



RESOURCE AFRICA

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Community-Based Natural Resource Management

Grassroots governance

What is CBNRM?

The concept of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is based on the premise that the people who live on the land alongside native plants and animals are in the best position to manage and conserve these ecosystems and species. In several southern African countries, CBNRM has become an integral part of national conservation strategies, often complementing state protected areas by maintaining buffer zones and wildlife corridors that connect protected landscapes.

This approach actively includes local communities in conservation by involving them in natural resource management and sharing revenue and benefits arising from sustainable use of biodiversity. CBNRM includes three interlinked aspects – governance, natural resource management, and livelihoods. When the rights to manage natural resources are devolved to the community level and governance systems are in place to channel the income arising from these resources to the whole community, then both people and wildlife can thrive.

Respecting rights, promoting good governance

The application of CBNRM involves community-based organisations (CBOs) that are governed democratically and transparently. These institutions and these principles are critical for negotiating with external stakeholders and defending the rights of local communities to benefit from the sustainable use of their resources. Elected committees of trusted community members and traditional authorities guide the organisation, while office and field staff carry out day-to-day activities on behalf of their communities.

Principles of good governance

While the systems of governance vary somewhat from country to country, good governance systems incorporate most of Elinor Ostrom's eight principles of sustainable management for the commons:

1. Clearly defined boundaries of the group and the land or resources they manage.
2. A close match between the rules of resource governance and local conditions.
3. Those affected by the rules participate in making the rules.
4. Effective monitoring systems involving monitors who are part of or accountable to the community.
5. Graduated sanctions against those who do not respect community rules.
6. Conflict resolution mechanisms that are cheap and easy to access;
7. Minimal recognition of organisational rights granted by external authorities (e.g. government).
8. Multiple layers of nested governance responsibility from the lowest level (e.g. one village) through to the system level (e.g. whole ecosystem or country).



Negotiating with private sector investors

In Southern Africa, local CBOs sustain their operations through income generated from wildlife-based land uses, primarily hunting and photographic tourism. The elected committees are tasked with negotiating with these private sector companies to maximise the benefits derived from these operations for their communities. These agreements may stipulate the number of jobs to be created locally, the price charged per bed night (lodge) or animal (hunted) taken, which parts of the community's land may be used for these activities, and the distribution on non-monetary benefits such as meat or infrastructure.

Equitable benefit distribution

One of the key roles of CBOs is to ensure that benefits arising from wildlife-based land uses are shared equitably within the community. The elected committees propose community projects or individual member benefits to their respective communities at regularly held meetings. In some cases, individual members will receive cash payments, but the funds are often used for projects that have larger social benefits – e.g. buildings for clinics or schools, rural village electrification, pumping clean water, or providing scholarships for higher education.

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Resilient livelihoods

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Supporting livelihoods, increasing resilience

As a people-centred approach to conservation, CBNRM supports the livelihoods of local communities and increases their resilience to external shocks. Environmental shocks such as drought or floods are expected to increase with climate change, making CBNRM a key intervention to increase resilience among rural African communities. International markets and trade for valuable local resources diversify rural livelihoods by providing alternative income streams and job opportunities in new economic sectors.

Developing the wildlife economy

Indigenous plants and animals are generally more resilient to climate-related challenges than domesticated animals and crops. Service-based industries such as tourism provide numerous employment opportunities, while those that place a premium on plant and animal products (e.g. medicinal plants, trophy hunting) can generate high financial returns whilst maintaining sustainable harvest rates. CBNRM allows local communities to develop their own wildlife economies by exploring the options most suited to their particular circumstances, thus supplementing and climate proofing their livelihoods.

Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship

Developing private sector partnerships to reach international markets creates more than just direct revenue for community-based organisations and jobs. These industries create opportunities for community members to sell crafts and fresh produce. Communities may choose to set up their own campsites or lodges and establish cultural centres or activities that provide guests with a deeper insight into traditional African cultures.



Skills development and capacity building

Community-based organisations build the capacity and skills of their leaders and staff members in the fields of financial and human resources management, conservation and wildlife monitoring, and hospitality. Community members who work at lodges and hunting camps can pursue careers in these industries that could otherwise be difficult for them to enter. Some community members may choose conservation careers with government and non-governmental organisations that support CBNRM after being exposed to this field through their community-based organisations.

