



Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations

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**STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2026**





This strategic plan was facilitated by Maliasili, made possible through the European Union's support to NACSO.

**Funded by the European Union.**

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of NACSO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

# Contents

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<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What is the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations?</b>	<b>8</b>
▶ Members	
▶ Associate members	
<b>Background</b>	<b>10</b>
▶ History and Achievements	
▶ Members' response to the COVID-19 pandemic	
▶ A Brief History	
<b>Situational Analysis</b>	<b>14</b>
▶ Understanding the Context	
<b>Values</b>	<b>18</b>
▶ NACSO's Approach	
▶ Our Value Proposition	
<b>Theory of Change</b>	<b>20</b>
▶ NACSO's key function is to convene, collaborate and coordinate	
<b>Strategic Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>22</b>
▶ Goal 1: A well-functioning Members' Association capable of executing its mission	
▶ Goal 2: Providing quality services and creating a unified voice through coordination, collaboration, learning and sharing	
▶ Goal 3: Developing leaders at all levels	
▶ Goal 4: Expanding the impact of CBNRM beyond wildlife	
<b>Operational Implementation</b>	<b>26</b>
▶ Our Structure	
▶ Resourcing Needs	
▶ The Working Groups	

# Executive Summary

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**S**ince its inception NACSO has played a key role in building Namibia's CBNRM movement and mobilising funds for the programme. By working closely together, its Members are stronger and more impactful. There are few examples worldwide of NGO alliances that have NACSO's level of endurance, resilience and cohesion. This strategic partnership of NGOs and key partners such as the Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Forestry has unlocked and expanded community conservation opportunities in Namibia and built Namibia's profile, globally, as a leading example of CBNRM.

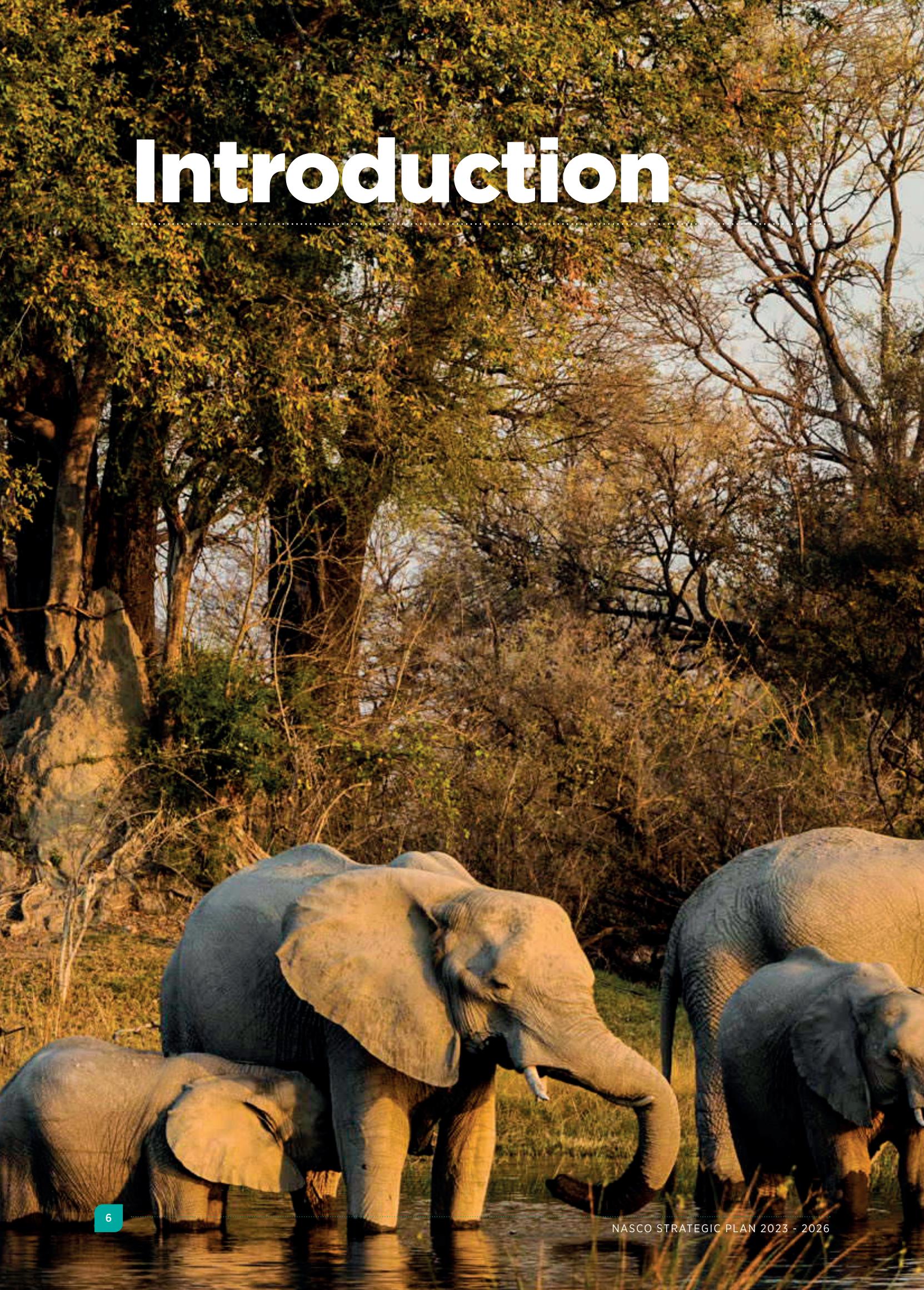
NACSO's key function and achievement as an association has been its strength of collaboration as well as convening platforms for reflection, debating, learning and sharing best practices. NACSO has also played a key role in advocating for supportive policies and legislation at national and international levels. Despite all the success, NACSO has faced a number of challenges, the biggest of which has been clarifying its governance structures and providing guidelines for internal accountability and lines of communication, plus fundraising for its secretariat.

