



# **Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO)**

Strategic Plan 2016-2020



## **1. Introduction | 3**

## **2. Situational Analysis: The Context of CBNRM in Namibia | 4**

### **2.1 Growth and Achievements of CBNRM in Namibia | 4**

### **2.2 Local Governance | 6**

### **2.3 Resurgence of poaching | 7**

### **2.4 Threats to trophy hunting as a revenue source | 7**

### **2.5 Land use and integrated natural resource management | 8**

### **2.6 Financing CBNRM | 8**

### **2.7 Organizational Capacity | 10**

## **3. Looking Inward: NACSO's Organisational Achievements and Challenges | 10**

### **3.1 Background: NACSO Structure | 10**

### **3.2 NACSO's Achievements & Strengths | 11**

### **3.3 Organizational Weaknesses | 13**

#### **3.3.1 Capacity and Resource Constraints | 13**

#### **3.3.2 Internal and external communications | 14**

#### **3.3.3 Membership and composition | 14**

#### **3.3.4 Prioritization | 14**

## **4. Strategy | 15**

### **4.1 Key Functions | 15**

#### **4.1.1 Technical Support and Development | 16**

#### **4.1.2 Information and Communications | 16**

#### **4.1.3 Government Relations and Advocacy | 17**

#### **4.1.4 Capacity & Resourcing | 17**

### **4.2 Thematic Priorities | 17**

#### **4.2.1 Integrated Natural Resource Management | 17**

#### **4.2.2 Trophy Hunting as a Sustainable Use Option | 18**

#### **4.2.3 Governance and Accountability 19**

## **5. Organizing NACSO's Work: Operational Goals and Objectives | 19**

**5.1** Technical Support & Development | 19

**5.2** Information and Communications | 20

**5.3** Government Relations and Advocacy | 20

**5.4** Leadership & Capacity Development | 21

## **6. Strengthening NACSO as an Association | 21**

**6.1** Human Resources | 21

**6.2** Financing | 22

**6.3** Structure | 22

## **7. Key Partners & Roles | 23**

## **Annex 1: NACSO Membership Profiles | 24**





# 1 Introduction

The Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) is a consortium of nine Namibian civil society organisations that works together to support, promote and strengthen community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). NACSO was formed in the late 1990s in order to serve a core coordination function within the overall CBNRM program that was being established at that time, following reforms to law and policy in 1995/96 that created the basis for the establishment of communal conservancies. Since that time, NACSO has played a key role in the development of Namibia's CBNRM program, which today has expanded to deliver a growing suite of critical conservation, rural development, tourism investment, and economic diversification functions.

NACSO's key functions are to coordinate the delivery of technical support services related to CBNRM- originally focused on the conservancies but now broadened to include community forests and a more holistic set of natural resource management issues- to rural communities, as well as providing a collective action body for influencing policy and engaging with government. NACSO also plays key monitoring, informational and communication functions, such as its annual or bi-annual State of Community Conservation in Namibia reports, and the information database covering different CBNRM impacts that they draw on.

**This Strategic Plan identifies NACSO's overarching priorities for the next five years, based around the key functions it plays in Namibia's CBNRM program.**

The plan seeks to address both opportunities created by the significant achievements of the program during the past 20 years and to address new external and internal threats and challenges. The plan includes priorities around strengthening the overall organizational and leadership capacity of its members and to build its capacity within the secretariat.

CBNRM in Namibia is undergoing a range of transformative changes at present, with the development of new long-term funding sources, a growing number of communities requiring different forms of support for conservancies and community forests, new challenges to sustainable use and trophy hunting revenue linked to a shifting global policy environment, and significant capacity and resourcing challenges within NACSO's membership. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to enable NACSO and its members to recalibrate efforts and investments in light of this changing environment, while building on the great progress and impacts achieved- often through the strong collective action and collaboration that NACSO has fostered- during the past twenty years.

## 2

## Situational Analysis: The Context of CBNRM in Namibia

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) has developed during the past 20 years into a cornerstone of Namibia's conservation, rural development, and economic policies and practices. CBNRM is a foundation of Namibia's role as a global leader in biodiversity conservation, of the growing national tourism industry, and in diversifying rural livelihoods through income and employment. NACSO has played a key role since its founding as the key coordinating body for Namibian organizations working on CBNRM, as well as building strong partnerships between Namibian NGOs, the government, and international organizations such as WWF.

Today, CBNRM in Namibia is undergoing a process of change and confronting a range of new challenges. Emergent threats include the resurgence of elephant and rhino poaching, new policy developments related to sectors such as land tenure and agriculture, and a recent increase in threats to sustainable trophy hunting as a result of international media and policy pressures. Local conservancy governance weaknesses related to financial management and accountability are a chronic problem in limiting community level benefits from wildlife, and have the potential to undermine local, national and international support for CBNRM.

These challenges, combined with the growth in the number of conservancies, have resulted in increased service and support demand from communities and related constituencies. At the same time, there are reduced financial, human and organizational resources in Namibia to respond to challenges and opportunities and that increased demand, as a result of the loss of large-scale and long-term external funding support to the CBNRM programme.

These processes of change create opportunities to address long-standing challenges, such as local governance and the need to revitalize member involvement in conservancies, to build new alliances to advocate for sustainable use, and to put in place more efficient financing of support services within CBNRM. The following sections discuss these interlinked challenges and opportunities as key context for NACSO's strategy going forward.

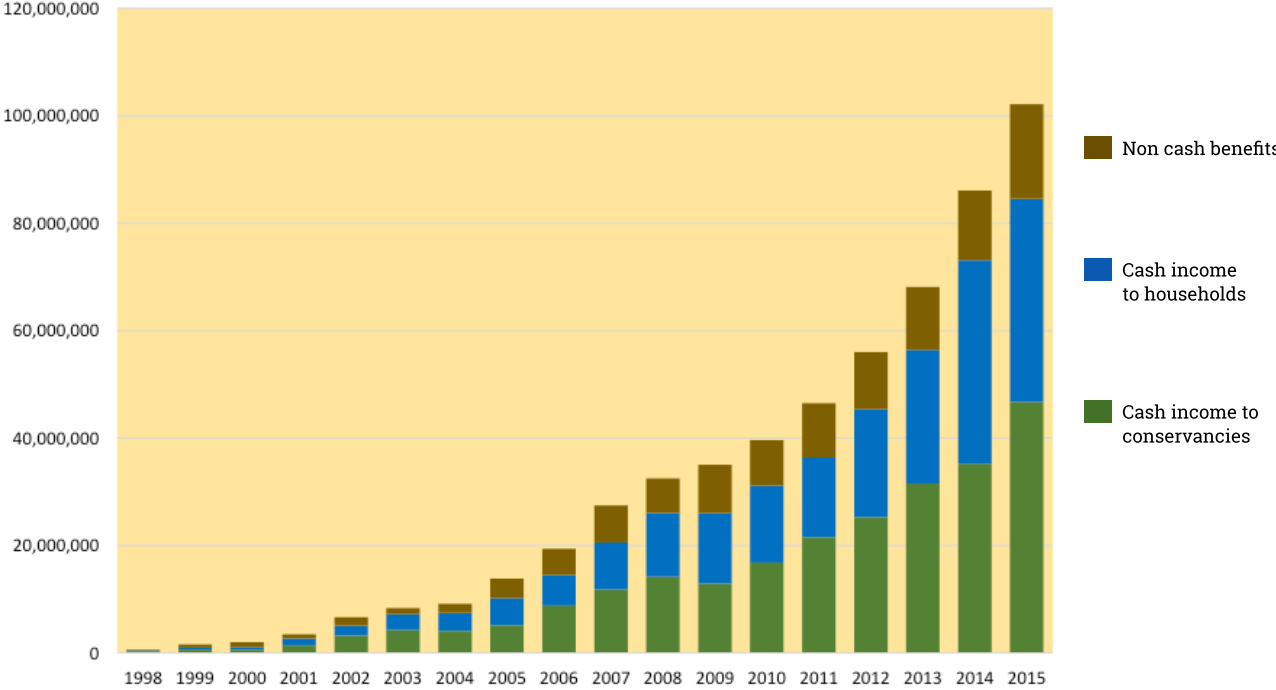
### 2.1 Growth and Achievements of CBNRM in Namibia

The vision of Namibia's National CBNRM Programme is one that "empowers present and future generations to manage wildlife and other natural resources in an integrated manner as a recognised and valued rural development option."

