Women and CBNRM in Namibia. A Case Study of the IRDNC Community Resource Monitor Project

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CBNRM in Namibia – An Introduction

Namibia has a very active CBNRM programme. This is facilitated at the highest level through the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1975, which was amended in 1996. As a result of this amendment, the Ordinance now gives communal area farmers (as well as commercial farmers) the right to organise themselves into legal bodies, called conservancies, with authority over the consumptive and non-consumptive use of wildlife and some other natural resources (see for example, Jones, 1999). For rural Namibians the primary value of biodiversity is food security (bushmeat, wild fruits, water lilies), particularly in times of famine. In addition, resources are used as materials for household construction and tools, and as a source of cash income (sale of bushmeat, grass/thatch, crafts) (Ntiamoa-Bardu, *et al.*, undated). Conservancies allow local communities to develop this use of biodiversity in a more commercial manner through, for example tourism, sport hunting and/or the sale of products, and to protect it from "outside" interests.

To date, some 15 communal-area conservancies have been registered and another 40-45 are being established. At the start of 2001, 7.5 million hectares of Namibia's communal area was under or developing as, conservancies. In 2000, approximately N$3.5 million[2] was generated by CBNRM for rural people. This rose to N$6.1 million between October, 2000 and September 2001 (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). By 2005 it is anticipated that this will increase to N$10 million (Jacobsohn and Kasaona, 2001).

The CBNRM programme involves a range of donor agencies, commercial companies and NGOs – each with their own roles and responsibilities. One of the main funding vehicles for CBNRM has been through the USAID funded LIFE (Living in a Finite Environment) Programme, established in 1992/3. This is a joint initiative between the US and Namibia government; WWF-US and its management partners; and Namibian NGOs including IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development for Nature Conservation). WWF International, WWF-UK and DFID (Department for International Development, UK) have also been key partners.

IRDNC – Its Goals and Objectives

IRDNC was established as an NGO in the late1980s by its two Namibian directors – Garth Owen-Smith and Dr Margaret Jacobsohn. Initially it was supported by WWF International for the expansion of a community game guard (CGG) project into the Kunene CBNRM project (north-west Namibia). Later, in 1990, and after a request from a local chief that the project should be expanded, additional funding helped start the Caprivi project (north-east Namibia). In 1993, IRDNC was provided a US$138,000 subgrant from the LIFE programme for work in Caprivi and for which subsequent grants have been given since. The project's work in Kunene is now being funded by DFID (through WWF-UK) and the UK Lottery Board. Funding in the past has also been received from Comic Relief, Hivos, Ford Foundation and the Canadian Ambassador's Fund.

IRDNC's primary goal is "to link conservation and sustainable use of wildlife and other natural resources to the social and economic development of rural communities in Namibia" (IRDNC, undated-a).

[2] 1 US$ = 9.57 N$ on 14th November, 2001

Its objectives are:

1) To contribute to building up the natural resource base, as the foundation of all development, in communal areas.
2) To develop the capacity of local communities to jointly manage with government the wildlife and other natural resources in communal areas.
3) To facilitate the return of social and economic benefits from wildlife and other natural resources to the residents of communal areas.
4) To promote community based natural resource management both nationally and internationally (Jacobsohn, pers. comm, 2001; IRDNC, undated-a).

This is to be achieved in Caprivi for example, by addressing the needs of remote rural dwellers through the:

- Creation of jobs through project execution and conservancy formation leading to more secure and improved livelihoods;
- Improving the incomes of conservancy members;
- Diversification of the subsistence economy;
- Sustainable environmental management leading to the reversal of the trend of deterioration of the natural resource base;
- Improved control of problem animals;
- Improved fire policy and practice resulting in improved land utilisation and management;
- The improvement of social organisation and the capacity of self development and ability to influence public development from central government;
- The strengthening of social, economic and political position of women and marginalised San hunter-gather groups in West Caprivi; and
- Community empowerment and the entrenchment of basic human rights.

Since 1996, as the conservancy programme has expanded, IRDNC's primary role has been, and continues to be, to provide technical support, training and interim financial and logistic assistance to registered and emerging communal area conservancies. It was registered as a trust in early 1999 with seven prominent Namibians as trustees who provide overall policy guidelines to the programme.

Initial Marginalisation of Women

When initial moves were made to promote CBNRM in Namibia, women were not taken into consideration, not least due to their lack of participation in traditional androcentric structures. Women were not attending meetings, nor were they being told about the meetings by the men (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). In addition, situations occurred where local conservation groups handed over the management of natural resources to male members of the communities with adverse consequences. For example, Jacobsohn (1993) relates how the management of palm trees (*Hyphaene ventricose*) was placed under the control of local men in Western Kaokoland, Namibia, by local conversationists who were concerned that their use by local women was threatening their survival. A few months later it was noticed that the palms were dying at an accelerated rate. The community blamed the women who used the palms for making baskets, claiming that they were too stupid and lazy to manage the palm trees sustainably. However, during a meeting it transpired that the palms had been previously managed and monitored only by women, and placing a man in charge had

altered the community's relationship with one of their resources and interfered with gender relations. The palms were 'returned' to the women, who agreed to take full responsibility for monitoring the use of the trees.

