and their children benefits much more than others. This is the reason I am saying this conservancy does a lot of things that are out of order”.*

#### **5.4 Relationship committee vs NGOs**

NGOs have been and still are powerful partners of this conservancy. They are recipients of funding from donors and are involved in facilitating the CBNRM process. A couple of NGOs and donor organizations has been working with this conservancy from its formation and through its implementation process in partnership with the government. They assisted the conservancy with awareness campaigns with residents, provided training for the committee members, provided materials needed and the constructions of buildings, and a vehicle. At the beginning most costs for the conservancy were covered by NGOs as the conservancy did not have any cent. To avoid more confusion and problems re-arrangement that can offset competition among NGOs for donor funding was made by creating a regionalization of NGO support for conservancies. The Rössing Foundation (RF) was then given the responsibility to facilitate the CBNRM process for the north-central region. Most funds from other NGOs and donors for the conservancy activities were channeled to the RF for implementation. The relationship between the conservancy and the RF is relatively good. Sometimes there are misunderstandings, because the conservancy does things outside the guidelines that are set for the program and if officials nudge the conservancy gets upset about it and feels the NGO is interfering with their internal affairs. For example, budgets are not followed and some quotas were refused by the Ministry until the conservancy could produce reports of previous quotas and no proper financial records. The Ministry is also not sticking to their terms, for example the conservancy must be audited when it makes over US\$3,621 per annum and when AGMs are not carried out. The officials said *“we only give them advice, if they want they take it and if they do not want, there is nothing one we can do. But all we do or say is in the best interest of the community”*. However, the officials were astonished when the King during the 2009 AGM threatened to report any one to the country’s President, be it MET, NGO or whoever whom he feels interferes with the decision to retain the current committee on power regardless the constitution.

### **5.5 Relationship committee vs traditional authority**

The traditional authority has been at the forefront on the formation of this conservancy and has not given up control and drives the decision-making process. Thus the committee is more accountable to the King than to the members. The only distinct functions of the two, is that the TA has the power to allocate land to any person from outside in the conservancy area and the conservancy committee has no control over it. The continuing allocation of land to outsiders might impede some of the conservancy development efforts. No clear roles for the TA are stipulated in the policy, but what is certain is that, the conservancy as an institution operating under certain laws operates within the institution of the Traditional Authority, which also has its own customary rules.

### **5.6 Relationship committee vs private sector**

One of the most important rights that the conservancy provides is the right to acquire a wildlife off-take quota from government, of which portions can be tendered to safari companies as trophy animals. The conservancy can also gain tourism rights and can enter into contracts with the private sector tourism operators as a legal entity. The economic promise of conservancies has been premised largely on the development of tourism joint ventures. Tourism in Namibia is widely white owned and run as they are the oldest hands of this trade. The tourism and safari hunting partners provides capital, expertise and market access. The conservancy relies heavily on these partners as they are not in possession of a Hunting Guide (HG), a Professional Hunters (PH) and a Big Game Professional Hunters (BGPH) that are required by law to guide and supervise the hunting exercise. It requires more than 30 years of experience and written examinations to get to the final category. Without this professionalism, communal conservancy cannot fit nor can they keep pace with their far advanced fellow farmers in the freehold area.

Much power in striking deals with conservancy still lies with the companies as the committees are new in the industry and are not even clear on the implications of shareholding and lacks business knowledge. It will definitely take some years of learning on the job to grasp business principles and all the nitty-gritty of this type of contracts. Conservancy committee members and local residents need to understand what international tourists are looking for in terms of accommodation and service standards. Grobler, (2008) indicated that trophy royalties have as a result become politicized, with conservancies

standing to collect about US\$10,620 per animal from commercial hunting safari, which in turn sell these to wealthy hunters for up to US\$30,171 per safari. Bagging a rare desert elephant bull one professional hunter admitted, can attract a price tag of up to 50% more (ibid). In the joint venture contract, the conservancy is the land lord and the company will manage the business and pay dividends and levies to the conservancy as per the contract.