The success of CBNRM relies heavily on communities having the rights to fully participate in conserving and benefiting from their natural resources. In the past, rural communities in Namibia were excluded from access and rights over their natural resources. Although communities' access to natural resources has increased and certain rights to manage their natural resources have been given, legislative barriers remain and communities still do not have the full capacity to participate in, and benefit from, community conservation. NACSO hopes to improve this situation by facilitating appropriate and coordinated services to communities at all stages of their development.

## **NACSO's 2022 - 2026 strategy will be guided by the following goals:**

- Sustaining a well-functioning Members' Association capable of executing its mission
- Enhancing coordination, collaboration, learning and sharing
- Developing leaders at all levels
- Expanding the impact of CBNRM beyond wildlife

# Introduction

A photograph of a group of elephants in a river. The elephants are partially submerged in the water, with their heads and backs visible. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding environment. In the background, there is a dense thicket of trees and bushes, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall scene is one of natural beauty and tranquility.



## **NACSO has emerged strong from a challenging five-year period.**

During one of the strategic planning sessions, a participant compared NACSO to the '*kan nie dood*' plant, directly translated as the 'cannot die' plant. A funding crisis threatened the Secretariat's existence. Several large projects emerged that provided a much-needed financial buffer, but came with conditions and deliverables that reduced the flexibility of the Secretariat, the Members and Working Groups. Membership engagement waned and the support needs of the programme continued to become more complex. Despite these challenges, NACSO has resolutely persisted and delivered critical services to Namibia's CBNRM programme.

NACSO's previous strategic plan portrayed NACSO as 'the CBNRM Programme'. The ground has moved, with recognition that NACSO is not in itself 'the Programme'. NACSO cannot speak for communities representing the myriad of community-based organizations involved in CBNRM - no longer just conservancies, but also community forests, a residents' trust inside a National Park, grazing groups, fish sanctuaries and other landscapes- and even transboundary-level initiatives that take CBNRM to the next level. More emphasis is being placed today on creating an enabling space for the voice of communities to be heard and amplified.

This strategic plan - which represents the product of over a year's engagement at multiple levels with the organisations that make up NACSO - places more emphasis on NACSO as an integrated bundle of institutions - a 11 NGO-strong Membership body, a Secretariat that serves its Members and three thematic Working Groups forming the glue that binds and ensures alignment between Member services. These parts working together achieve more than they ever could working separately.