Linking with emerging global markets

Global funding schemes relating to climate change and biodiversity conservation provide an opportunity for community-based organisations to increase their revenue. Carbon markets and Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes are among the new opportunities that communities could access, provided that the barriers to their participation are not prohibitively high. While some pilot projects exist in Southern Africa, more needs to be done to link local communities with these global markets.

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Conserving biodiversity

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Maintaining habitat, protecting species

Managing natural resources is at the heart of the CBNRM concept. Indigenous peoples and local communities have long-established traditions relating to their resources that prevents over-exploitation and includes respect for wild animals. Modern CBNRM programmes support the rights of these communities to use their resources sustainably while linking them to international markets and associated job opportunities. These resources include plants, fish and land animals.

Wildlife-based land uses

While indigenous plants and animals have traditional uses that support livelihoods, provide food and shelter, local communities can expand the use of their resources by linking with international markets. These include reaching agreements with tour operators that run lodges or camps, allowing hunting outfitters to hunt some animal species in return for meat and income, and harvesting plants that have internationally recognised medicinal or cosmetic uses. Besides the revenue generated by community-based organisations (CBOs) through these uses, jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities are created for community members due to the presence of these industries.

Boots on the ground: Community Rangers

CBOs in Southern Africa are not just passive beneficiaries of the proceeds from using natural resources. They are actively involved in monitoring wildlife numbers, reducing human-wildlife conflict, combatting wildlife crime and ensuring that land set aside for wildlife is not encroached. To carry out these activities, the community organisations employ community rangers (also called village scouts or game guards) who are well respected within their communities and have a detailed knowledge of their land and resources.



Combatting wildlife crime

Where local communities have genuine ownership over their natural resources, they are incentivised to protect it against commercial poachers and illegal harvesters. These resources are regarded by communities as belonging to them and to their children, and must therefore be defended against over-exploitation. While the community rangers play a key role preventing wildlife crime through patrols, ordinary community members are encouraged to report suspicious activities to the rangers.

Mitigating human-wildlife conflict

Living near dangerous wildlife species is one of the greatest challenges for communities in rural Africa. Large carnivores like lions, spotted hyaenas, leopards and others frequently kill livestock, sometimes in large numbers. Large herbivores like elephants, buffalo and hippo can destroy crop fields and gardens. All of these pose a threat to human life and children are especially vulnerable to attacks. CBOs monitor conflict situations and assist their members either financially or with technical support to prevent or respond to conflict incidents.

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Hunting and Community-based Natural Resource Management

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Hunting and Community Conservation Statistics

Hunting tourism, also known as trophy hunting, sport hunting or conservation hunting is a key source of income for communities engaged in Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). Below are estimates for the contribution of hunting to CBNRM in five Southern African countries prior to the impacts of COVID-19 for community-based organisations (CBOs).

The number of people and land engaged in CBNRM in southern Africa and the income they derive from trophy hunting.

	Year	CBOs	Land (km ²)	People	Income (US\$)
Zimbabwe	2016	28	50,000	2,400,000	850,000
Tanzania	2017	21	28,484	350,000	4,300,000
Zambia	2019	90	167,000	5,000,000	5,000,000
Botswana	2011/12	45	66,750	283,123	3,900,000
Namibia	2019	86	166,179	227,802	2,300,000
Total		270	478,413	8,260,925	16,350,000



Conservation outcomes of hunting

Hunting requires relatively intact natural habitat, on either communal or private land. In 2007, an estimated 1,394,000 km² of land was managed for the purposes of hunting wildlife – 22% more land than is covered by National Parks. Intact habitat is critical for biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

Income from hunting across Southern Africa is used to employ community rangers (or scouts, or game guards) who play a key role in anti-poaching initiatives. Namibian communal conservancies employ 763 game guards and community resource monitors (monitoring plants and fish). While rhino poaching continues to be a major threat, Namibian communal conservancies recently recorded more than two years of zero rhino poaching on their lands. Similarly, over 1,000 community scouts are employed in Zambian Game Management Areas. Across Southern Africa, hunting concessionaires and private game ranch owners employ anti-poaching teams to protect wildlife on these lands.