Indeed, the initial focus of the work of NGOs involved in CBNRM was the setting up of an all-male community game guards (CGG) programme concerned with encouraging communities in taking responsibility for wildlife protection and facilitating problem animal control. It was then realised that there were large gaps and problems in such an approach and not least in that women were receiving few direct benefits from the project, nor playing a role within it (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). In addition it was realised that women were actually major actors in the use of natural resources, the provision of food and income and in general community welfare though being historically marginalised in community and household decision-making processes. Women were also major crop producers and therefore suffered greatly from any animal damage that occurred. At the same time, women had been educationally deprived and consequently had little access to cash and credit opportunities.

As a result it was decided that attempts would be made to involve women in the conservation of natural resources, particularly those resources that they used. Visits were made to women to help spread information about the project and its potential benefits. These were followed by visits to relevant tribal authorities to gain support for the idea – which, subsequently, was given. Then meetings were held to find out what resources were used by the women and why. From these meetings ideas began to grow into the initiative of employing women as community resource monitors (CRMs). This would give women the opportunity of accessing information and a forum for influencing decision-making. It was anticipated that this would then evolve into the actual management of natural resources (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001).

Community Resource Monitors (CRMs)

Thus the CRM programme was initiated in 1994 in East Caprivi with the employment of the first two CRMs (see below). Originally the women were employed to address problem animal concerns (in conjunction with the CGGs) as well as the natural resource management issues faced by women. However, it soon became clear that the primary roles of a CRM should be to organise communities and women's groups to better exploit natural resource management opportunities and to facilitate the flow of information between local users, decision-makers (at both local and regional levels) and the 'external' world e.g. tourist companies and craft sellers (Wyckoff-Baird and Matota, 1995).

Initially the CRMs focussed very much on the gathering of knowledge from local women on natural resource use for example, palms, grasses, trees and veld foods, and understanding the problems that women experienced with these resources. Women used techniques such as group discussions, resource maps, seasonal calenders, ranking exercises and trend matrices to collection information on who had tenure and use rights to the resources; what veld products were being used, by whom and why; what was the availability of markets; and what importance were the products to the household economy (*ibid*). The information was then used in the planning and continuing development of the project (IRDNC, undated-b). For example, women's knowledge was used concerning which parts of palm leaves should be harvested for baskets without affecting the regeneration of the mother plant. The women also

specified the frequency, season and height for cutting thatch grass to optimise its productivity.

CRMs were not appointed to stop people from using resources but rather to collect information on the resources (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). Despite this, initially, the local people viewed the CRMs with suspicion. They were thought of as informers, as they were constantly moving around the neighbourhoods and watching people's use of resources. The local communities had to be assured that the CRM's position was merely one of monitoring and not, at that stage, one of reporting/informing.

As the programme developed it aimed to raise the capacity of women in CBNRM activities rather than just promote gender balance (and quotas of women) within community organisations. It promoted the active participation of rural women in natural resource management by their appointment as facilitators within IRDNC and by encouraging conservancies to appoint women as CRMs and community activators (CAs) (as they were called in Kunene). Advice on gender issues was provided by Barbara Wyckoff-Baird, who was at that time technical adviser on the LIFE programme.

Variable Successes, Problems and Constraints

The project is now based in three areas – Kunene and West and East Caprivi – between which there are many differences, both positive and negative. These are due to a number of reasons including the geographical and cultural contexts of the local women involved; the length of the presence of the project; and the use of slightly different management approaches within the different areas.

In West Caprivi, for example an independent assessment of the CRM programme (Berger, 1997) observed that the programme there had been a good channel of communication reaching women and giving them a role in conservation. It had given an opportunity to women to become employed and exposed them to modern life skills, roles and responsibilities and functions. In addition it appeared to have created a greater awareness among women for the need to care for resources upon which they depended. However, several problems were identified including the fact that although people listened to what the CRMs told them about better harvesting practices, they often continued to, for example, cut down trees instead of shaking off the fruit. In addition, many CRMs were not performing according to IRDNC's expectations and objectives; there appeared to be a lack of enthusiasm and commitment to work; and many had difficulties in communicating conservancy concepts and information with IRDNC management and outsiders.

Berger (1997) suggested that the reasons for these problems might be due to a lack of managerial capacity to provide enough guidance and supervision to CRMs; historical influences; the degree to which resource monitoring is seen by the community to be a meaningful activity; and "cross cultural confusion". By this latter statement she meant that between 'bushmen' and the 'modern' world-view as well as social processes and relationships. She suggested that there was difficulty in finding a common ground to establish understanding and trust, so goals and expectations were disconnected. For example, there was not a good understanding of what it meant to "have a job". There was a lack of female role models for individual job status – it was unusual for women within the local communities to be in such a position and this may have caused conflict

within their families and the community. In addition, the notion of being paid to look for veld foods seemed strange to many as it was something they had always done for free. And a drawback of paid employment was that it did not produce tangible benefits for the individual nor the community. The only benefit, money for the job (which can not be easily supervised) merely required one to turn up to collect a pay-cheque. As a result CRMs were not being associated with any activity that was perceived as helping people or the community.