# What is the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations?

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NACSO is a network of NGOs that directly assist communal conservancies, community forests and other relevant CBOs with advice, support and training, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT).

NACSO consists of Members who provide overall oversight, a Secretariat, currently consisting of one staff member, that represents the collective interests of the Members, and three Working Groups that provide technical services to conservancies. The working groups comprise Member representatives and other partners such as MEFT.

**NACSO supports three key thematic areas, which are:**



# Members

## *Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)*

Provides technical support to conservancies and other CBOs including training in natural resources management; community capacity building; institutional and economic development; financial and logistic assistance.

## *Legal Assistance Centre (LAC)*

Provides legal advice to conservancies and other CBOs on constitutions, contracts, legal conflicts and conflict resolution and advocacy on CBNRM issues.

## *Namibia Development Trust (NDT)*

Works with historically marginalised rural and urban communities to build their power to act for social change, through capacity building initiatives.

## *Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF)*

Provides assistance in grant administration, fundraising, financial management and Monitoring and Evaluation.

## *Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN)*

Supports and empowers the San people to improve their quality of life economically and socially including land and human rights and the sustainable use of natural resources.

## *Ombo Arts Trust (OAT)*

Supports sustainable livelihoods of Namibia's marginalised communities through the development, sales and marketing of quality crafts.

## *Save the Rhino Trust (SRT)*

Implementing rhino conservation and management, training and capacity building in rhino management and responsible rhino tourism ventures.

## *Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)*

Saves cheetahs in the wild through scientific research and integrated programmes that address mankind's interaction with the cheetah and its habitat.

## *Multi-disciplinary Research Centre and Consultancy (MRCC-UNAM)*

Conducts research on the social effectiveness of CBNRM and conservancies in Namibia.

## *Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA)*

Aims to reduce human elephant conflict and enable people to live safely and without fear of elephants through practical and innovative mitigation strategies.

## *The Rössing Foundation*

Aims to implement and facilitate corporate social responsibility activities within the communities of Namibia. The Foundation undertakes a broad range of activities across a wide spectrum of community development areas and concentrates its activities mainly within the Erongo Region and to a lesser extent in the Oshana, and Omaheke Regions.

# Associate members

## *Namibia Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS)*

Works to conserve Namibia's natural environment; to promote appropriate protection and wise use of natural resources and sustainable development.

## *Southern Kunene Regional Association (SKRA)*

Increases the sustainability of the conservancy programme in southern Kunene by creating a platform where members can discuss issues and share best practices.

## *Tourism Supporting Conservation (TOSCO)*

Links the tourism industry to local people, conservation organisations and research. Supports conservation projects and local people who share their land with wildlife.

## *World Wildlife Fund in Namibia (WWF in Namibia)*

Provides technical support to implementers in the fields of natural resource management, business and enterprise development, and institutional development.

## *Kavango Regional Conservancy Association (KRCA)*

Independent organisation comprising registered and emerging conservancies in the Kavango region, acting as a representative umbrella body.

## *Kunene Regional Community Conservancy Association (KCCA)*

Independent organisation comprising registered and emerging conservancies in the Kunene region, acting as a representative umbrella body.

## *Otjozondjupa Regional Conservancy Association (ORCA)*

Independent organisation comprising registered and emerging conservancies in the Otjozondjupa region, acting as a representative umbrella body.

# Background

## History and Achievements

NACSO's consortium of 10 Namibian civil society organisations and the University of Namibia's Multipurpose Research and Consulting Centre (MRCC-UNAM) work together to support, promote and strengthen Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). NACSO was formed in the late 1990s to serve a core coordination function within the emergent CBNRM program, following reforms to law and policy in 1996 that created the legal basis for the establishment of communal conservancies. Since then, NACSO has played a key role in the development of Namibia's CBNRM programme, which today has expanded to deliver a growing suite of critical conservation, rural development, tourism investment and economic diversification functions.

NACSO's structure comprises its Membership, a lean Secretariat, and three thematic Working Groups (Natural Resources Working Group, Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group, and Institutional Development Working Group) that are collaborative spaces currently hosted by NACSO Members, working in coordination with the Secretariat. Voting membership is limited to Namibian

NGOs, while key non-member collaborators such as WWF participate prominently in the three Working Groups, which, aside from being collaborative platforms, also provide critical technical service delivery functions. As the primary civil society convening body and counterpart to the government, NACSO works closely with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT).