Committee members monitoring their joint ventures agreements with private sector need to understand such issues as the difference between turnover and profit, and typically low returns on investment in the initial start-up years of a tourism business. A professional hunter has been residing/camping inside the conservancy core-area with the permission of the chairperson, without a collective decision of the committee and he managed to hunt 3 springbok for shoot and sell without the presence of the MET-staff and/or the CGG to monitor the hunting process. The chairperson said there are competing claims between hunting and tourism and this is why the tender of both is given to Namibia Country Lodges for better coordination between the two. This is to ensure that tourists' tours do not take place during hunting days for example. These companies also agreed to train conservancy employees in becoming professional hunters in future and in managing their businesses including the lodge and tour operators. Namibia Country Lodges already have a relationship with Uukwaluudhi Conservancy by having an exclusive fly-in-camp and wildlife related activities within the conservancy, ensuring that roads are cleared and maintained. Because the conservancy lies close to Opuwo, Namibia Country Lodges also provides visitors to the Opuwo Country Hotel with an exciting option to visit Uukwaluudhi and witness conservation in action.

## Chapter 6: The social dynamics at Uukwaluudhi conservancy

### 6.1 Part One: Implementers views

These are actors who have been involved in the facilitation and formation of the conservancy and still continue to assist in the implementation of the activities of the conservancy and oversee its progress, because they work for implementing agencies such as MET and NGOs, and have some knowledge on CBNRM policy and conservancy constitution. Added to this group are the committees and staff members who have a formal role to play in the process and are involved in the day to day implementation of this conservancy. I wanted to learn how they view the intervention and progress in the implementation of the conservancy. Below is what they had to say:

#### 6.1.1 Government officials

*“The whole CBNRM program is a benefit to black people. It seems people’s attitudes have changed and poaching has dropped dramatically, says the officials”.* Before the conservancy, people did not benefit from the wildlife, because everything was for the government. Problem animals were killed and sold but the money went to government coffers and not to the community. Also not even to those who experiences losses with their assets. Today most of them come running to report poaching (especially those from Sheya Uushona conservancy) because they know the money and meat will not go to government. There have not been reports of poaching from the conservancy for some time now. What is on the increase is livestock theft. People now show positive attitudes towards conserving wildlife.

*“But we are very concerned with the way the conservancy is managed since the new committee took over the reins. There are no meetings to plan for activities and the use of money with the other committee members and with the members. AGMs are not held as required or can be postponed with no concrete reasons. The chairperson is a sole decision-maker. Others are just there to implement his decisions. He runs the conservancy as his own and not a community business. He keeps the financial documents such as the conservancy checkbook and no proper records are kept for example (receipts, invoices, payment request sheets and all that). During the conservancy annual quota setting it was observed that some animals were hunted without permits. Some were hunted by the chairperson for no clear purpose and it is not*

*known if money were received for such utilization or not*". The officials said, records are supposed to be carried out at the project by the administrative secretary who is trained in book and record keeping and the bosses are just to sign for the authorization, but unfortunately it does not happen in this way. *"We do not have any problem with other conservancies in the region, but this conservancy is a problematic one"*. The committee does not function; other members are not confronting the chairperson for the things they are not happy with. At the AGM meeting of 2007 which could not be declared as an AGM, due to a lack of quorum, the committee members were not participating and they kept giving their questions to the MET facilitators to ask on their behalf. It appears they are afraid to confront the chairperson. The chairperson was the most spokesperson at this meeting as he is the only one who is aware of the conservancy activities (he plans, decides, review and implement). He did not even accept the advice from the MET officials that they should at least meet even once quarterly to make joint decisions. He avoids questions that deal with finances and questions on how further joint venture contract agreement between conservancy and the investor will be dealt with. *"You see, this type of behavior will drive other people away from the conservation objective"*. The officials have therefore requested the MET head office to intervene and facilitate a fair process that allows the involvement of the community at large in the management and decision-making of the conservancy activities and operations. The officials also requested and recommended to their head office that the UC be compelled to carry out a financial audit as a matter of urgency. This is done to ensure that the generated funds are accounted for, because there has not been an audit carried out since the UC started generating income.

### **6.1.2 NGO officials**

*"The worst thing is that the other committee members are not questioning the behaviors of their chairperson, even during the AGM, they tell the MET officials to ask questions on their behalf. And at the end it will look like it is the MET officials who have a problem with it and not the members"*. Sometimes MET officials try to ask a question just to pave way for the committee members to probe further but they just keep quite. Ordinary members are not given opportunities to give their views and ideas or ask questions, even if they wanted to. Those who raise hands are told to keep quite because the King has spoken and has made decisions as the overall leader of Uukwaluudhi. We have tried to advice the King not to get involved in the day to day management of the conservancy, but

to be an advisor and give directions that are in the interests of the community through the conservancy committee. He seems to have understood this idea but the status quo remains.