As a result of this assessment, evaluations with the communities were carried out to value the CRMs work. In addition, alternative strategies were worked out for paying them for specific tasks rather than a monthly salary; a community drama group was set up for education and tourist activities; and workshops were given to provide further training in data collection techniques (see for example McGrath and Matota, 1998; Paxton, 1999). A social intern – Karine Rousset – was employed by the project to carry out anthropological work and participatory exercises to gain a better understanding of the local context and the problems that had arisen. The CRMs were renamed in their local language *Kwena Chapi* or 'community keys'.

The new phase of the project, which followed the assessment, began with a four-day workshop where problems were raised and discussed, and solutions suggested. Role play sketches formed an important part of this work allowing local people to show their own perspectives and ideas. Problems raised included children spending too much time in night-clubs; conflicts over resources between ethnic groups; lack of adequate water supply; senior traditional leadership treating women's money as theirs; drunk soldiers; and little support for the CRMs. Over the following year or so these problems were looked into in more detail and Karine and the local women drew up plans and facilitated ways to address them (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). Karine's work also suggested that cultural factors were a primary reason for the lack of enthusiasm and activity of the CRMs. These included the traditional presence of feelings of resentment towards anyone who might be seen as being 'successful' or singled out as a leader. Whether they were male or female made little difference (Rousset, pers. comm., 2001).

Exchange visits have been carried out between the different groups of CRMs. For example in 1999 such an exchange was facilitated between the CAs in Kunene and the CRMs in Caprivi with the main aim of facilitating the exchange of ideas between them (see Rousset, 1999). Differences found between the two groups was that in Kunene it was the women who pushed the communities to achieve things – community meetings were often chaired by women and it appeared that the Kunene women had a better grasp of the conservancy concept than their Caprivian counterparts. It was felt that this was due to their relatively small numbers (7 CAs in Kunene compared to 24 CRMs in Caprivi) and to their full-time positions, allowing for more one-on-one training. On the other hand the Kunene region had no formal structure in place to deal with the management of plant resources nor a strong craft programme – both a focus of the Caprivi CRMs.

In addition the women from Caprivi were impressed by the amount of wildlife that was seen in Kunene and that there appeared to be a greater awareness of its value. For example, one woman from Caprivi stated that " the wildlife is like their goats". Indeed, in Caprivi there is much less wildlife than in Kunene, primarily due to the much higher human population found there which limits the wildlife to in, and around, National

Parks. For example, in East Caprivi most of the wildlife is found close by to the two major parks – Mamili and Muduma (both of which, incidentally, were created 24 hours before Independence and without consultation with the local communities).

Unfortunately, the exchange visit also highlighted and indeed, failed to resolve tensions between the different regional groups of CRMs, despite an objective of the team-building exercise to create a base for future collaboration. The West Caprivi CRMs were under the impression that the East Caprivi CRMs were against them, and in turn, some of the East Caprivians felt antagonism from the Kunene CAs. In both instances, deep-seated prejudices may have played a part, but language barriers and the resultant difficulties to communicate exacerbated things. For example, despite translations being given throughout the trip, the West Caprivi CRMs did not engage in group discussions and question-answer sessions. This may have been due to their low self-esteem, coupled with hesitancy to use their home language publicly while others were proficient in English and Afrikaans (*ibid*).

Positive Achievements of the CRM Programme

Despite these problems the CRM programme has been very successful in many areas. Today, the CRMs are led by Janet Matota. Janet became a CRM in 1994/5 when she was 28. She was the first CRM to be employed by the project and was soon joined by her now deputy – Loveness Shitaa. Janet was born in Zimbabwe and came to Namibia when her father changed jobs. When she first took the position she was considered to be very shy (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001). Since then she has been trained through UNIFEM and also carried out training herself. In 1998 she obtained her driving licence (an unusual event for a woman in rural Namibia) which placed her in a much stronger position for providing training and supervision of the CRMs and craft groups, and in linking her work with conservancy development. By 2001 her confidence had grown greatly and she is now a strong, respected and outspoken woman.

Today there are over 35 CRM/CAs in both the Kunene and Caprivi regions. In East Caprivi there are 11 CRMs, including Janet and Loveness – 5 of whom are paid directly by IRDNC and 6 paid for by the conservancies. IRDNC pays the CRMs approximately N$600[3] per month, in contrast the conservancies pay less. For example Mayuni conservancy pays between N$300-350 per month (Matota, pers.comm., 2001). Despite these differences any income is of benefit – unemployment is a large problem in the area so jobs are hard to come by. In addition, these jobs do not require women to read and write – many cannot.