NACSO's key functions are to coordinate the delivery of support services related to CBNRM through the Secretariat and Working Groups. These services were originally focused on the conservancies but are now broadened to include community forests and a more holistic set of natural resource management issues relevant to rural communities. The NACSO Secretariat, as a representative of its Members, further serves as a collective action body for influencing policy and engaging with government. NACSO, through the Working Groups, also plays key monitoring and communication functions, such as its annual State of Community Conservation in Namibia reports, and the information database for CBNRM impacts.

## Members' response to the COVID-19 pandemic

NACSO Members, with coordination by the Secretariat and support from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism provided much needed support to conservancies during the Covid pandemic. The pandemic's impacts on conservancies were many. These include a loss of income from tourism-related industries as a result of the lockdown that restricted face-to-face meetings and travel. These strict measures put in place by the government to contain the spread of Covid also resulted in the reduction of conservancies' capacity to tackle poaching and monitor human-wildlife conflict incidents as they relied on support from NACSO field partners and MEFT. Furthermore, severe disruptions in community benefit projects were seen. It was clear that conservancies needed help.

NACSO Members, with coordination from the Secretariat, together with the Namibian Chamber of Environment, made special fundraising efforts to support community game

guards as well as lion and rhino rangers in the conservancies. These funds supported the salaries of conservancy employees working on poaching and human-wildlife conflict, critical threats for conservancies. In addition to this, assistance was given to conservancies to renegotiate the agreements they have with their joint venture partners. Further assistance was given to conservancies to review their budgets so as to ensure they were in a position to cover salaries and essential activities during the pandemic.

NACSO, through the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia, provided oversight and implemented the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilience Facility (CRRRF) which was aimed at ensuring conservation efforts in conservancies continued during the pandemic. A total of 4,000,000 Euros has been committed and funded activities include:

- ▶ Wage support grants to tourism business enterprises which saved the jobs of 899 employees at lodges and campsites country-wide. A total of just over N\$ 11.2 million has been paid out in staff salaries to ensure continued operations of the 38 tourism business enterprises.
- ▶ Emergency support towards human-wildlife conflict mitigation: grants amounting to N\$ 1.5 million have been committed to support the construction of predator proof kraals as well as construction of the Hobatere Concession Boundary Fence along the western boundary of the Etosha National Park.

- ▶ A grant worth N\$186,450 was disbursed to the Mashi Crafts Centre in the Zambezi Region in exchange for a variety of hand-made arts and crafts. A similar grant was rolled out to the OMBA Arts Trust for income replacement for the different artisans who sell their items through them. This grant is expected to benefit at least 330 families.
- ▶ The procurement of masks, sanitisers and sanitiser stands which were successfully distributed to all 86 conservancies countrywide for use in respective communities.

## A Brief History

**1982**

In spite of a hostile political climate, a pioneering partnership was initiated between a small group of conservationists and community leaders in north-west Namibia. Their aim was to find joint solutions to the massive decline in wildlife due to illegal commercial and subsistence hunting, exacerbated by one of the worst droughts in decades. Community-based solutions - fiercely opposed by the colonial authorities - included community leaders appointing the country's first community game guards. This joint action turned round what appeared to be a hopeless situation; wildlife started recovering well and a vision of community ownership of that wildlife was nurtured.

**1990**

At independence the new, idealistic SWAPO government included CBNRM as a key conservation and development strategy for the country. The early game guard initiative, a small project where tourism directly benefited a community and an exemplary community consultative process - a series of socio-ecological surveys in areas across Namibia where people and wildlife still lived together - formed the basis of what was to become the national Namibian CBNRM programme, as well as informing government about needed policy and legislation changes. One of NACSO's Founding Members; IRDNC has its origins in these early initiatives.

**1993**

Saw the start of a US \$14 million support programme for CBNRM in Namibia, known as the Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Programme, funded by USAID, WWF-US and the Government. Earlier CBNRM pioneered in the Kunene Region was funded by grants from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, WWF-UK and WWF International. The LIFE programme was guided and overseen by a Steering Committee made up of the key implementation partners. This formal collaborative group led to the formation of NACSO and the establishment of a national Community Based Natural Resource Management programme.