During the past twenty years Namibia has established itself as one of the world's leading models of wildlife conservation and community-based natural resource management. The aggregate achievements of these efforts are significant and gradually have become better documented through scientific analyses, and international publicity associated with Namibia's approach to conservation and its remarkable national achievements.

Following reforms to its wildlife policy and law in the mid-1990s, Namibia's communal conservancies program has expanded to increasingly large-scale impacts. Today conservancies and community forests exist across over 16.5 million hectares of land, roughly 20% of Namibia's total surface area and about 53% of all communal land.

Conservancies contain around 189,000 residents, generating N\$102.1 million in total income (2015 data), 1,827 full-time jobs and more than 2,000 part-time jobs<sup>1</sup>. The steady increase of community benefits (Figure 1) underpin conservancy management- today roughly one-third of all conservancies are self-sufficient in terms of their operating costs- as well as generating cash and non-cash benefits for conservancy members, ranging from social service projects to game meat. Twenty-three conservancies earn more than N\$1 million in cash annually. Joint-venture tourism benefits for communities have continued to grow, increasing by about 26% between 2014 and 2015, to a total of N\$49.9 million. At the national level, enterprises related to CBNRM contributed an estimated N\$644 million to the Net National Income (NNI).<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1:** Increasing economic benefits from conservancies, 1998-2015. Source: National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy.

Through the combination of CBNRM, private freehold conservancies, and traditional government protected areas, Namibia has become a leading example of large-scale conservation, with entire regional landscapes in the northwest and northeast of the country comprising a mosaic of state and communal lands under different types of natural resource management. Within these landscapes, wildlife has broadly recovered and increased over the past two decades. Namibia has the largest population of free-ranging black rhinos outside state or private lands, in the country’s northwest; it has a growing population of lions outside protected areas in the same region; and its national elephant population has increased from roughly 7,500 animals in 1995 to around 22,711 by 2015.<sup>3</sup>

1 NACSO. 2015. The state of community conservation in Namibia - a review of communal conservancies,  
 2 State of community conservation in Namibia, 2015.  
 3 See Namibia Proposed Amendment to The Appendices I and II to the COP 1 Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species, April, 2016. Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

Namibia has also built on the development of communal conservancies since the 1998 with further sectoral reforms, notably the establishment of community forests in 2001. There are now 32 community forests, many of which are wholly contiguous with conservancies. There are also initial models for community-based fisheries management emerging in the inland floodplains of Zambezi Region.

The expansion of community-based natural resource management from the wildlife sectors, to other areas such as forests and fisheries, as well as rangelands management, presents opportunities for integrating the management of multiple natural resources within a common framework, as well as for adding to the overall suite of resource management activities and values available to communities.

The growth of the scale and coverage of community conservation, increasing economic value of wildlife and other natural resources at local and national level, and development of local knowledge, support and institutional capacity are all strong foundations for NACSO and its members to build on. These achievements also attest to NACSO's core values and functions as a forum for coordination, learning, and monitoring, as well as its role in building strong collaboration between government and non-governmental entities.

As a result of its achievements, Namibia is increasingly recognised as a global leader in conservation and nature-based rural development, a distinction that NACSO and its member organisations have played a key role in during the past 20 years. Within southern Africa, Namibia also plays a leadership role, which is particularly important in the context of transboundary conservation efforts such as the KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area. The conservancies in Namibia's Zambezi Region are located at the geographic heart of KAZA, and there is broad consensus that the success and viability of KAZA depends largely on the ability to adapt CBNRM in some form to cross-border areas of Angola and Zambia, in order to create incentives for local conservation of wildlife corridors and dispersal areas.

With actors in different parts of the world increasingly looking for models of effective conservation and natural resource-based rural development, Namibia has increasing opportunities to share its experiences, knowledge, data, and insights. NACSO's role as a forum for collaboration, technical knowledge and innovation, and long-term monitoring give it a central role in Namibia's engagement with external networks and actors.

## 2.2 Local Governance

The core premise of CBNRM is that when local communities are able to capture the economic and social benefits of wildlife and other natural resources, they will have incentives to look after and sustainably manage those resources. Central to achieving such outcomes is the ability of local communities to collectively manage their natural resources through accountable local governance institutions.

The dynamics surrounding local governance of conservancies has been one of the foremost challenges facing CBNRM in Namibia for many years. The management of shared conservancy resources, such as the financial revenues generated by wildlife and tourism enterprises, is hampered by management through committees that often receive little by way of feedback, participation, or sanction from conservancy membership. As conservancy revenues have grown over time, more revenue has been invested in the operating costs of conservancies, including in the management committees themselves, as opposed to investing a larger proportion of benefits in the membership. This has emerged as the greatest constraint to the delivery of greater benefits to conservancy members and resident communities.

The technical capacity of conservancy management committees, or employed conservancy management staff, is a component of this challenge, as is the overall level of engagement and participation by the conservancy membership. Funds are often not accounted for, do not necessarily follow constitutions or financial management plans, and may be misused by committee members. Mechanisms for conservancy members to hold committees accountable remain weak and a major challenge for conservancy governance and the delivery of benefits from wildlife to community members.

These issues have been a focus of NACSO and its members in recent years, including efforts to increase government's role in maintaining and enforcing standards, which have been developed through the MET Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The SOPs have been developed through collaboration between NACSO and MET, with the purpose of strengthening central government's role in developing and enforcing compliance with governance standards in conservancies. The prospects for MET to play a greater role in enforcing compliance with basic governance standards is viewed as an important measure for promoting improved governance within conservancies, and addressing existing challenges.

## 2.3 Resurgence of poaching

Commercial poaching in Namibia, particularly of elephants and rhinos, has escalated during the past several years. During 2014, 24 rhinos and 78 elephants were poached in the country, rising to 83 rhinos killed by poachers in 2015.<sup>4</sup> Many of these rhinos were killed in Etosha National Park, but significant numbers were also poached in conservancies. The recent rise of poaching of elephants and rhinos, as key high-value species underpinning commercial investment in tourism and trophy hunting enterprises in conservancies, represents a threat to local communities' natural assets and economic opportunities. The escalation of poaching also creates challenges to the legitimacy of local wildlife management systems, nationally and internationally, and makes it harder to defend sustainable utilization as a management practice.

Despite the challenges created by the poaching crisis, there are nevertheless important opportunities that are being generated. Even with the uptick in rhino and elephant poaching, Namibia remains a highly successful example of community conservation and sustainable use, in a context where global actors are searching for models of strong conservation performance and collaboration between government and local communities to protect wildlife. The poaching crisis is also generating new resources, both financially and organizationally, for investing in the protection of African wildlife. Given that Namibia, along with South Africa, is the key range state for black rhinos, and that conservancies play a key role in the conservation of its rhinos, there are opportunities both in terms of resourcing flows and in terms of capitalising on Namibia's leadership role in global and African conservation.

## 2.4 Threats to trophy hunting as a revenue source

Somewhat linked to the rise of commercial poaching is the increasing threat of international trophy hunting bans in recent years. During 2015, numerous (14) international airlines banned the transport of hunting trophies on their carriers. Some countries have also banned the import of trophies of certain species (e.g. lion in Australia), with moves to potentially further restrict the import of wildlife trophies in the European Union and United States.

The prospect of losing external market access for trophy hunting represents a significant challenge to the economic foundations of CBNRM and sustainable use in Namibia, and the justification for rural communities to tolerate growing numbers of harmful species such as elephants

<sup>4</sup> NACSO, State of Community Conservation in Namibia 2014/2015



and lions on communal lands. The financial and economic implications of the growing restrictions on trophy hunting are stark. Sustainable trophy hunting currently generates 62% of the N\$46.7 million in cash fees received by conservancies in 2015. Recent research by WWF demonstrates quantitatively the importance of trophy hunting to the operational viability of conservancies. In 2013, 74% of conservancies had income that was greater than their operating expenses, but if they were deprived of hunting-related income, only 16% of conservancies would have income in excess of their expenses.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly the loss of revenue-generating options from trophy hunting, which has emerged only in the past year or so as a serious possibility, represents the greatest risk to the financial and economic viability of the CBNRM programme which NACSO and its partners have spent the past two decades building up.