In the future CRMs will be progressively integrated into the conservancies, who will be given guidance on planning and directing the CRMs in carrying out their duties, dealing with disciplinary issues and paying salaries. Minor adjustments in job descriptions are expected to allow the CRMs to conform to the management activities of each conservancy. As the role of CRMs has developed over the years, they now have the ability to get involved in a wide range of activities in connection with conservancy development. These are:

- the formation of and working with crafts groups as part of craft sales outlets;
- monitoring use of resources used for crafts, food, building and medicines;

[3] To give some idea of the size of this wage in the local context - a bag of mealie meal costs approximately N$16.

- developing a resource inventory that can be identified and recorded;
- mapping resources;
- provision of data and information on resources;
- planting and propagating gardens of priority resources under heavy use by enterprise related activities e.g. palms;
- developing social maps to aid conservancy formation and management;
- liasing between community, committees, IRDNC, MET (Ministry of Environment and Tourism), professional hunters and other organisations & passing on information;
- assisting with problem animal control;
- assisting with applications;
- assisting with benefit distribution;
- assisting with conservancy membership registration;
- assisting with committee formation;
- assisting with drawing up a constitution;
- discussing and helping with land use planning; and
- involving women in decision-making and ensuring that they are represented.

The project has been particularly successful in East Caprivi (the main area visited during this case study). Here the project has now grown from the initial focus on the dissemination of information to a wide range of activities summarised in Box 1 and discussed in more detail below.

Crafts

Many women, particularly in East Caprivi, are involved in the making of baskets – 7 groups in 5 different villages. The women tend to make the baskets at home in their own spare time. The groups act more as a forum for information exchange, coordination, marketing and training. Originally the women in Caprivi took their baskets to Katima (approximately 120 kms away) for sale where a craft market – CACA (Caprivi Arts and Culture Association) – had been set up with support from SIDA (Swedish international development fund). However, CACA ran into several problems including the disappearance of some of the money owed to basket-makers. This was due, it was suggested, to bad accounting (Shitaa, pers. comm., 2001). Alternatives were thus sought and a craft centre was set up in a location closer to the majority of basket-makers on the dirt-track that tourists took to the Malimi NP. IRDNC built the main framework for the centre and the local communities provided the thatch and mud for the walls.

However, this centre also ran into problems due to local women not having enough free-time to man the market voluntarily and there not being enough business due to the dramatic collapse of tourism as a result of conflicts along West Caprivi's Angolan border, to warrant the hiring of full-time staff. As a result the market has been temporarily closed down and the women are now selling their baskets to the Mashi Craft Shop at Kongola (approximately 35 kms away) and to Rossing Foundation's Mud Hut crafts in Windhoek. Unfortunately this means a commission being placed upon the crafts – for example Mashi places 40% commission on the goods which is used to pay for wages, per diems, stationary etc. Mashi, also an IRDNC initiative, has been developed into a locally managed (by women) business, and until the spillover of

the Angolan war in January 2000, this craft centre was making a profit. Currently, most craft income comes from sales to Rossing Foundation's Windhoek shop.

Box 1

Summary of Roles of CRMs in East Caprivi

1. **Monitoring** – tree, palm, grass and find monitoring systems for other resources; training and monitoring systems.
2. **Meetings** – find out resources being used (data collection); find out about resource problems.
3. **Training in harvesting** – e.g. methods, time; planting palm gardens.
4. **Management** – fences; planting palms and trees (dye); weeding palm gardens.

5. **To support Conservancy Development:**

a) Registration of members.
b) Promote conservancy awareness – meetings about what is happening in conservancy; talk on radio about what is happening.
c) Social surveys – household surveys; community maps; find improved method.

6. **Promote women's involvement in CBNRM.**

a) Meetings about – becoming active in CBNRM; how to benefit from CBNRM (ideas); how to control veld fires; finding out problems; commission levels on crafts; men's impact on women's natural resources.
b) Training – capacity building (pass on raw knowledge); pricing and grading of crafts; harvesting techniques; quality control; book-keeping; monitoring (trees, palms, grass).
c) Communication with CBNRM partners – establish contact with Women's Affairs; maintain links with national craft groups; strengthen influence in national CBNRM organisations; organise regular radio talks on women's involvement in CBNRM.

7. **Coordination**

a) Report back to conservancy committees and traditional authorities; partners (MET, IRDNC).
b) Meetings – khuta; Conservancy; CRM planning; partners (MET, IRDNC).

8. **Promote Aids Awareness and Family Planning**

a) Training in protecting themselves – condoms, AIDs, one partner; family planning. SMA.

9. **Support Caprivi Crafts Industry**

a) Training workshop; book-keeping; pricing and grading; quality control; market requirements.
b) Find markets for products (marketing); communication with CBNRM partners; advertising (radio, t-shirts, TV, signs); exchange visits (opportunities, ideas).
c) Meetings to place craft orders; improve quality; collect crafts (grade); feedback on sales.