**1995**

The cabinet approved the policy that provides the basis for communal conservancies.

**1996**

Parliament passed Communal Conservancy legislation.

**1998**

The first four communal conservancies were registered via the Namibia Government Gazette. As of 2022, a total of 86 conservancies have been registered.

Official public launch of Namibia's Communal Area Conservancy Programme by His Excellency the President, Sam Nujoma. On behalf of Namibia and the CBNRM programme, the President received the WWF International award for 'Gift to the Earth' in recognition of the value and uniqueness of the conservancy programme.

**1999**

Formation of the CBNRM Association of Namibia (CAN) commenced to take over the CBNRM Programme coordination role from the LIFE Secretariat.

**2000**

The CBNRM Association of Namibia, CAN (consisting of MET and NGOs) Secretariat was established. It was later renamed the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Support Organisations (NACSO).

CBNRM working groups (Natural Resource Management, Institutional Development, Business Enterprise and Livelihoods, and Research) were created.

**2001**

The Forest Act was passed by parliament.

**2005**

The first State of Conservancy Report, entitled Namibia's Communal Conservancies – A Review of Progress and Challenges was launched.

**2006**

The first 13 community forests were gazetted in terms of the Forest Act

**2007**

The National CBNRM Programme Sustainability Workshop endorses the importance of NACSO and the CBNRM working groups to the long-term sustainability of Namibia's communal conservancies.

**2009**

The number of communal conservancies gazetted increased to 59. CBNRM generated N\$ 42.48 million in benefits during 2009, of which N\$ 35.02 million came from registered conservancies. A record 29 joint-venture (JV) tourism agreements were in place.

**2012**

The Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) Inception. The CLP program is a mentorship and leadership program introduced to provide two years long internship opportunities to young graduates in pursuing their careers in the CBNRM program. A total of 21 young graduates have gone through the programme to date.

**2015**

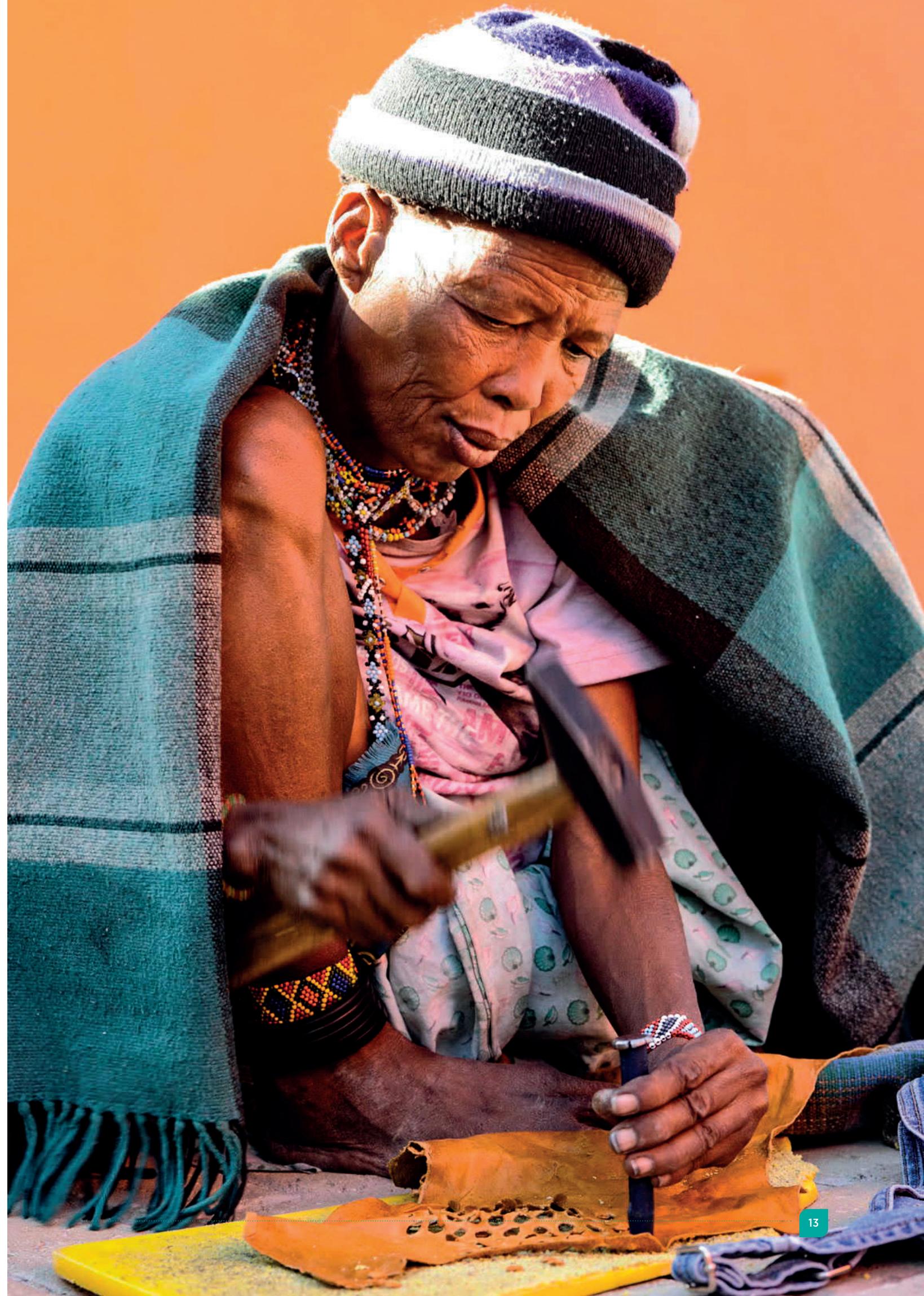
The number of communal conservancies gazetted increased to 82 registered plus 1 community conservation association in a national park (Kyaramacan Association which is managed like a conservancy. There were a total of 19 concessions in national parks or on other state land held by 23 conservancies (some conservancies share concessions). The number of registered community forests increased to 32. The number of community fish reserves increased to 2. A total of about N\$ 102 million was generated in returns for local communities. About 70 conservancies had a total of 184 enterprises based on natural resources.