*"You know, the AGM is suppose to be a platform for members to make decisions on the use of revenues and other conservancy matters. In most cases they are postponed and if they take place, in reality the chairperson just reports on incomes and expenditure and the balances left on the account. He is too much into figures, thinking the people will be carried away by the amounts of money generated. But people do not care about what you know, until they know how much you care".* No further discussions are done with regard to the revenues and its use. He even tells the meetings that all the moneys were only made by the new committee and the old committee did not bring any money to the project. Whilst in reality, the new committee only started to implement what the old committees have organized. The founding committee worked for the first three years to lay grounds, and they have worked hard to ensure that they have prepared contracts for hunting, for lodge and for a vehicle. But now the new chairmanship keeps on boasting, that he is the one who brought money to the project and must be praised for that. The King also encourages this type of things. He said publicly during the AGM that the old committee did not do any work. *"They just misused the money. The new committee has worked and brought money in".* How on earth can one just disregard all organizational work that was done by others and insult other adults in front of everybody. This type of messages can create wrong impressions to the people who are to be served and is subject to misinterpretations.

The committee is advised to invest on issues that concern the community such as water. The conservancy is also supposed to implement student program funded by the Namibia Country Lodges. The programme is to send two students from the local school during holidays to Opuwo Country Hotel to learn tourism, so they can be prepared as future conservancy workers. But instead he starts investing in army functions and regional education fund while, neglecting problems amidst his own community. *"People are worried whether the regional fund will really think about taking pupils from the conservancy area for further education at this point in time, says the officials".* There are boreholes that are not working and they are shared by people and elephants, the fences (at the game park) are not regularly maintained as required. The chairperson fired the guy who was specially trained for fences maintenance because he was outspoken and he can confront him. Although this guy was a cousin to the area

headmen and the senior CGG, *“you see this shows you how powerful a person can be, because he is not even worried of what other committee members would feel or say”*. This person now has found employment somewhere else, while he could work at the project, in his own community. He cannot stand people who question him. Cattle owners ones killed an elephant, because the conservancy was not contributing to the diesel and maintenance of the shared water facilities. But now they have improved on this, they just need to do more. In general, wildlife has increased and poaching is rear. People have changed their attitudes positively towards wildlife.

### **6.1.3 Conservancy staff members**

*“We cannot even learn or practice what we have been taught during workshops, because everything is decided by one person. With the old committee we had meetings, we planned together and decisions were made by many not only by one person. Information meetings were carried out with members although we did not manage to reach all villages in Uukwaluudhi, because of time and distances. But at least many people knew about the conservancy and the benefits expected and that is why some started to respect wildlife today. Villagers were informed of their rights to visit the conservancy office to see the financial books and ask questions or have things cleared which they do not understand. All this is now history”*.

People are not given an opportunity to talk during the AGM. There are those who are not afraid of asking questions for clarification or talk about burning issues in the community. But they are always urged by others and headmen to refrain because the King has decided. They are told no comments after the elderly has spoken. The conservancy has potential to make money and government has proven that the wildlife is for the community, because all the income goes to the conservancy. But the problem is the money is not used properly as it is decided by one person. The chairperson and the treasurer have signatory rights and they just signs for expenditures but no proper records are kept.

### **6.1.4 Committee members**

*“The chairperson claims money for traveling to the conservancy while he has a homestead in this area. One do not know how these claims are approved. He prevents others to take part during the hunting activities saying is a waste of money. He does not want others to be paid. One time we came to work at least to do preparations for the hunting and he came and chased us away. He said what are you doing here, it is not*

*needed you must go back home. This is the reason you do not see many of the committee members here, because they are discouraged to take part in the activities. The meetings are abolished and there is no platform we can use to air our views. In an occasion where the chairperson might call a meeting, many members do not turn up and he comes with a set agenda that is not amendable and plus he does all the talking himself. Most of the committee members now feels relaxed and do not know why they are in the committee and why it exist. Some are not even willing to tell why they do not pitch up at the conservancy when there is hunting.*