10. **Monitor Natural Resources**

a) Use: how much being harvested. Best practice: palms – leaves cut (number baskets); thatch – bundles cut (bundles sold and new roofs and sledges).
b) Health: how many are left; how healthy.
c) Other impacts: rain; wildlife; fire; other plants; livestock; cropping.

Source: Summary of Workshop at Kubunyana Campsite, 24th June, 2000

The women are paid by the craft market on a monthly basis and for those products sold. Often the women will work to specific orders. For example one group recently received an order for 60 mats for which they would be paid approximately N$1 per mat. The baskets are graded according to their quality. High quality large baskets which might take as long as 1 month (part-time) to make, can sell for between N$60-100. Dyes for the baskets are collected/made from bark and shrubs (red-brown colours) growing in the local area, as well as from sorghum leaves (mauve), ash (grey) and very rusty tin cans (dark brown).

The development of the craft programme as an enterprise for women and other disadvantaged groups has led to the establishment of new revenue sources for the area. Today, approximately 700 people (formed in groups of about 30) are involved in making crafts including children and one or two men. In addition some people have become involved in other enterprise developments through small credit loans from the Development Bank (Shitaa, pers. comm., 2001). Women earn on average approximately N$250 per month making baskets. One craft worker – Mary Lyonga – explained that she saves some of this money in a savings account and the rest is spent on the household.

The women have been trained in alternative methods of weaving to improve the quality of the finished products and make them more suitable for urban tastes. And they are very keen to take part in further training for the production of crafts other than baskets (Lyonga, pers. comm., 2001). It is aimed that at least 50% of people involved in project-facilitated income generation will be women. By encouraging this, there is the risk that women may become over-worked, however the CRMs try to make sure that this does not happen (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001).

Visits continue to be arranged between the different groups – for example arrangements had recently been made for the Kunene group to visit Caprivi for a demonstration on basket making and the use of dyes, later in the year. And in 1997 the Caprivi group made a visit to a women's craft group in Botswana where they exchanged basket making techniques and the Namibian women learnt how to make closed Botswana baskets.

Palm gardens

It was realised that as the craft enterprise grew there would be an increasing demand for palms. One bundle of palm will make 2-3 baskets. Many of the palms around the villages in East Caprivi had been so badly damaged in the past that they could not provide an adequate supply and therefore the women had to travel to Katima to collect palms from there. This involved a journey of 2-3 hours each way and began to generate a feeling of resentment from the local communities in Katima. Therefore it was decided that palm gardens would be established within the villages so that their own supply could be grown.

Several palm gardens have been planted in the villages of East Caprivi. Depending upon the water supply the palms take approximately 6 months to grow and 5-6 years to mature. The women tend the palms, as well as a few dye trees that are also planted there.

Thatch grass

Thatch grass has always been used locally as a roofing material. However, rarely was it sold by the communities on a commercial basis, not least due to a lack of markets. The LIFE programme and IRDNC found a number of markets for the grass including its purchase by local tourist lodges. It is suggested that the harvesting of thatch grass "is an almost perfect example of sustainable commercial use of a wild resource, because the resource is tolerant of intensive exploitation; if not used, the resource is lost as a result of naturally occurring bush fires; appropriate harvesting methods are already known by the community; and a stable market for the product is close by"

(Ntiamoa-Bardu *et al.*, undated: 38). However, in the first few years of the project there were a number of problems. Buyers placed orders that were not purchased and much of the grass was left to rot. Some buyers would buy from the same location, leaving other locations no opportunity to sell their grass. And in addition, the local women were not adequately organised to negotiate their demands.

To reduce these risks and address the problems more markets and buyers were found to increase the competition and room for negotiation, and women were better organised into groups. To ensure the sustainability of the resource base CRMs were trained to monitor the effect of harvesting on the growth and spread of the grass. Before the project, women in the villages within the project area were earning less than US$27/season through its sale. In contrast in 1994-5 they earned US$130-260 and the whole of Lizauli village (a total of about 160 women), for example, earned US$17,000 (Ntiamoa-Bardu, undated:40; Wyckoff-Baird and Matota, 1995). It is suggested that in 3 years the thatching grass project in Caprivi provided benefits of N$400,000 to over 800 households (Hagen and Wyckoff-Baird, 1998). Local lodges such as Lianshulu continue to purchase grass from local communities on a regular basis. The women control the harvesting of grass and at one stage there was a worry that because it was becoming commercially successful that the men would try to take over the business. However, the CRMs monitored the process and have prevented this from happening.

Monitoring of the resources

The monitoring of the natural resources continues. Originally CRMs in Caprivi, for example, monitored trees and palms. Lilies – an important food source – were then added to the list, however these proved very difficult to measure. Today, a greater emphasis is placed upon monitoring those trees that are used for dyes and for wood carving in view of their greater demand due to the increasing craft projects. A survey is made every 6 months – if the trees are found to be damaged then the CRMs will go to those people who have been using the trees and ask them not to use them in such an unsustainable manner. If there are any further problems then reports are made to the village chiefs (Shitaa, pers.com., 2001; Mushavanga, pers. comm., 2001).