**2020**

The number of communal conservancies gazetted increased to 86. A total of N\$ 11,889,143 in cash benefits was distributed to conservancy residents and used to support community projects. Conservancies generated N\$ 96,300,178 total cash income and in-kind benefits to rural communities. The number of community fish reserves increased to 10. The number of registered community forests increased to 43.

**2021**

NACSO CCFN project Inception meeting. NACSO received a grant from MEFT through CCFN (Community Conservation Fund of Namibia) to support the implementation of COVID-19 relief fund received by conservancies.



# Situational Analysis

**Understanding the Context**

## Strengths

*NACSO's key achievement and key function as an association has been its strength of collaboration, based on long-term individual and organisational relationships that have been built amongst its Members, as well as with external parties, for over two decades. Other key achievements and strengths of NACSO include:*

- ▶ **Unique unifying platform.** NACSO's Member organisations have different organisational mandates but have been able to maintain the same vision and focus as an association over several decades. There are not many successful forums such as this in the region, and indeed internationally. This uniqueness and clear shared vision has been a key factor attributed to the success of the CBNRM programme in Namibia. NACSO has always had a collegial culture of debate and self-critique; and Members demonstrate maturity in their ability to handle differences.
- ▶ **Transformational policy change.** Advocacy at the national level has led to the adoption of Namibian policies that have given significant natural resource user rights and benefits to rural communities. The Namibian CBNRM programme has also become a model of excellence around the world. NACSO's advocacy for community conservation has further fostered an increasingly united voice in the country and region, a voice that has been legitimised by support from government. In Namibia, NACSO has also succeeded in building CBNRM and conservancies into national planning frameworks such as NDP III and IV, Vision 2030, the Communal Lands Act of 2002, the National Rural Development Strategy, etc.
- ▶ **Coordination and collaboration.** Effective coordination, facilitated by the Secretariat and between Members, over the past two decades has resulted in Members sharing the

same vision thus reducing competition for funding and building stronger relationships with various partners such as MEFT. The Secretariat has mediated the relationship between NGOs and MEFT. This level of institutionalized collaboration has been key to the overall progress of CBNRM in Namibia.