*The King will kill this conservancy in 5 years to come, because of his bad leadership. He can not only send a vehicle to collect meat but he must also send people to come and work from the other parts of Uukwaluudhi. The people currently doing work here are just from Omakange while others are to receive meat and do not do anything”.*

*“All along, the area has been a wildlife pan. But wildlife belonged to the Ministry and now they are ours and we try to treat them as our own. We started hunting in 2007 and made some money so far. The money we made is not sufficient to share with all members but can be used for community projects and sending our youth for studies in the conservation subjects from the early age so that we can build their capacity to come and take over from us. The challenge is to avoid wildlife-human conflict, because we do not have money to compensate the damages. The fear we have now is for those who get often damages from elephants and predators to develop adverse attitudes towards wildlife because they cannot be compensated. Many people are still negative about wildlife but some now value them, because they receive meat and can buy meat below market price. The price of meat is set specifically to be affordable to all community members, because the animal has been paid for as trophies by trophy hunters”.*

## **6.2 Part Two: Members views**

These views were gathered from residents living close (0-10km away) and those living far from the conservancy (20 to 60km away). These people are regarded as members of the conservancy and are to enjoy the benefits from the conservancy both cash and non-cash benefits as per the benefit distribution plan. They in turn are to conserve the wildlife. Migrated cattle posts owners were also talked to as resource owners but are not regarded as members. I wanted to learn how they view wildlife and to what extended their involvement is and benefit from the conservancy. The names of these informants are all fictional in order to protect their privacy.

### 6.2.1 Close members

**Ntombi Siyaya:** lives 1km away from the conservancy office and is a farmer. She explains what she can remember during the conservancy formation and what is prevailing today. At first people did not want to accept the conservancy. A few of them were in agreement and later others changed their minds to also support it. They thought it was only for some people and now they see wildlife meat and they are happy whether they buy or they get it for free. She went on to say *“you see the conservancy is the only one in this area that can supply the community with meat. Livestock owners here do not slaughter their animals any longer to sell meat under the trees, because of the penetration of the lucrative Angolan livestock buyers. Angolans buy livestock with American dollars and in amounts more than Namibian buyers do. So livestock owners now view the Namibian market small and opt to only sell their animals to Angolans”*. Some people now buy wildlife meat, cook it nice and sell it at the cuca-shops (small and locally designed bars, where people amuse themselves around the area). The first committee held meetings with people explaining the good things we can expect from the conservancy and also about our rights to the conservancy. But the big problem now is with the new committee. People are not involved in any conservancy activity, except those who work there or cook during AGMs. There are no meetings with the community and one is not allowed to say anything at the AGM. This demoralizes people and makes them lose their hopes and confidence in the conservancy. People were starting to respect wildlife, but with the way things are done by the committee, they will go back to serious poaching soon. Asked about how she feels herself, she said *“I still have hope that the conservancy will do better in the years to come, maybe it is just the beginning, because this is the second year that hunting is taking place. I want to see how they will behave in the following two years to concretely make my judgements”*. As of now I am happy because I live close and always make sure I collect the meat. If I do not go there myself I send the kids.

**Lyahulapo Zee:** Lives 7km away from the conservancy office and is also a farmers. After a tip about agricultural opportunities of the area from her friends who use to collect mopane worms from Uukwaluudhi Lyahulapo have migrated to this area in 1995 with her mother who is now late since the year 2000. She has moved to this area in search of better livelihood. She narrated to me that she is amazed by the way residents of this area have been conserving their environment especially the forest. She explains by saying *“hereros mostly*