The CRMs work in small teams and are accompanied by CGGs. In East Caprivi the women will stay with other women in the villages where they are working, however in West Caprivi and Kunene the CRMs will work from pre-arranged bases (Shitaa, pers.comm., 2001). In West Caprivi this is proving more difficult due to the conflicts in the area.

Tourism

In 1993 Lianshulu Lodge in East Caprivi introduced a levy of US$1.5 per visitor for every night which was distributed to the 5 neighbouring communities – Lianshulu, Sauzuo, Lizauli, Sachona and Lubuta. By April 1995, more than US$7,000 had accumulated but not yet distributed. In addition a Traditional Village was set up in Lizauli by the Lodge where tourists paid US$5 – the majority of which went to the village (Ntiamoa-Bardu, undated: 42). It was anticipated that similar arrangements would be made with other lodges and tourism schemes and in addition, staff would be increasingly employed from the local communities. For example, one woman employed by Lianshulu as their housekeeper – Esther Makokwa – worked full-time for the Lodge where she lived (away from her family) and earned a wage of N$1,000 per

month (Makokwa, pers. comm., 2001). In addition several campsites have been set up by groups within the local communities, with the support of IRDNC. Again, the collapse of tourism as a result of the Angolan war, exacerbated by the Zimbabwean unrest, has meant that these local businesses are not currently earning any income.

Where local people have been employed by lodges the work has been very much defined along traditional roles – men are employed as guides and scouts and women are employed as cleaners, administration and kitchen staff. It was suggested by the manager of Lianshulu Lodge that he would consider taking on women as guides if they were trained, however they did not come forward and apply for the positions (Nicolas, pers. comm., 2001).

Other developments

A number of other smaller projects have been successful in West Caprivi. For example, the women in the community realised that because more children were going to school they were not spending enough time in the bush and learning about the natural resources. As a result posters were produced for the schools illustrating and describing local plants and veld foods. In addition, a 'living catalogue' has been established in the local project office, cataloguing the natural resources of the area – anyone can add to the book at any time.

Social Benefits

The CRMs who were visited during this study appeared confident and happy with their work. It was also clear that in East Caprivi they were seen as having some status within the local society. This was also confirmed for West Caprivi by Rena Mushavanga (pers. comm., 2001) – a CRM there – who said that she felt that CRMs had improved women's position in the community. Women had more confidence; they contributed to local meetings and gave support and encouragement to other women to do the same. Though in Caprivi the women are officially working on a part-time basis, the women find themselves in much demand, which sometimes conflicts with their own personal responsibilities. However, most do not mind the extra work as they know that it is valued. As Loveness Shitaa explained – "before, the women were left behind, now they are seen as being as much a part of the community as the men". In general the women are supported in their work by the men, who will, for example, go with the women on occasions to collect palms and/or other resources that are needed (Lyonga, pers. comm., 2001).

It was stressed that in Namibia the emphasis on extended families make things very difficult for people as the responsibilities for one's family can be large. Generally men are thought of as the head of the household, however if the woman is earning more than her husband, then she will be considered as being so. One of the most difficult times for families is at times of funerals especially if the person dies in a hospital as a coffin would need to be bought and transport arranged for the return of the body as well as for grave diggers. In contrast, if somebody should die at home, they would be buried more simply and cheaply in a blanket. It is also the custom that one should not refuse anybody anything in his/her time of need, therefore people are always borrowing things – such as oil and sugar. Support to women at these times is important and the project through its emphasis on bringing women together and opening up opportunities to them helps provide such support (Matota, pers. comm., 2001).

In addition it was felt that women in the local communities play an increasing role in the decision-making processes, especially those involving natural resources. Today, IRDNC attempts to make the planning and implementation of its work as participatory as possible. For example, social maps are produced by different groups in the communities (e.g. men and women) at the formation stage of any conservancy and thereafter periodically updated. One particular PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) exercise that had been carried out was attempting to resolve a dispute over a conservancy boundary. And through social mapping in different male/female groups it was found that men and women held different ideas and priorities for the boundaries depending upon their different resource use. The men valued the lowland areas more and the women stressed the importance of the mountain areas which they used extensively for medicinal plant collection (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001).

Remaining Problems and Constraints

There are a number of problems and constraints that compromise the success of the CRM programme. These include a continuing male domination in societies and institutions; conflicts between local food security and commercial enterprises; the handing over of responsibility for CRMs to conservancies; continuing problems with elephants and other wildlife; and international and local ethnic conflicts.

Continuing male domination in societies and institutions.