## 2.5 Land use and integrated natural resource management

Namibia, like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, faces increasing demand for land and resources across its regions as a result of growing human populations, expanding infrastructure, and rising levels of consumption. Mining is a growing threat, while conversion and fragmentation of agricultural lands is the major challenge to conservancies, wildlife movements, and natural landscapes in Zambezi Region. Increasingly, cross-sectoral policy and implementation issues are critical to CBNRM outcomes.

Land tenure policy and legal reforms are particularly important. The push for formal registration of individual and potentially group land rights could lead to landscape fragmentation if not managed carefully and integrated with or addressed by conservancies and community forests. Another critical policy issue in recent years has been the debate over taxation of tourism leasing ventures on communal lands, which has the potential to reduce the viability of tourism ventures in conservancies, or at least channel a significant proportion of their revenue to central government instead of rural communities.

More broadly, it is increasingly clear that CBNRM in Namibia needs to develop a more integrative approach that addresses land tenure, water use, livestock management, forestry, and fisheries, if land use change and development processes are to be managed in a way that effectively reconciles different resource uses and processes. Consequently, after previously focusing primarily on wildlife and tourism, there is now a greater emphasis within both government and civil society in Namibia on the importance of integrated approaches to CBNRM, particularly conservancies and community forests. The functional integration, in terms of resource management and local governance institutions, is being explored and piloted. Some NACSO members are also exploring how to integrate community fisheries management, particularly in the important fisheries of the northeast, through conservancy and other CBNRM structures.

## 2.6 Financing CBNRM

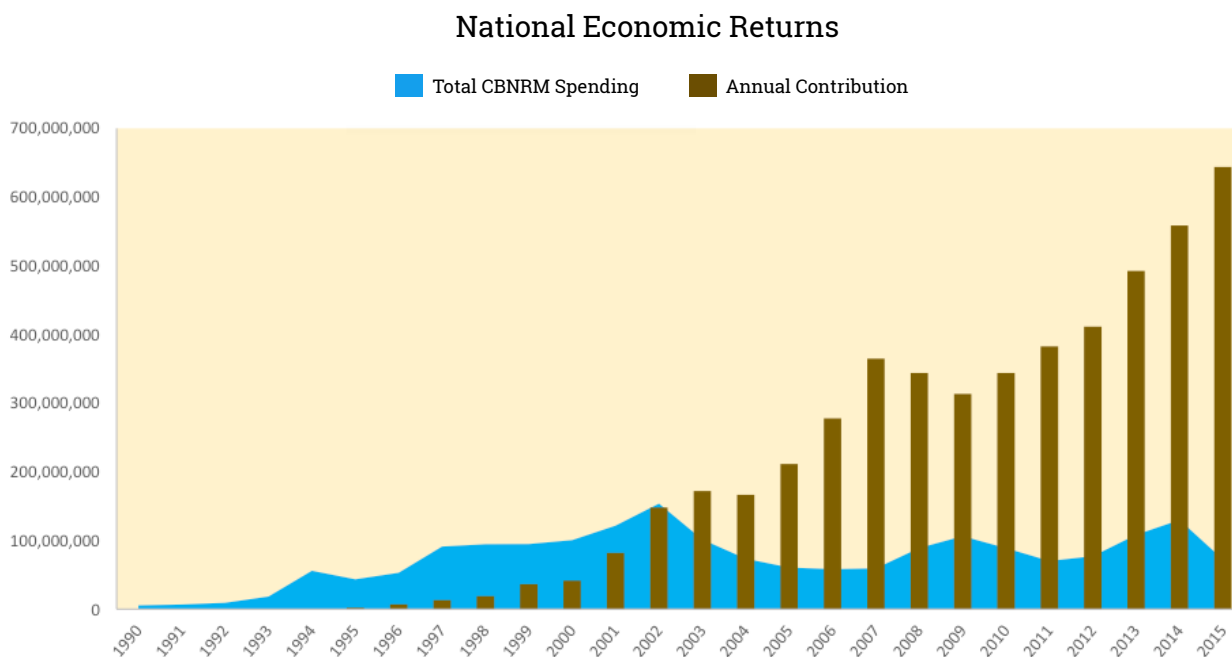
The financial circumstances of Namibia's CBNRM programme overall, and for NACSO and its member organisations, have changed considerably during the past five years. Up until 2014, when the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) programme concluded, NACSO members had been able to fund much of their activities through large-scale external donor financing, with N\$1.9 billion invested in total since the outset of the CBNRM programme.<sup>6</sup> After the end of the USAID LIFE programme and then the conclusion of MCA in 2014, these consolidated sources of large-scale donor funding are no longer available and are unlikely to return.

5 Naidoo, R., Weaver, C. L., Diggle, R. W., Matongo, G., Stuart-Hill, G., & Thouless, C. (2015). Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting to communal conservancies in Namibia. *Conservation Biology*. DOI: 10.1111/cobi.12643.

6 State of community conservation in Namibia, 2015.

The situation at present is one where funding sources are smaller and more fragmented, even while the number of conservancies and the support requirements, ranging from financial management to addressing the poaching crisis, have escalated considerably. This has put considerable strain on NACSO members, and NACSO as a coordinating body, to cope with a situation defined by increased demand for services, with reduced funding and increased transaction costs associated with fundraising and donor reporting.

The National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy, and financing mechanisms such as the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN), began to be developed nearly 10 years ago in order to address the inevitable financial transition of the programme. This fund is expected to generate a stable amount of approximately N\$26-30 million in annual funding, based on a number of different financing components including a long-term endowment. However, this funding source will only come online after about four years of building up the initial endowment corpus.



**Figure 2:** Estimated net national income (adjusted for 2015 Namibia Dollars) generated by the CBNRM Programme as contrasted by CBNRM Programme investments from 1990-2015 (Source: National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy/NACSO).

In addition, increased support from the Namibian government through MET- clearly justified in light of the growing economic value of conservancies through tourism and the other economic values of CBNRM (Figure 2)- is also a key component of this sustainability strategy, and has been formally recognized as such within the government.

However, at present neither of these two sources of funding- CCFN externally and MET government funding- have become operational, and CCFN will take another four years to come fully online. Thus the resourcing pressures for NACSO and its members persist and have impacted the quality of service delivery and conservancy performance.

## 2.7 Organizational Capacity

Related to changes in the financing of CBNRM in Namibia, many of NACSO's member organizations have experienced a substantial reduction in internal financial and human resources, including losing important staff over the past several years. Indeed, many of NACSO's members have been or are currently undergoing their own processes of strategic planning and reformulation, which NACSO's own plans must take account of. The changes in NACSO's members' capacity strongly influences NACSO as a collective entity, as its member organisations are stretched at all levels in terms of their ability to contribute to NACSO activities and deliver services at the community level.

These human and financial resource challenges create a vicious cycle involving NACSO's institutional capacity, the capacity of its members, challenges in delivering on its mandate and demands, and overstretch of existing capacity. The major opportunity created by these resourcing and capacity challenges is for NACSO and its members to adapt to changing circumstances with their own reorganization of their work and allocation of resources. This strategic plan is a key step in that process, within the context of these wider changes.