*lived in this area and they do not like to live in open spaces like owambos, especially from where I hailed from. That is the reason that the area has good grazing for livestock and fertile soil for crop farming. This is the main reason I have decided to reside here permanently. Here one is not allowed to cut fresh trees not even for the erection of a house. If you want to erect a house you are permitted to go to the thick forest and collect dry poles not fresh ones."* Since moving to the area, she was able to acquire a few livestock and receive sufficient yields of mahangu (finger millet) grains from her land. As a result she is now able to sell and assist relatives who are unable to sustain themselves with the staple grain around the year. She further went on to say *"thanks to the conservancy"*, that she is able to raise her kids in this area as they will grow up having knowledge of nature especially having the opportunity to see wild animals in their natural form, unlike those kids who are born in areas without forests and just seeing them in books at school. *"The only thing we get here is meat, but it is also little and cannot reach every one. Plus you have to buy it and if you do not have money, you are out. Only one elephant can be killed in a year, so it is also not enough for all of us and not all can reach the scene where it is killed. The problem is there is no good organization to distribute the meat. If it was rotational for villages, maybe it was going to be better. It is confusing, one do not know anymore to whom this conservancy belong. We were told it is a community project at the beginning through meetings, and we believed but now we know nothing about it. We see white people coming to hunt and we are told over the radio about hunting and to come and buy meat and also to be careful about our movements during hunting, after hunting you hear nothing until the next hunting"*.

**Jose Mingu:** Mingu is a pensioner and farmer and lives 15km from the conservancy office. He explain that the area has been a wildlife spot in the old days *"there was only one family living here and that was long time ago"*. Many people now have come to live here because the area is nice for agriculture. People use to get permission from the King to go and hunt during winter times. *"Wildlife meat has never been for sale and I am baffled by the conservancy selling wildlife meat. If I had all the power on earth I would stop them from doing it"*. People are not given opportunity to talk during the AGM, which is a good platform to view our concerns, because many people come to this meeting, *"but also they just come to eat food that is prepared there that day"*. In addition this meat can only be bought by people who have money; if you do not have a penny you cannot have meat, except the elephant one. Elephant meat is for everybody, if you can reach where it is you can have it, but elephants are killed very far from the

conservancy center and one need transport to reach there. So there is also very little chance that many will benefit from it, because of the distance. *"I am not a member of the conservancy. The conservancy is for the committees. They do all the decisions not the people. We are just people living in our villages, cultivating our fields to have food. The jobs during hunting do not rotate it is only the same people all the time. I am sure you have noticed that, I come here often during hunting but I see the same people cutting meat every day. The young people must rotate; it is not difficult to learn how to cut meat or skinning, after all hunters bring their own people to do skinning. You know we grew up hunting, this was all bush, and hunting is to show your manhood, especially for young men, you must show that you are a man and you can bring meat to the house for the pot. We did not hunt for sale but for food. Nowadays you cannot hunt freely, you will be arrested". Therefore, many young boys in the area will miss the opportunity to hunt, because it is prohibited, they cannot even hunt the small animals, and so they cannot claim to be men.*

**Naushwe Deshee:** lives 5km away from the conservancy office and this is what she had to say. *"There is not much difference in our lives, if we compare now and before the conservancy. We still live as before, except seeing different people (white people and yourself) and a small plane that also bring them here sometimes. When there is no hunting it is hard to see meat. Farmers here do not slaughter livestock, because there is no money here, the workforce is too little for a farmer to make profit out of it. Even meat from the conservancy is bought by a few people because sometimes it is in the middle of the month and people have no money. Some pensioners who can reach to the center take meat on credit and pay at the end of the month". Many community meetings were carried out to consult with us during the start-up period of the conservancy, but now it is impossible to have an opportunity to learn about how much revenue was made and how they are accumulating in the account and how these monies are to be allocated by the management committee for our benefits".*

She went on to say, people do not hunt only because they are afraid of being arrested. But some of course hunt without being noticed because they only kill the small animals, except those who killed an elephant some two years back, because elephants are using water and competing with cattle. Elephants can kill cattle when they are thirsty, if they meet at the water point. Farmers are not allowed to hunt these problem animals. So people were further-up and they killed one elephant. There is no difference whether you are registered or not. People here have no say. It is the committee with the say; they do their things in their own way. It is a committee but without the community. Information is not

given clearly, the first hyena only benefited one man, because people did not know it was not for sale, but this time close to 15 people benefited. It is difficult to say one is a member, because there is really nothing that shows this one is a member and this one is not a member. *“My livelihood is from my field and my few goats. I also sell my local brew at the cuca shops”*.