The traditional institutions are still very male dominated. All major decisions within the community are made by the 'khuta' the all-male controlling institution. Women are allowed to attend khuta meetings however they must do so in traditional wrap with their heads covered. Women may ask questions when invited to do so. This male domination is still reflected within the conservancy committees and their organisation, though the criteria and procedure for being recognised as a conservancy states that no-one may be excluded on the grounds of ethnicity or gender (Jones, 1999). For example, in some conservancies though it is true that women are indeed committee members and some hold important positions such as in Environmental Education and Outreach, when it comes to who is going to cook lunch for the committee members at the AGM this is seen as the women's job whether this means that they will miss part of the meeting or not. At IRDNC community meetings local women are employed as caterers.

The LIFE programme has set targets for the percentage of women playing a significant role in the management of conservancies (WWF-US, 1999): 20% by 1999; 25% by 2000; 30% by 2001; and 35% by 2002. Such a role includes for example, participation on conservancy management committees and ensuring that the needs of female-headed households are considered by conservancies in the development of benefits distribution plans (*ibid*). Though in some conservancies these targets have been met, in the majority this is not the case. In addition, as suggested above, even if they have been met the 'quality' of such involvement could be questioned.

In addition it still proves difficult for the many women to get more involved in the project and for example the income generating initiatives – not just because of time but because many men will not support them. It was suggested that it is easier for a woman to become involved in the programme if she and her husband are 'close' – that is living together on a daily basis, rather than the husband working away in a town or city

(Mukwata, pers. comm., 2001). Increasingly men have to search for work beyond the local area as unemployment is a large problem.

Conflicts between local food security and commercial enterprises

Veld foods are a very important component of every day diet as well as in times of drought. This is particularly true for the poorer members of the communities. Few of these products are utilised on a commercial basis. As Kamminga (undated:7) confirms "the variety of products utilized is limited, the uses not very varied, processing methods and marketing not well developed either. The Marula tree, for example is hardly utilized. This could be explained by the fact that East Caprivians have traditionally been more oriented towards water [rather] than land. Some of the elderly women spoken to, however, remembered that during their youth all kind of beverages were made from fruits and other products were utilized. There might be opportunities for expanding and enhancing activities in this area, [which] might also create goodwill and incentives in favour of forest management".

The project has tried to develop some of the products for commercial use and sale. For example the mongongo nut is widely grown and extremely popular for its taste and high nutritional value[4]. The nut was tested by a product research group in Windhoek for its viability as a commercial product and the result was very positive. However, once harvesting began the local women became less enthusiastic about the idea of selling the nut – they would rather have the food source than the money, not least because the money might be spent by their husbands on alcohol. As a result the enterprise was stopped.

The handing over of responsibility for CRMs to conservancies

Today, the responsibility for CRMs is gradually being passed over to the relevant conservancy committees, including payment of their wages, their management and discipline. This is considered to be vital if the sustainability of the programme is to be achieved (Jacobsohn, pers. comm., 2001).

However, this has caused a number of problems. For example, in order to share the benefits of the programme amongst a greater number of women, in West Caprivi the CRMs have been made 1/4 times rather than 1/2 times by the local committee which hoped to develop a conservancy. Though this certainly may be beneficial in some ways, it also created problems – there were more women to account for; the women were working for less so were not so enthusiastic; and training proved more difficult. In addition, because the conservancies are now employing the women rather than the project, there tends to be a large number of relatives being chosen. This may well cause problems in the future and some resentment from other members of the communities.

Finally, some women expressed concern that they were not sure how sustainable the CRM project was without the backing of IRDNC. They suggested that when complete authority for the monitors is passed over to the conservancies there might not be such enthusiasm or support for them and their work.

[4] The nut is 28.8% protein (Reader, 1997).

Continuing problems with elephants and other wildlife

Elephants are a particular problem in East Caprivi – many hours are spent by women and men guarding crops and yet still crops are destroyed. Attempts to build fences and alarms have failed as the elephants have easily destroyed them. The most contentious issue is that no compensation is given for lost crops and this has made the local women very angry. However even if compensation was given the animals still need to be controlled. Otherwise it will remain unsafe to live in the area (Matota, pers. comm., 2001). Elephants can only be shot with specific permission from the MET. Lions can be, and have been shot if they threaten stock or people. As a result it is often the case that the women will collect the crops before they have reached maturity to avoid their destruction. It is felt that it is better to collect what there is whilst it remains rather than risk losing it all.

International and local ethnic conflicts

Tourism has been greatly affected by the troubles close to the Angolan border. As a result, the opportunities that were being opened up for the local communities by tourism have been severely curtailed. The new lodge manager at Lianshulu stated that in 1998 the lodge had received about 2,500 visitors – In the year 2000 they had only seen 50. This was despite that fact that the lodge had its own airstrip and the last 'incident' in the area had been in February, 2000 (Nicolas, pers. comm., 2001). As a result many lodges were surviving on reduced numbers of staff and at the same time had reduced their donations/bed levies, to the local communities. Lianshulu, for example, had stopped their contribution altogether.