# 3 Looking Inward: NACSO's Organisational Achievements and Challenges

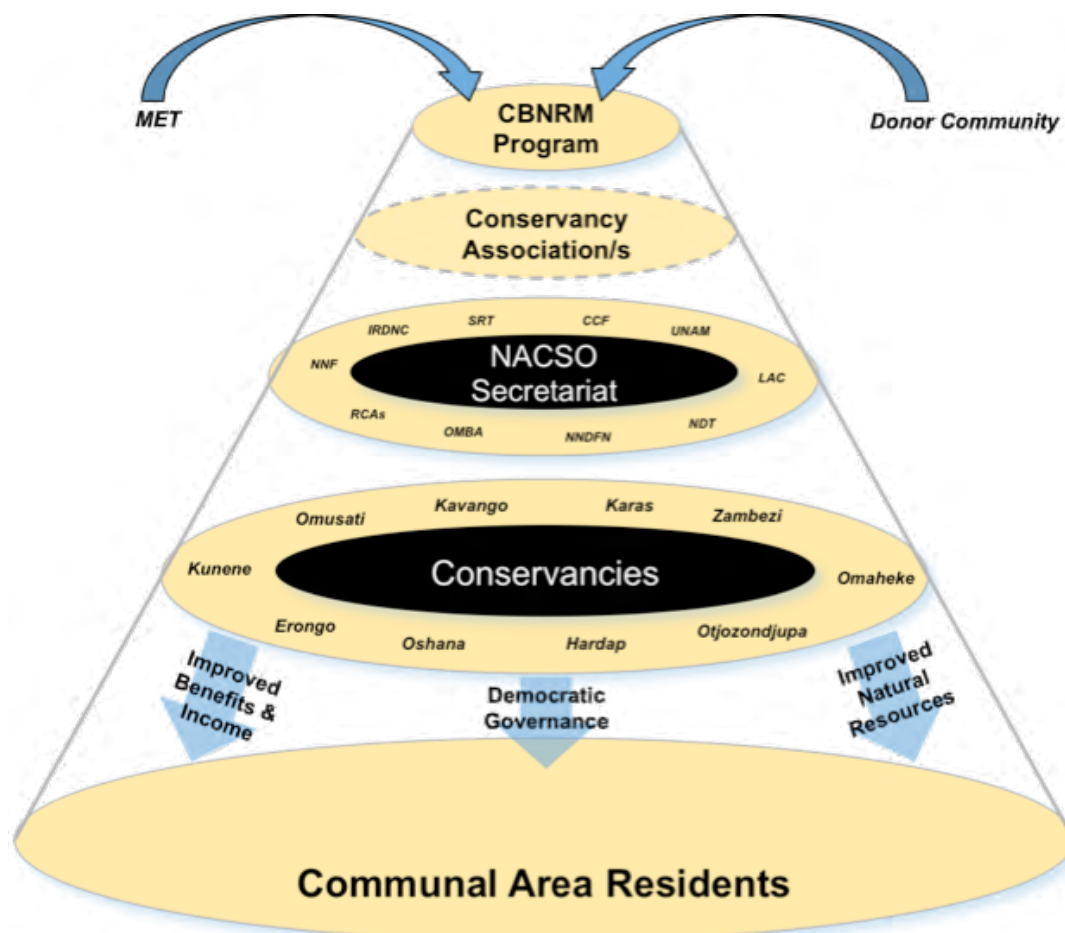
## 3.1 Background: NACSO Structure

"NACSO plays a strong civil society coordination role, ensuring the various NGOs are working in tandem with one-another and promoting programmatic monitoring efforts through the collection of data required to produce Annual State of Community Conservation Reports. It also acts as the conduit for innovation, bringing new ideas and approaches to the conservancy programme."

-National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy

NACSO was established in the late 1990s to provide a central coordination role amongst service providers involved in supporting CBNRM, and for the CBNRM Programme as a whole. NACSO is structured as a voluntary non-profit association, with its structure based on its constitution. NACSO's structure comprises its membership, secretariat, and collaborative working groups (Natural Resources Working Group, Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group, and Institutional Development Working Group). Voting membership is limited to Namibian NGOs, while key non-member collaborators such as WWF participate prominently in the three working groups, which provide the key technical service delivery functions. NACSO works closely with MET as the key civil society convening body and counterpart to government in the CBNRM programme.

NACSO's basic function of providing a forum for NGOs working in CBNRM to support conservancies (and community forests), and coordinating service delivery between the national CBNRM programme and the community level, is depicted in Figure 3.



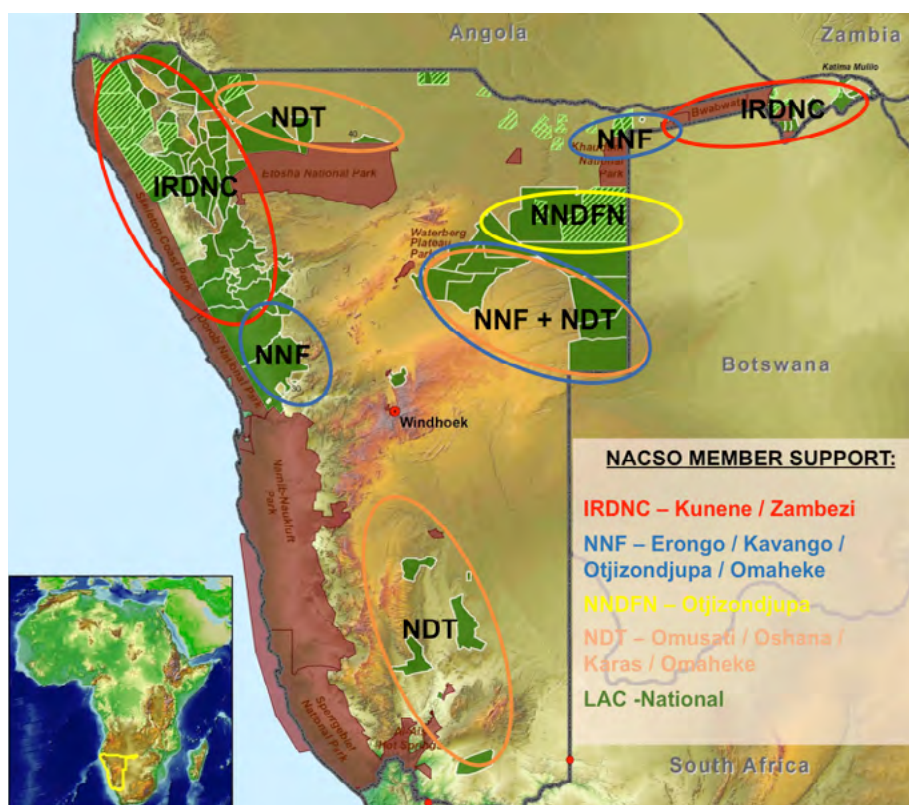
**Figure 3:**

NACSO in relation to the national CBNRM support structure for communal conservancies.

A key element of NACSO’s overall capacity and strengths as an organization is the diverse strengths and resources of its members. Today, NACSO has nine members, who all bring different and often complementary skills and perspectives to the group (see Annex 1).

### 3.2 NACSO’s Achievements & Strengths

NACSO seeks to build upon the thematic strengths and geographic presence of its member organisations. Individual member organisations have varying areas of expertise including field implementation capacity, financial management, legal and human rights expertise, natural resource management, etc. (Annex 1). An additional strength of NACSO is the geographic spread of where member organisations work with communities (see Figure 4). Given these strengths, NACSO is uniquely placed to promote programmatic coordination at thematic and geographic levels.



**Figure 4:** Geographic areas of support to communal conservancies by NACSO members.

NACSO's key achievement, and key function as an organization, is the strength of collaboration, based on long-term individual and organizational relationships that it has built up amongst its members, as well as with external parties, over the past 20 years. The level of institutionalized collaboration within NACSO; between NACSO's Namibian membership and international organizations such as WWF; and between Namibian civil society organizations and government in the form of the MET; are all advanced, exceptional, and have been key to the overall progress of CBNRM in Namibia for the past two decades. NACSO provides the central focus for collaboration and collective action, and for building stronger and more diverse partnerships, that can achieve systemic change and impact in Namibia's natural resource management, rural development, and local governance arenas.

Set against this broader context, some of NACSO's specific areas of achievement or value-added include:

- Enabling high-quality data collection, storage, and dissemination, which plays a key role in monitoring progress by government, NGOs, and communities, but also in documenting the achievements of CBNRM in Namibia and thereby marketing the country and the program, and its wider philosophy of sustainable use. For example, making Namibia's case for the value of trophy hunting to community conservation would be impossible without the high quality of long-term data on wildlife numbers, benefits, joint ventures, and other aspects of the CBNRM program. This information, collected through the Natural Resources Working Group, is a key achievement for NACSO.