### 6.2.2 Distant members

**Mukwaya Nathi:** lives 40 km away from the conservancy. According to him, he is a full resident of Uukwaluudhi, but do not know anything about the conservancy, and is not a member either. He has no idea how it started and was not part of the meetings. The conservancy has nothing to do with my life or that of my household he says. *“I and my family do not live from the wildlife, but from growing mahangu (finger millet) and keeping livestock and other domestic animals such as chickens for our daily survival, plus assistance from other family members. I have a son who works at sea in Walvisbay and a daughter who is a nurse, so those two helps the family as me and my wife are both unemployed and are also not yet qualified for the government monthly pension grant, we still have 5 years more to go to reach that stage”*. The main issue here is that we are used to live our lives and will continue to do so *“with or without government assistance”*.

**Shimboo Lukalo:** lives 60km away from the conservancy office and is a cleaner at one of the local schools. *“The conservancy is not known much in this village and maybe also in some neighboring villages too. But we hear announcements of hunting in the radio, where they informed people to go and buy wildlife meat and also collect elephant meat. I do not know when it started and I also think many of the people here do not know how it works. I am not a member and no one informed me of anything of being a member of a conservancy at Omakange. Our households are far from the conservancy and there are hardly no transports heading to that area, unless if people from there come to Tsandi the centre of Uukwaluudhi. But the big question is “how would one come back and how would you survive during the day in terms of food just for collecting a piece of meat. It does not make sense, plus it is costly. I have really no clue of the conservancy and have nothing to do with it. Wildlife is not really in our village and so we do not care much about them. What we care about is our field that provides food for us.*

### 6.2.3 Cattle posts owners

**Tileni Muiinga**, this cattle post is 12km from the conservancy office. He is from Uukwaluudhi and has his homestead somewhere else. *"I came here to look for pasture for my livestock, because there is good grazing here. I was given land by the traditional authority and knew there was wildlife in the area just like anywhere else where there is forest in Namibia, so I knew I have to take care of animals and I have people and dogs do watch the livestock. The only thing that worries me and others is the absence of compensation for losses by predators"*. He said they are not allowed to kill these problem animals ourselves and the conservancy takes long to kill them and yet we share water with them at our costs. Also the money from the predator goes to the conservancy not to the person who lost the animal.

*"The only problem is with the elephants, because if they come to the water point and do not get water they get angry and destroy the facility and we have to go to our pockets and contribute to the repair because government does not repair these facilities anymore. They were handed over to the people and a committee is there to collect money. If we do not repair, our cattle have to walk long distances to get water once a day only. We suggested to the conservancy to erect walls around the engines like the government water department did to some water points, but nothing has happened"*.

*"We are only troubled now by cattle theft. In this area, cattle are stolen often. A person from around teams up with outsiders or outsiders just comes in the night and takes a whole kraal. The theft is all about the Angolan market. There is a new slaughter house which was opened at Calueque in recent years and buys a lot of cattle from individuals. "You just wake up in the morning and the whole kraal is gone". We might consider to having the whole conservancy core-area fenced in, so that our cattle are safe.*

He further noted that, he has really nothing to do with the conservancy, because he believes in farming and not in raising wildlife. He said the conservancy operates on government rules, they receive money, but we are not aware of what the money is used for and therefore, one cannot expect much than doing your own work for survival. He further stated by saying *"you can go around and you come back and tell me whether there is anyone who would tell you their live are dependent on that conservancy"*.

**Mwiiya Maulinus**, this cattle post is 20km from the conservancy office. The owner employs two young men to take care of his cattle at the post within the conservancy core-area. He is not from Uukwaluudhi and is not considered as a member of the conservancy. He was just visiting the post to monitor his animals and brought food for the workers. He says he does not mingle with conservancy activities and is aware of predators. But what bothers him is when he pay for diesel to provide water to livestock, because it also include providing water to the lost cattle known as (eenghani) in the vernacular. Those lost livestock are cared for by the headman or any villager who found them but later will belong to the King. He says *"we heard that the conservancy wants to extend the fence to the rest of the core-area, and we have suggested if they can just also fence off our posts in groups so we only care for our own livestock, can control diseases and share the costs of diesel amongst ourselves (the owners)".* That way our livestock will also be saved from the thieves. We have talked about it with other posts owners and will sell the idea to the conservancy. Those who are members are in a good position to act on this than myself, because *"I am not ekwaluudhi"*.

The main concerns that we all (farmers) have in this area is the regular breakdowns of water infrastructures. Grazing is good but water facilities break too much and the rural water supply of the agriculture ministry takes too long to repair.