Hunting and tourism are complementary

Countries and remote areas within countries that are not attractive for photographic tourism, which accounts for significant swathes of land in many instances, can still generate income from wildlife-based land uses through hunting, thus maintaining intact habitat for this purpose. This is particularly the case in Mozambique (which is in post-war recovery) and Zimbabwe, although it applies across Southern Africa. The hunting industry is more resilient to external shocks than photographic tourism: due to political instability in Zimbabwe, tourism occupancy declined by 75% while hunting revenues dropped by only 12.2%. Today, over 90% of the income to communities in the Zimbabwe CAMPFIRE programme, which was the first community-based wildlife project to approach wildlife as a renewable, profitable resource, comes from hunting.

With proper land use planning, hunting and photographic tourism can operate alongside each other and support the same community-based organisations (CBOs). Hunting can provide a stepping-stone to developing photographic tourism in areas that have potential, as it requires less infrastructure to start generating benefits from wildlife and thus create conditions that are more conducive to tourism.

The threat of anti-hunting legislation

Whether hunting or photographic tourism is suitable for a given area is best decided by the people living in those areas, rather than policy-makers from other countries. Hunting trophy import bans proposed by non-African countries threaten to reduce the financial viability of hunting in Africa, which will have negative impacts on local livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. The UK, Belgium, Italy and Finland are all currently considering proposed legislation that includes trophy import bans intended to undermine hunting tourism. Communities involved in CBNRM will be most negatively affected by these policies, as most CBOs rely on this income to cover their operating costs and deliver benefits to their communities.

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African resources for African people

Aligning Global Policies with Local Needs

The Nagoya Protocol and Access and Benefit Sharing

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity's Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits was signed in 2010 at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP). The Protocol enables indigenous and local communities to benefit from the commercial use and export of their natural resources and/or traditional knowledge. The requirements for invoking this Protocol to create Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) agreements include the use of the whole biological entity and/or genetic resources and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities.

Current and potential applications of the Nagoya Protocol in Africa

The Nagoya Protocol has already been used successfully to secure the rights of the South African Khoikhoi and San people to derive income from the commercial use of Rooibos, which is used as a tea and herbal medicine in South Africa and exported internationally. This victory came after a nine-year battle that Resource Africa CEO, Leslé Jansen, supported as a lawyer. Although the Nagoya Protocol is currently used for plant resources, there is a strong argument for African countries to apply its provisions to the use of wild animals, their products as well as other natural resources.

Lucrative commercial markets based on African animals include photographic tourism, recreational hunting, live sales and meat. In our globalised world, the clients who are using these resources are not necessarily African (especially in the high-value markets of tourism and hunting), but neither are Rooibos consumers. The use of wildlife relies on traditional knowledge as much as the use of the biological resource Rooibos does. In Southern Africa, the art of tracking animals (used in both tourism industries) is a large part of San, Khoikhoi and Shangaan cultures, to name a few. Traditional methods of skinning game and preparing game meat are still used today, while many tourist lodges and camps use African culture and art for decorative purposes.

By expanding the application of the Nagoya Protocol, African governments can provide tangible benefits for their people that are associated with biological conservation. For example, people living near protected areas could become real shareholders in the conservation and use of the wildlife occurring there. On community lands, this arrangement could pave the way for more engagement with the wildlife economy by strengthening the rights that local communities have over their resources.





Nagoya Protocol and Community-based Natural Resource Management

Several Southern African countries have established their own community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programmes, whereby governments have devolved the right and responsibility to local communities to manage their wildlife and benefit from its use. ABS agreements could strengthen the position of community-based organisations when negotiating contracts with private sector partners in the tourism and hunting industries.

While animal-related ABS agreements would take a different form to the Rooibos case, the basic principle that local communities have the right to benefit from the commercial use of their resources still holds. In countries where CBNRM has not yet been developed, this approach could open the door for communities that want to regain access and control over their resources.

More work needs to be done to create awareness among local communities of international laws that uphold their rights to benefit from the sustainable use of their natural resources and traditional knowledge. While private sector investment is welcomed as a means of generating value for wild landscapes, plants and animals, it is only fair that the stewards and custodians of these valuable resources receive a fair share of the income generated from these commercial uses.

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