- NACSO provides the key point of contact between civil society and government on CBNRM, and has built up strong working relationships with MET and other government agencies. A key achievement for NACSO has been the level of support for CBNRM within government and specifically MET, and increasing commitment by government to support CBNRM, through for example increased funding of CBNRM support services, and enforcement of the SOPs as a way to improve conservancy governance.
- Relatedly, NACSO is formally represented on or works closely with a number of important government decision-making bodies and is frequently consulted with by MET. This enables NACSO to formally influence a range of key management and policy processes, gives it legitimacy and access to policy and institutional processes, and makes it a key entity in policy engagement and influencing. Through its members and structure, NACSO is able to help build linkages between the community scale and policy makers and help local communities gain access to policy processes.
- NACSO provides the key voice and communication hub for the CBNRM programme within Namibia, in engaging with policy makers, as well as the private sector and wider public, and in providing a voice for the CBNRM program internationally. This is particularly important given the global pressures CBNRM in Namibia currently faces related to hunting and sustainable use.
- NACSO not only coordinates CBNRM support services, but provides the forum for reflection and learning around best practices, sharing of innovations across its membership, and questioning existing practices and models.
- NACSO also provides the basis for collective action in addressing systemic human resource and financing challenges, such as those described in section 2.6 and 2.7. In terms of achievements, NACSO has played a key role working with government, WWF, and other actors in the design and development of the CCFN as a new CBNRM financing mechanism, which is nearing the stage of being operationalized. In the human resources realm, NACSO's Conservation Leadership Programme, initiated in 2012, has been an important initiative in developing the pipeline of talent and future leadership for the CBNRM programme and for NACSO's members.
- NACSO has succeeded in building CBNRM and conservancies into such national planning doctrines as NDP III and IV, Vision 2030, the Communal Lands Act of 2002, the National Rural Development Strategy, etc.

## 3.3 Organizational Weaknesses

NACSO's major organizational weaknesses and challenges fall into the following categories:

### 3.3.1 Capacity and Resource Constraints

NACSO faces significant shortfalls in its human and financial resources. Over NACSO's history, funding has depended heavily on large-scale donor projects (e.g. USAID/MCA) and on support from WWF. With these funding sources in decline and the transition to a mixture of trust fund, government, smaller donor and philanthropic, and potentially conservancy-derived service provision funding, as described in the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy, NACSO's own financial resourcing is in a period of uncertain transition. Funding needs to become more diversified and resilient in the face of these changes and less dependent on external donors.

Funding shortfalls also translate into human resource shortages that limit NACSO's overall organizational capacity. Two of the three NACSO working groups have lacked dedicated coordinators, and the staff of the secretariat has been stretched very thin in relation to the scope of NACSO's work and mandate. This strategic plan both identifies priority human resource gaps and strives to prioritize NACSO's existing human resources towards the most important actions and outcomes.

An additional challenge is simply the shortage of skilled and experienced staff within the CBNRM field in Namibia, and the pipeline of talent that NACSO and its members can draw on in building their teams and organizations. This dimension of the human resource constraint is addressed in terms of the need to invest in leadership and capacity development at an institutional level, to grow the future human resources capacity of NACSO and its member organisations.

### **3.3.2 Internal and external communications**

As a consortium of diverse organizations, communications between the different organs of NACSO- the members, the working groups, and the secretariat- is critical to performance and impact. But internal communications across these different layers has not always been at the level required for effective and efficient operations and is an area for improvement.

Externally, as noted in the previous section, NACSO has a key role as the voice of the CBNRM programme to government, the Namibian public, media, and wider civil society; and to relevant international audiences, including media and decision-makers in the global policy arena. While NACSO excels at certain technical publications, such as the State of Community Conservation annual reports, and has recently invested in developing the 'Community Conservation Namibia' brand, external communications, particularly through web-based and other media, is an area for improvement. This may be particularly important in relation to challenges such as trophy hunting and sustainable use at the global policy scale.

### **3.3.3 Membership and composition**

While the strong and long-term working relationships and shared vision have been a key strength of NACSO and a key to the achievements of the CBNRM programme, this membership composition can also lead to the drawbacks of being a 'closed family', as one member put it during the strategic planning process. This can result in NACSO falling into patterns of conventional 'group think', not incorporating new ideas and new perspectives, or diversifying the membership in ways that take account of the changed context of the CBNRM programme. This may result in insufficient skills or organizational focus and experience within the membership on increasingly key issues outside the conservancy realm, such as land tenure, fisheries, forestry, communications, and other growing opportunities or threats.

### **3.3.4 Prioritization**

NACSO's overall situation during the past several years has been defined by a growing suite of conservancies needing support, new emerging threats such as poaching and trophy hunting pressures as described in Section 2, while confronting increasing financial and human resource shortfalls. Circumstances of increasing pressures and demands coupled with decreasing internal capacity and resources inevitably result in a struggle to prioritize and focus effort. For example, facing manifold policy issues and challenges, including those related to emerging threats such as new fees or taxes levied on tourism joint ventures in conservancies or customary land adjudication, NACSO has sometimes struggled to prioritize its engagements and investments of time and effort.

# 4 Strategy

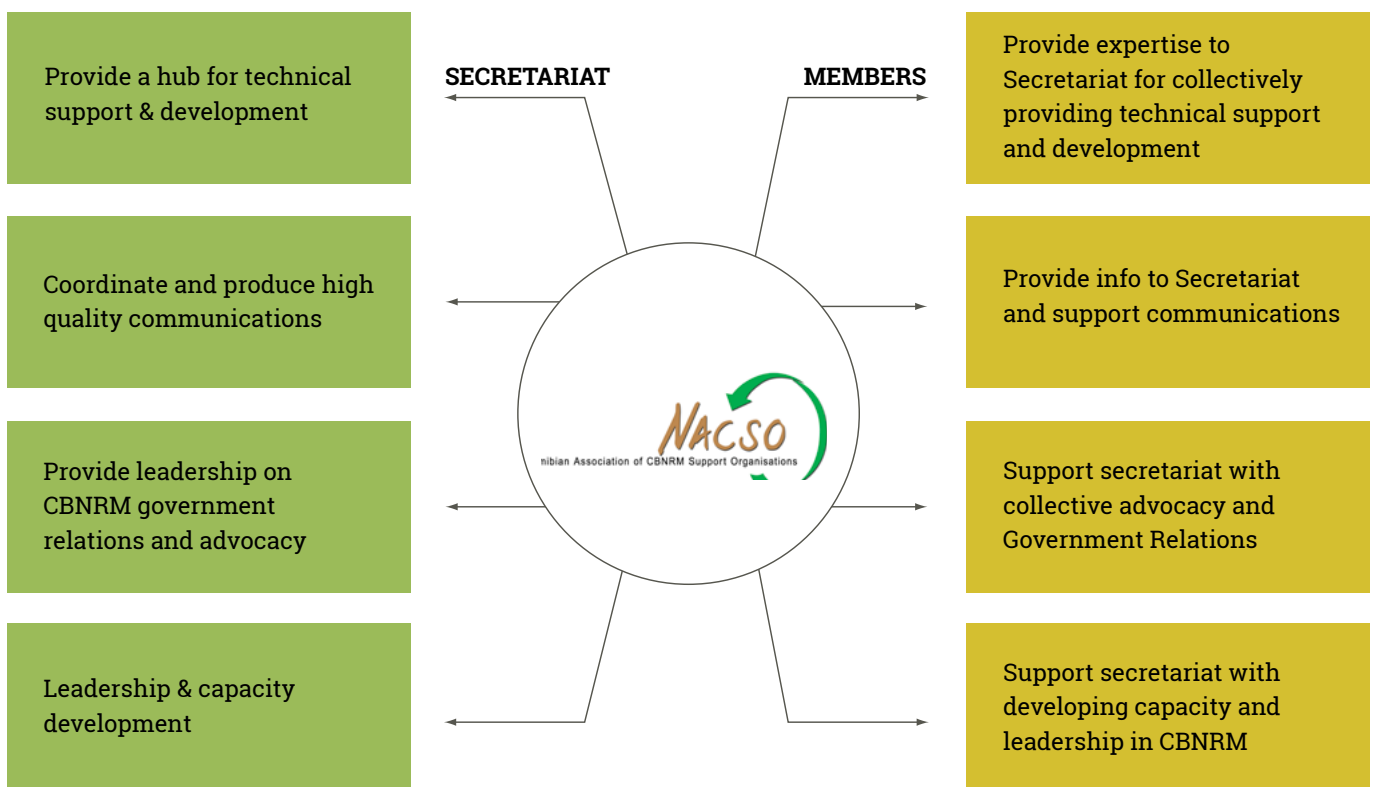
NACSO's strategy is organized according to a combination of key functions- the critical roles and services NACSO provides to its members- and key themes that identify priority issues to address over the next five years. This combination of key functions and priority themes provides the basis for the secretariat and the working groups to organize their work and annual work planning priorities.

## 4.1 Key Functions

NACSO has four key functions, which describe the core roles that encompass the critical service categories and the values that NACSO provides to its members. All of these functions relate to NACSO's basic, core mandate to coordinate and convene as an association of diverse organizations working towards a common and shared vision as defined by NACSO's constitution.