## **Chapter 7: Community dynamics, power and distribution of benefits**

It is an acceptable belief that natural resources have always been maintained and conserved by people who depend on them, therefore government's efforts of granting full/partial management rights of wildlife to the local people at the lowest level of society is imperative. One of the principal objectives of the CBNRM Program in Namibia is to help historically disadvantaged Namibians (mostly black people) to earn income from natural resource-based activities. The creation of the conservancy is to fill the governance gap at the local level through the involvement of people at the lowest unit to benefit from the resource they live in. Although the law has made it flexible for communities to define themselves and to elect their representatives, results proved it difficult for the conservancy to ensure that the devolution of decision-making has trickled down from the committee to the lower level units of community, establishing transparent and accountable institutions and realizing tangible benefits for local people. The Uukwaluudhi Conservancy instead has become an arena of power struggles and conflicts over the control of the natural resource. Individuals in the committee are struggling and trying to monopolize power. This is evidently seen by the fact that the conservancy operations are not in compliance with their constitution and legislations governing this conservancy. This shows that, what is called legal pluralism is at play here.

The field outcomes show that all decisions affecting the community are taken outside the formal loci of decision making by loosely bounded groups of individuals or factions. Decisions in this conservancy are all taken by the chairperson in juxtaposition with the King, the councilor and perhaps a very little number of conservancy committee members (3-4 persons) who are dancing to the tune of the chairperson to implement these decisions. Kajembe and Monela, (2000) described a faction as not a legitimate agent within an administrative structure. It maybe a locus for decision-making but the rules if there are any, that govern it are not prescribed by the institutional framework in which it operates. Thus their criterion of membership and decision-making are necessarily informal. From the interviews with the MET and the NGO, it one establishes that the conservancy chairperson appear to use his position to seek special support and invest to maintain his own social and political capital

from influential people as possible and thus his decisions of making donations to the King, the army and other agencies at regional level.

The situation at Uukwaluudhi conservancy tells that communities have no say in matters pertaining to the conservancy decisions and therefore, do not partake in conservancy activities. In this case one can say the conservancy committee does not regard its own members as owners but treats them as clients of the conservancy. The stories told by the informants show that the conservancy committee is more answerable to the King 'Traditional Authority' than to the community. The central government devolved the decision-making authority to the committee on behalf of community but the committee does not listen to viewpoints of its members. This is what (Brett, 1999; Platteau and Abrahams, 2002 cited in Platteau and Gaspart, 2003:2) referred to by saying "*participatory development therefore, cannot be treated as a process in which facilitators merely 'enable' local people to do what they would have done anyway*".

Since the inception of the conservancy six years ago, the creation of environmental subjectivities (Agrawal, 2005) has been fluctuating. In the first three years (2003-2006) individuals started to believe and had very high expectations that the conservancy will someday bring good things to their lives. But this situation is taking some adverse turns as a number of communities are currently displeased, simply because the conservancy does not meet local people's needs and interests. The dominant behavior of the chairperson is one of the reasons that people are losing interest in the conservancy, as it is the driving force fueling the committee to stay aloof from its members and being self-serving. The decision-making process is failing to put proper prioritizing mechanisms in place to ensure that people's needs, aspirations and livelihood are taken into consideration. A number of reports and interviews with implementers indicate that poaching has dropped dramatically and the numbers of wildlife have increased. From an outsider's view this would imply that people's attitudes have changed positively towards wildlife. Paradoxically my field results shows that people's behaviors did not change because of benefits they reap from wildlife, but because they are afraid of being sent to prison, pay bail and attend court sessions that are so prolonged due to the inefficiency of police officers in gathering evidence for the cases as one community member puts it "*you go to jail, if found guilty, who wants to be jailed for years and leave your house and field unattended*". *Wildlife is more under control now than before independence. There are MET offices all over than ever*".

It seems that benefit driven approach turns out to be problematic in high density membership like this one. Uukwaluudhi conservancy has approximately 30,000 members and because it cannot satisfy everyone, in the end it is the elites against communities who suffer the consequences of living with wildlife and there are losers and winners. The information from informants reveals that people at this conservancy are not sufficiently informed, prepared and trained on their rights at the initial stage. Therefore, they are not confident enough to assert them and as a result benefits are likely to be largely preempted by local elites acting on their behalf (Platteau and Gaspart, 2003).