Baskets made by the women were still being sold, mostly to Mud Hut Trading in Windhoek and some at the lodges, though again sales in recent months have been reduced. Despite this, the craft projects as a whole were fairing better than tourism and were still able to find markets for the goods. For example in 1999 the income from the campsites within the project was N$46,000 with crafts taking $N68,000. By 2000 both had been severely reduced, however the crafts were still able to make $N40,000 – the campsites only taking N$24,000.

The problem of conflicts between ethnic groups at a local level is also a problem for the project and in many areas it appears to be more of a problem than gender differences. For example, there have been several conflicts over boundaries during conservancy establishments (see for example, Corbett and Jones, 2000) and public demonstrations against the project and IRDNC in north-west Namibia (Sullivan, in press). In addition, the continuing conflicts spilling over the Angolan border are greatly affecting the success of the project in West Caprivi in more direct ways. It is extremely difficult to move around, many locals have fled the homes and there is pressure from some donors, such as the US, to move out of the area altogether.

Summary and Conclusions

Initially, women were marginalised within the CBNRM process in Namibia. However, it was then realised that this was not of benefit either to the women, the local communities as a whole or to CBNRM. As a result ways were found that attempted to draw women into the conservation process. Primarily this was achieved through the IRDNC initiated CRM project. This project has developed over time from an emphasis

on problem animal control to the sustainable management of natural resources and income-generation activities.

The strengths of the IRDNC CRM project have been, and continue to be:

- The valuing of women's knowledge of local biodiversity;
- The use of participatory methods to collect information;
- The recognition of the inequities that exist in the local societies;
- Its attempts to change such inequities through supporting women and finding ways to improve their status and contribution to the community and household;
- Exposing women to modern life skills, roles, responsibilities and functions without forcing them to take up such things against their will;
- Its ability to build upon the traditional roles of women such as collecting grass and basket-making – both traditionally seen as "women's work";
- Finding ways for women to improve their income and that of the household. Though the amount generated may not appear to be large – for the poorest amongst the communities it is certainly very beneficial. Reliance on income generation through products, such as baskets, means that the money/benefits can be easily returned to the producer. This proves more difficult when dividing out money/benefits from e.g. camp-sites and/or sport hunting.
- Its recognition of and ability to build upon the strong alliances that exist between women in their villages – this formed a good basis for working together on natural resource management issues;
- Its ability (though some might say luck) to choose women to lead the project who had strength, conviction and enthusiasm to continue despite problems;
- Ensuring that women take on responsibilities e.g. for the sustainability of the natural resources that they use;
- The formation of a good communication network between women, the rest of the local communities and 'outsiders';
- The exchange of ideas and experiences between the different groups within the project and also, with similar groups from other projects e.g. through exchange trips;
- The emphasis on integrating the CRMs into conservancy management to encourage sustainability;
- An approach that focuses on 'gender mainstreaming' rather than quantitative measurements of numbers of women on committees etc;
- The provision of advice on gender issues to the project from 'outsiders';
- The flexibility to adapt the programme to local contexts;
- Having faith that the programme will work despite the problems that have arisen.

The weaknesses of the IRDNC CRM project have been and may continue to be:

- Not enough support/supervision in the early stages of the project to guide and train women in their expected roles;
- Not enough emphasis on smoothing out the problems that arose in the initial stages of the project;
- Having too high expectations of what CRMs could achieve in the complex socio-economic and political contexts in which they work;
- Reliance on a small number of women to hold the project together – without these women and their strengths, the project may fall apart;

- Promoting gender stereotypical roles through supporting projects for women that have always considered to be "women's work". It could be suggested that the project could do more to break such stereotyping, though it is agreed that such issues are very culturally sensitive;
- A lack of gender expertise within the organisation so that gender and women's issues have been addressed when problems have arisen and in a somewhat 'hit and miss' manner. A more planned, structured and strategic addressing of such issues may have avoided such problems in the first place;
- The questionable sustainability of the project once it has been totally handed over to the conservancies.

These strengths and weaknesses are not exhaustive and it should be recognised result from what was a comparatively short visit and study of the CRM programme. Also, as can be seen, some points can be defined as both strengths and weaknesses depending upon which angle they are looked from. This illustrates the complexity and sensitivities of the situation and suggests how difficult it is to address gender issues and support women and "women's project's".

There has been much criticism against the CBNRM process due to its emphasis, in the past, on large animals – usually considered to be the domain of men (see for example, Sullivan, 1999). As a result women had been marginalised and generally, had 'missed out' from any benefits that had resulted. The CRM programme, as it has evolved in the past ten years, has certainly changed this and though, the project is not perfect by any means, many positive aspects have been achieved. Women have now been drawn into the CBNRM process and are receiving benefits from it. Their roles and responsibilities have been recognised and continue to be built upon. In addition their position within local communities has improved and their self-esteem and confidence has grown. Despite this, large challenges still exist that need to be overcome. The most important of these is to ensure the sustainability of the programme in the future and particularly under conservancy management. Though firm foundations appear to be in place for doing so, how successfully this will be achieved is yet to be seen.

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