### NACSO's Vision according to its constitution is to:

Promote, support and further the development of community based approaches to the wise and sustainable management of natural resources, thereby striving to advance rural development and livelihoods, to promote biodiversity conservation and to empower communities through capacity building and good governance, to determine their own long-term destinies.



**Figure 5:** NACSO's 4 key functions, showing the basic roles of the Secretariat and of the Members.



#### 4.1.1 Technical Support and Development

A core function of NACSO is to provide a forum for organizing, coordinating, and strengthening the technical support services from NACSO's member organizations, which in turn support CBNRM at the community scale. The key mechanisms for doing this are NACSO's three working groups:

- The Natural Resources Working Group (NRWG) provides a range of critical technical support functions, including overall wildlife and natural resource monitoring- including the development and refinement of community level monitoring systems and protocols- and support to hunting quota setting, trophy hunting monitoring and standards.
- The Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group (BELWG) focuses on technical support related to joint venture negotiation, monitoring and management; and other aspects of tourism and business development support.
- The Institutional Development Working Group (IDWG) provides a forum for the development of knowledge, skills, training and other services related to community governance institutions for communal conservancies and community forests.

The technical resources developed, coordinated, and often provided through NACSO are a foundation of Namibia's CBNRM program. The provision of these technical resources are also a foundation of the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy, which envisions extension services and other technical support services being provided by NACSO members and funded by a combination of sources, including the CCFN and government support.

A key function of NACSO is not only to provide for the coordination of technical support, but the development and progressive improvement of its members' approaches to supporting CBNRM. This constitutes an important learning function of NACSO, by enabling members to exchange experiences, reflect on outcomes and impacts, and develop innovations to improve CBNRM facilitation over time. Strengthening NACSO's learning function, to ensure that members continue to reflect on their practice and adapt to changing circumstances, is a strategic priority for NACSO over the next five years.

#### 4.1.2 Information and Communications

A strength of Namibia's CBNRM program and a key function of NACSO as a collaborative body is the generation and pooling of data and information. CONINFO is an exemplary database on CBNRM status and performance and provides the basis for adaptive management at conservancy level, monitoring results at programme level, and developing strong data-driven communications products such as the State of Community Conservation (SoCC) annual reports.

A key strategic priority for NACSO over the next five years will be ensuring that existing data collection and key sources such as CONINFO are maintained as a foundation of the CBNRM programme and service to members, and to make this data more easily available to members. Flagship products such as the annual or bi-annual SoCC reports will be continued at a high technical standard.

NACSO will increase its capacity to communicate the information it collects through its working groups and members. This will include continuing to build the 'Community Conservation Namibia' as a central organizing brand for materials. NACSO will improve its ability to package its rich store of data, experiences, and information into communications products that address key needs and priorities.

### **4.1.3 Government Relations and Advocacy**

A third key function of NACSO lies in being the key point of engagement between its members, Namibian NGOs, and government. This function involves building strong collaboration with government partners such as MET, including joint plans and strategies, involving monitoring, support services, financing, and other key aspects of the CBNRM programme.

This function also includes more of an advocacy role, and influencing government policies in ways that support CBNRM. NACSO has a strong working relationship with MET but a strategic priority is to improve its ability to engage with and influence other government agencies, including those that pertain to land, rural development and planning, agriculture and livestock, and other natural resource sectors such as forestry and fisheries.

Advocacy functions also exist at an international level, where critical issues or threats such as trophy hunting and sustainable use exist. Such engagements are closely tied to NACSO's capacity for information and communications as well.

### **4.1.4 Capacity & Resourcing**

A final key function of NACSO is as a hub for building the leadership and human resource capacity of the overall CBNRM programme, particularly for NACSO's members. NACSO has piloted efforts to build the pipeline of human resource talent in the programme through the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP), initiated in 2012, and this function is a priority going forward.

Another component of developing the capacity of its member is facilitating their access to resources. NACSO serves as a forum for joint initiatives between its members, and as a way to facilitate access to funding opportunities for its members. However, a function of NACSO is not to raise money for its members or to serve as a funding vehicle; members must take responsibility for raising their own funding, jointly with NACSO or its other members, or independently.

## **4.2 Thematic Priorities**

In order to be successful and strengthen the delivery of CBNRM in Namibia, NACSO has identified a number of thematic priorities. These are key strategic issues facing the CBNRM programme, and NACSO's membership, and which require work at the collective or systems-wide level. In other words, they require NACSO to focus on delivering on these issues and integrating them across all of its activities.

### **4.2.1 Integrated Natural Resource Management**

The achievement of more integrated CBNRM in Namibia- involving multiple key sectors (i.e., forestry, fisheries, land, livestock, agriculture etc.) is key to addressing threats and capitalizing on new opportunities at the local and regional scale. Integration is important for enabling communities to grow their benefit streams from CBNRM, from underdeveloped opportunities such as forestry or fisheries. Integration is critical to enabling communities to manage their resources holistically and without excessive transaction costs from parallel management bodies or institutions. Integration is key to addressing threats such as land use change; for example, Community Forests present a potential mechanism for strengthening control over grazing access in conservancies and communal lands. Group rights over land and related land tenure reforms may also be important for strengthening CBNRM and averting land use change.

Objectives for NACSO in terms of integrating NRM include:

- Mainstreaming cross-sectoral integration across all working groups; for example, existing monitoring and data collection focused on wildlife could be extended to other resources.
- Promotion of learning around integrated models for natural resource management, including institutional design issues (e.g. how to best integrate Community Forests and Conservancies). This will draw on pilot initiatives being developed around integration at the local level by NACSO members, and can also link to communications efforts to raise awareness amongst NACSO members, policy makers, and others of integrated management models and practices. Case studies could be developed based on emerging integration models on the ground.
- Promotion of measures at the policy level that support consistent principles of CBNRM across different ministries, and enable implementation to occur at the community level. For example, the development of communal land policy and reforms in ways that support CBNRM is an important policy issue for NACSO. To do this, NACSO needs to strengthen its relationships and collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Lands, and other key agencies beyond MET.

“There is a need to better coordinate the provision of inter-ministerial support to conservancies and community forests so conservancies and community forests can integrate their operations and management of their forestry and wildlife resources in an efficient and holistic fashion. Communities utilize and manage their natural resources (i.e., forestry products, grazing, water, fish, and wildlife) in a holistic fashion, and such consideration is also merited by the national support framework and attendant service agencies.”

-National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy

#### **4.2.2 Trophy Hunting as a Sustainable Use Option**

As noted previously, trophy hunting revenue provides a key source of income to conservancies and is an important option for rural communities in the sustainable use and benefit from their resources. Due to external public and media pressures in northern countries, trophy hunting as a wildlife use option is under threat, with serious implications for the revenues used to manage conservancies and the flow of economic benefits into the rural economy in Namibia.

Addressing this challenge is an important role for NACSO as it requires making a link between local interests, data and information collected by NACSO members and managed by the working groups, and strengthening collaboration with the Namibian government, international organizations and networks, and other key actors; and developing effective communications that can influence policy debates and perspectives. It also requires strengthened efforts to address wildlife crime and strong regulation and management of trophy hunting, as supported by NRWG through monitoring, inputs to quota setting, and other activities.

### 4.2.3 Governance and Accountability

One of the most critical priorities facing Namibia's CBNRM program in terms of its delivery of benefits to conservancy members and local communities, and generation of strong economic and conservation outcomes, is to strengthen local governance and accountability. Although tourism and hunting revenues in conservancies have grown markedly in recent years, increasing the overall pool of potential benefits, benefits to members have generally not increased. Financial management by committees and transparency often remains weak. Efforts by NACSO and its members to address this challenge through training on financial management in recent years have not led to the desired improvements.

NACSO's strategic focus will be on improving local governance and accountability in CBNRM through two major areas of intervention:

- Working collaboratively to influence and support MET's implementation of and compliance with the SOPs and related Compliance Requirements, which are a key step in improving conservancy governance and accountability to conservancy members.
- Investing in learning and evaluation processes that re-think the conservancy governance model, in order to develop potential technical improvements to conservancy governance and inform conservancy design and operations.

## 5 Organizing NACSO's Work: Operational Goals and Objectives

In order to address the critical thematic issues described in the previous section, and fulfil the key functions NACSO plays in order to deliver value to its members, NACSO will operationalize this strategic plan through annual work plans with clear goals and priority outcomes. This strategic plan proposes organising NACSO's work according to its key functions as described in Section 3.