Although the community is dissatisfied with the way the conservancy is conducted, most close residents are still happy to receive or buy meat from the conservancy in the absence of meat in the area. But the general view of the conservancy is that it does not mean much to the people, they do not see it as influential to their daily lives and business goes on as usual. People feels they were bamboozled by the authorities to get the conservancy through for registration and the end results now is to receive pay-lip services.

### **7.1 Conclusion**

The conservancy approach is using environmentality to disciplining society through new environment policies but two problems have cropped up with that in Namibia. One is that due to unambiguous policies, the state is failing to ensure that people at the lowest echelon of community owns the decision-making power over their natural resources and not the elites. On the other hand the community as the organizational principle of conservation is very problematic as there is no homogenous community as expected by policy-makers and central planners, but is rather fragmented which becomes manifests by the various networks that have emerged over time in the conservancy.

The Uukwaluudhi conservancy clearly shows how the devolution of decision-making authority has failed to blend or bring local people together to form one mass 'community' to use and manage their natural resources. This indicates how difficult it is to develop what Muphree (1994) calls "coalescent authority structure" which can reconcile the different interests of social-actors. The approach clearly indicates that the CBNRM idea originated and was engineered from outside the policy space, in this case the UC and other conservancies in the country, limiting the much needed involvement of actors at very low level of

community in the framing and implementation of conservation and environment policies. Although laws and rules are put in place by the legislation and are said to be flexible to allow communities to define themselves, there is no guarantee that they are followed in practice as it is shown by the UC.

This would mean that the issue of how best to devolve control over natural resources to local communities in a way that the poor are the recipient of that power is still juggled with. The CBNRM programme in Namibia has recorded substantial cash incomes received since its inception in the mid 90s, but the people who are suppose to benefit from these benefits are still poor. The Uukwaluudhi experience indicates that conservancy revenues to needy people at the lowest level of community are far from reach and many have even given up dreaming or hoping for such eventuality. Therefore, emphasis on CBNRM programmes should be targeted at the poorest people and policies and regulations must be formulated in that line.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

We cannot dispute that CBNRM is certainly a strategic method of promoting and creating “balanced” economical citizenship. Rural CBNRM programs have worked fairly in most though not all regions and areas of consideration. However, benefits of CBNRM programmes have no discrete establishment of their impact on the bona fide members of conservation as portrayed by Uukwaluudhi conservancy, which is a result of improper planning and design of the program.

It is therefore, imperative that the government ensures that CBNRM modeling should take sufficient time to involve locals in all stages of policy development to implementation of the program rather than handing them a complete model developed somewhere else.

Importantly, the people need to be adequately free and to express their views in a democratic way and unedited. Two key factors to consider in ensuring people’s quality of life is freedom and good governance. A society like the one at Uukwaluudhi must be free to exercise their democratic rights over the control of their natural resources and must have relatively good governance. What is needed at this conservancy is to assist the community to establish countervailing power institutions to massively confront this rotten regime.

It is worth recommending that, the locals should be allowed to design and formulate their own strategies as they deem fit to their situations, settings and lifestyles. This can then be shared with the government, donors and NGOs to reach a consensus. Governments and Donors must allow spaces to establish settings in which certain speeches are not more valuable than others and in which opportunities for learning are broadly available. In this way programmes are designed by people who would manage them and thus enhance the likelihood of positive results.

It is high time that policy makers should make distinctions on targeted groups at local level. People living in rural areas are not all poor. It is therefore, important that studies to categorize the needy people for supplementary benefits than others are required. In addition, it is imperative that CBNRM programme facilitators in Namibia be equipped and be given enough time to sensitize and educate the less status people in the community about their rights and the in-depth intentions and objectives of contemporarily conservation laws. Perhaps the Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre in Brazil can be a good example to the CBNRM programmes. The process could shed some lights to policy-makers, central and local planners on how budget planning has benefited from the wise ideas of the ordinary men and women from the streets. It made it possible for inequalities to be understood as a problem of context rather than as a problem of person and thus it continues to yield results that are beneficial to all in Porto Alegre today (Baiocchi, 2003).

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