### 5.1 Technical Support & Development

A core function of NACSO is to provide a forum for the provision of technical support services to rural communities. These services are provided or coordinated through the working groups that NACSO coordinates and comprise a set of core monitoring, auditing, training, and related technical support services. These services are structured as the Minimum Support Packages (MSPs) elaborated in the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy.

NACSO's core goal over the next five years is to develop and operationalize the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy, by working with members and government, and new financing mechanisms such as the CCFN, to ensure communities receive the technical support services they require, according to their variable stages of development. Specific objectives include:

- To operationalize a new system of CBNRM extension support services, working with members, working groups, MET, and the new CCFN board.
  - Determining the role of NACSO as an accredited training institute will be a component of designing the new extension system.
- To work with MET to support implementation of the SOP compliance procedures, as a way of promoting improved governance at the community level.

- Additional objectives involve moving beyond existing CBNRM models and practices, to improve CBNRM in two key areas: 1) integrated natural resource management; 2) improved local governance and accountability. In order to do this, the key objectives are:
- To integrate additional natural resources such as forests and fisheries into existing monitoring systems, at least on a pilot basis.
- To develop integrated models for natural resource management and governance, including enterprise development and benefit generation, based on pilots carried out by members, and to review, refine, and share effective integration models.
- To review the existing framework for conservancy/community forests governance and CBNRM, and develop and communicate ideas for improving governance based on existing experiences of members.

## 5.2 Information and Communications

NACSO's objectives for information and communications are:

- To maintain CONINFO as the core database and monitoring system of the CBNRM program, and to incorporate additional relevant data from forestry, fisheries, and other natural resource sectors as those become integrated into monitoring at the local scale.
- To produce the annual State of Community Conservation in Namibia as NACSO's flagship annual report, drawing on the CONINFO database.
- To continue to build the Community Conservation Namibia brand as a way of promoting CBNRM in the public, media and private sector in Namibia.
- To strengthen targeted communications around key policy and advocacy priorities, particularly trophy hunting and sustainable use and wildlife crime and trafficking.
- To improve internal communications and information flow within NACSO's membership, to key partners and collaborators, and from the national level to the field level.
- In order to operationalize these objectives and develop a more refined set of communications goals and targets, NACSO will develop a specific longer term communications strategy as a part of implementing this strategic plan. In the near-term, upgrades to NACSO's communications platform and information management systems will be explored.

## 5.2 Government Relations and Advocacy

NACSO's major objectives for government relations and policy advocacy are to:

- Promote integration of CBNRM through greater outreach, relationship development and engagement with key rural development, land use planning and land reform, and natural resource management sectors and decision makers. NACSO will promote integrated NRM models as developed through members' pilots and institutional design work. Key policy targets and priorities that promote integrated CBNRM will be identified through annual work plans based on specific policy processes that create risks or opportunities in relation to CBNRM.
- To build collaboration with MET and other key policy makers on key priorities such as the design of extension services/delivery of MSPs in the operationalization of the CCFN. This also

includes implementing a clear agreement and set of arrangements for government funding of conservancy support services/MSPs, as described in the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy. This will also include working closely with MET to support implementation of SOPs and encourage compliance with SOPs.

- To develop strong collaboration with MET and other key government bodies in defending Namibia's CBNRM programme and sustainable use principles from external challenges related to trophy hunting or other forms of wildlife use.
- To coordinate and collaborate with Government agencies to address the growing threat from wildlife crime and trafficking.

## 5.4 Leadership & Capacity Development

NACSO will build on the recent development of the Conservation Leadership Program to establish a broader senior and middle-management level NGO management and leadership programme, which will aim to develop the talent pipeline of future leaders and managers within the CBNRM programme, including NACSO and its members. The purpose of this programme will be to develop a CBNRM leadership capable of providing strategic vision, technical programmatic growth and required long term financial and human resources. The major objective for this area of work is to design, secure funding for, and implement a new leadership and management programme, drawing on lessons from the CLP outcomes, as a long-term investment in the capacity of the CBNRM programme.

## 6 Strengthening NACSO as an Association

In order to deliver on the needs and priorities described in this strategic plan, NACSO will need to overcome the current resource and capacity constraints limiting it and its members. This will require targeted investments in strengthening human resources, funding, and NACSO's structure and composition.

### 6.1 Human Resources

A key priority is for NACSO to grow its current human resourcing, with the following specific strategies and targets identified:

- To recruit a Program/Operations Manager or Deputy Director as in a high level management support role, to strengthen the overall capacity of the secretariat. Key functions of this person could include managing information flow between the Secretariat, Working Groups and Members; supporting communications and fundraising functions; leading operational management and administration; and program development.
- To add key competencies in fundraising and communications. NACSO needs to substantially improve its capacity to generate funding in order to address current resourcing gaps and build a more sustainable organization; for both operational and organizational reasons, NACSO also needs to considerably strengthen its communications. These functions could be recruited separately, could be part of the job description of the Program Manager/Deputy Director, or could be combined into a single 'Development and Communications' position. These options will need to be thoroughly analysed as a near-term priority for implementation of the strategic plan through a set of human resource recruitment priorities.

- To ensure that the three working groups all have dedicated coordinators that can lead, manage and develop the work programs for those bodies. Currently IDWG and BEL WG lack coordinators.

## 6.2 Financing

A critical component in executing this Strategic Plan will be improving NACSO's resourcing through new sources of funding. This is required to overcome current resource constraints, invest appropriately in new priority human resources, and build a more sustainable organization that can provide long-term support to CBNRM.

The priority for raising additional funds is to address the core secretariat costs, particularly the human resource gaps and priorities identified in the previous section. In order to improve and diversify fundraising, NACSO will develop a full fundraising strategy to guide its transition to a new funding portfolio, which may include the following:

- As described in the National CBNRM Sustainability Strategy, and in recognition of the pivotal role NACSO plays in the Namibian CBNRM programme, to integrate some of NACSO's core services and the costs associated with that, including functions of the NACSO Secretariat and Working Groups, with funding from the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN).
- To diversify NACSO's funding through private sector sources within Namibia, new partnerships with private foundations, conservation or development NGOs or networks, and other sources.
- To ensure funding is aligned with the priorities and key functions in NACSO's strategy and work plans.

## 6.3 Structure

NACSO is structured as a voluntary non-profit association, with its legal structure based on its constitution. Full membership is restricted to Namibian organizations; other organizations can be associate members. Key governance organs are the Members Committee (MC), comprising one representative of each full member, and the Executive Committee, comprising three representatives from within the total MC.

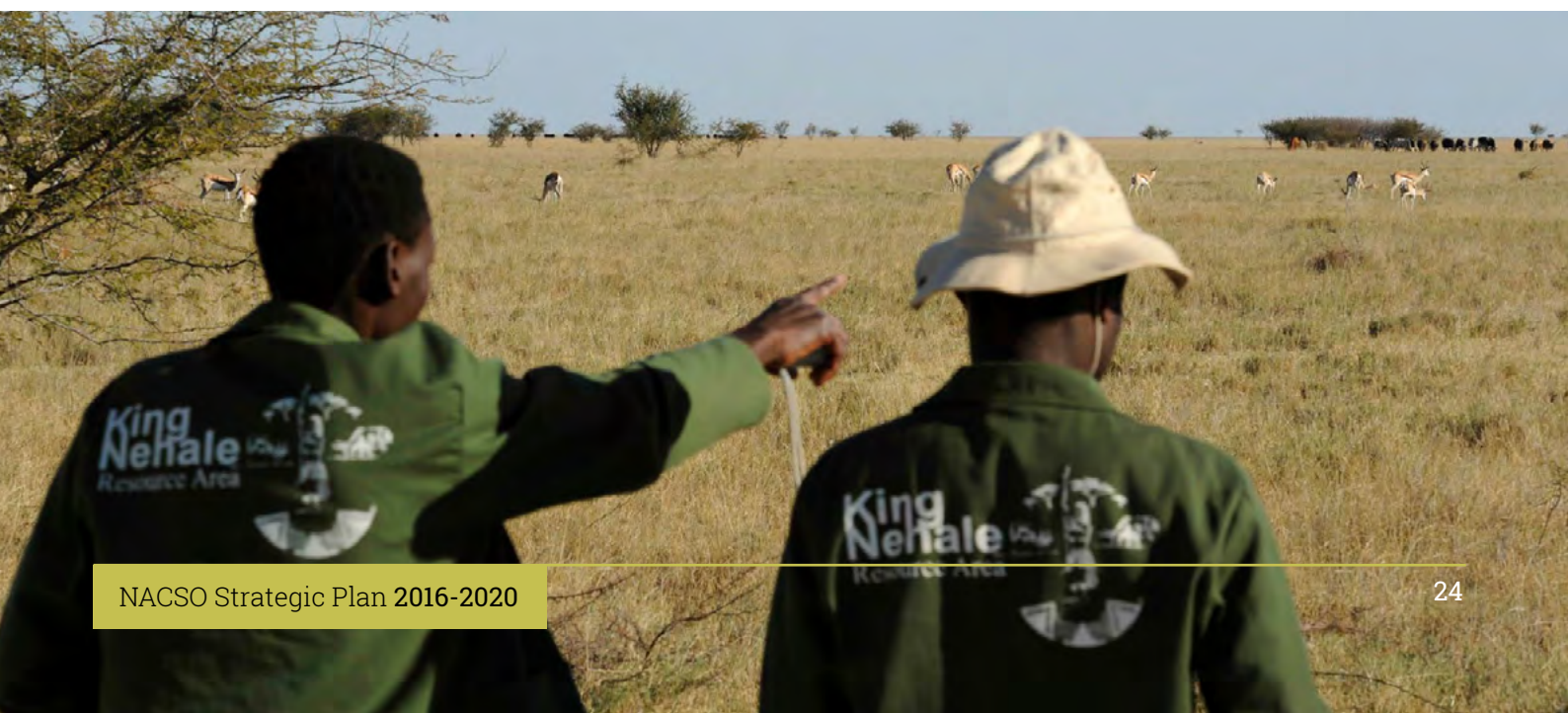
A number of structural issues need to be revisited and potentially amended in order to provide NACSO with the capacity it needs going forward. These include, as priority issues:

- To assess its legal status and assess if it would be advantageous to be a fully registered legal body, in terms of mobilizing resources, NACSO's governance (transparency and accountability), or other factors.
- To explore opportunities and options for recruiting new members and to develop criteria for new member recruitment. Potential value from new members might entail expertise in natural resource sectors beyond wildlife, including land, agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fisheries. NACSO will also explore diversifying membership beyond NGOs, and assessing options for having different membership categories to enable broader participation and collaboration.
- To review the costs and benefits of NACSO obtaining accreditation as a training institution, for purposes of both credentials and funding associated with government-accredited training.

## 7 Key Partners & Roles

NACSO's ability to deliver on the functions and objectives described in this strategic plan depend on a number of key partnerships, collaborations, and networks, beyond the NACSO membership. These include, most prominently:

- **MET.** While NACSO will work to diversify its collaboration across other elements of the Namibian government, as described herein, MET will remain the key strategic partner and counterpart to NACSO on the national CBNRM programme. The ability of NACSO to work effectively with MET, building on the strong relationship developed over the past decade, will be critical to the achievement of core NACSO objectives, particularly in terms of a) the provision of greater direct financial support for conservancy service provision by MET; b) the enforcement of the SOPs by MET in order to improve conservancy governance and accountability.
- **WWF.** For over two decades, WWF in Namibia has been the key international NGO supporting the national CBNRM programme. This has included WWF's role as the key provider of technical and financial support to NACSO and many of its members. WWF provides key technical support to many of the NACSO working groups, particularly NRWG and BELWG, as well as communications, monitoring, and other key functions of NACSO. WWF also has an important role to play, as one of the leading global conservation organizations, in working with NACSO to advance evidence and arguments supporting sustainable use in international policy arenas and to connect to key networks and sources of financial and technical support outside Namibia.
- **IUCN.** IUCN, the global conservation union, is the key international conservation body for governments and NGOs. NACSO is actively collaborating with the IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi), which is the key global technical and advisory group within IUCN on sustainable use issues. This provides a key network around trophy hunting and other wildlife use and utilization issues, and a way to build collaborations for influencing the international policy arena.
- **ICCA Consortium.** NACSO has applied for membership of this leading global community conservation network, which provides another strategic network for influencing and engaging with global policy debates that can impact CBNRM in Namibia, as well as to exchange experiences and learning around key priorities such as integrated NRM.





## Annex 1: NACSO Membership Profiles

**Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)** has been a leading field-level CBNRM service delivery organization in Namibia since the outset of the CBNRM programme, working with over 40 conservancies across Kunene and Zambezi Regions. IRDNC currently Chairs NACSO.

**Namibia Nature Foundation** is one of Namibia's foremost sustainable development organisations, promoting the conservation of biological diversity and natural ecosystems, and the wise and ethical use of natural resources for the benefit of all Namibians. In relation to CBNRM, NNF provides a number of technical services (including Environmental Economics, Land-use planning, Sustainable Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Management) as well as field services (mainly in Erongo and Kavango) for the CBNRM Programme.

**The Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN)** was founded in 1981 to support the indigenous Ju/'hoansi San people of the Nyae Nyae area in the former eastern Bushmanland (Tsumkwe East). NNDFN now supports the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and Community Forest, a community-based organization, responsible for managing the natural resources in the area. More recently NNDFN has also begun to support the neighbouring N=ǀa Jaqna Conservancy populated by Ju/'hoansi and !Kung San.

**The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC)** is a public interest law firm whose main roles in supporting CBNRM are:

- CBO Governance issues (e.g., constitutions, compliance, resource integration);
- Legal Advice (e.g., hunting/tourism contracts, land issues);
- Outreach (e.g., explaining powers, procedures and rights over land and natural resources);
- Litigation (e.g., precedent cases on illegal fencing, illegal grazing); Policy & Legislation (inputs to CBNRM Policy, Parks & Wildlife Management Bill, wildlife crimes); and
- Research (communal land group rights)

**Namibia Development Trust** is a Namibian Non-governmental Organisation that provides Rural Development function through, Capacity Building, Strengthening Governance, and income generating activities.

**Save the Rhino Trust** is a non-governmental organisation operating in the Kunene and Erongo Regions in North Western Namibia. The main activities are Monitoring and Anti Poaching activities, capacity building and facilitating Rhino Rangers programme with communal conservancies in the Northwest of Namibia.

Founded in 1990, the **Cheetah Conservation Fund's (CCF)** mission is to be an internationally recognised centre of excellence in research and education on cheetahs and their ecosystems, working with all stakeholders to achieve best practice in the conservation and management of the world's cheetahs. As Namibia has the largest and healthiest population of cheetahs left in the world, CCF's International Research and Education Centre is based in Namibia, near Otjiwarongo.

**Omba Arts Trust** has been a key player in developing the craft sector in Namibia. It is a registered member of the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO). It has developed and now market the largest range of quality Namibian crafts and contemporary San art in the country with established retail, wholesale and export networks.

**The Multi-Disciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre (MRCC) at the University of Namibia (UNAM)** was formally established in 1993. The former Namibian Institute of Social and Economic Research, (NISER) was renamed the Social Sciences Division (SSD) in 1993 and became an important division of the MRCC. At that time, a further two research divisions were established under the umbrella of the MRCC, namely the Engineering, Science and Technology Division (STD) and the Life Sciences Division (LSD). The SSD has three main research programmes, and they are Community Based Natural Resource Management, Rural poverty (and Land), Gender Research and Training, and the Urban Research and Development Programme. The Engineering, Science and Technology Division focuses on conservation of Namibian biodiversities and genetic resources, energy research and development, technology transfer, industrial projects and Namibian technical standards. The MRCC is committed to the training of students and runs an internship programme for UNAM students. This programme aims at providing practical skill to complement their studies, and thereby also contributing to the skills base of the country.

The MRCC Resource Centre houses a collection of development related literature, both published and unpublished. Many of the project documents and reports are not available elsewhere in Namibia, and as such the Resource Centre provides an invaluable service to the academic, research and development communities in Namibia. As part of its active acquisitions policy, the Resource Centre has literature exchanges with local and international organisations, which specialise in African studies, socio-economic and scientific research in Southern Africa and the developing world.

The MRCC publications are an important function of the Resource Centre. This list includes all publications by the staff and associates, since the beginning of 1990. The list is organised in four sections: Divisional Research Reports, which present results of completed research projects.





# Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO)

Strategic Plan 2016-2020