- ▶ **Multi-stakeholder support systems.** NACSO is renowned for its strength in providing cost-efficient coordinated technical support and services to conservancies through the Members and the three working groups where the Member Organisations' field staff and MEFT are represented. Furthermore, NACSO's Working Groups produce quality training modules to provide standardised training to CBOs.
- ▶ **Data collection, storage and dissemination.** NACSO has enabled 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 achievement of CBNRM in Namibia which in turn markets the country and the programme.
- ▶ **Forum for learning and sharing.** NACSO provides a forum for reflection and learning about best practices, sharing of innovations across its Membership, and improving existing practices and models

## Challenges

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

- ▶ **Governance structures.** Although roles, responsibilities and accountability lines are outlined in the constitution, there is some uncertainty on the specific roles of the Secretariat vis a vis its Members. There is also a lack of clarity on who is accountable to whom. This has left Members feeling they cannot hold the Secretariat accountable when their views and priorities are not aligned. There has been growing discontent as the Secretariat's focus and priorities have not always been aligned to that of the Members. As new members and staff join NACSO, there need to be clearer internal governance systems and guidelines for internal accountability and lines of communication. Although conservancies do not

feature in NACSO's structure, the Secretariat is regarded externally as a conservancy representative structure, which has led to tensions with members, and in some instances with conservancies.

- ▶ **Fundraising capacity.** The Secretariat, Working Groups and a few Members have heavily relied on support from a single donor over the years which has resulted in a more reactive rather than proactive approach to fundraising. In recent years, the funding pipeline has expanded, but remains limited to rigid project-minded initiatives that risk straightjacketing NACSO rather than enabling innovation. Furthermore, there is a shortage of skilled

and experienced staff within NACSO's Secretariat with the technical skills to build strategic donor relationships, fundraise and manage grants. The Members could take greater responsibility to fundraise for NACSO's Secretariat and the Working Groups.

► **Data and service delivery.** Although service delivery and data collection is seen as a strength, the collected data is not always used by conservancies to inform their management plans as the data may be too complex and only "understood by those at a certain academic level". In addition to this, there is sometimes a gap between the services provided by Members and the services needed by the conservancies. Some partners think NACSO has become stagnant and provides the same services even though the conservancies have evolved and require more sophisticated skill sets. There has been an overall lack of innovation around some of the approaches NACSO takes in terms of the services they deliver.

► **Member disengagement.** Aside from a highly committed and diligent Executive Committee, there has been gradual disengagement from the broader Membership. During its early years, NACSO was characterised by vibrant and robust debates among a well-represented group of Members who would travel to annual meetings from distant field sites. These gatherings prompted the innovations that made Namibia's community conservation programme globally renowned. It is not unusual for mature networks to lose their dynamic energy when there is no longer a common struggle. Work is needed to revive that original enthusiasm, drive and commitment to NACSO.

► **Coordination of field partners.** Alignment between the Secretariat with - and between - field partners is lagging. Coordination in the field for the introduction of new projects and programmes can be strengthened in some regions.

## Opportunities

*The following opportunities exist for NACSO:*

► **Expanding the reach of Members beyond wildlife.** Although some NACSO Members have expanded their work to include fisheries and agriculture, overall the CBNRM Programme has not had sufficient impact in areas other than wildlife. Other factors that influence civil society and community rights, such as issues relating to land and grazing need more attention. Opportunities thus exist for NACSO and the CBNRM Programme to expand beyond wildlife. One way to do this is through diversifying the membership. This will allow NACSO to deepen its impact, diversify its funding, and increase its network and reach through building new partnerships. A further consideration is whether NACSO has aligned itself so closely with MEFT that its scope becomes restricted and its voice becomes muffled. Whilst there are advantages to the strong relationships that NACSO has developed with MEFT, this should not remove the impetus from developing collaborations with other government agencies and organisations. Furthermore, the Secretariat's Director has been the key point of contact with MEFT, and there are opportunities to broaden the level of Member engagement with MEFT, to reduce reliance on the Secretariat and emphasise that NACSO is not just a Secretariat but an Association of Members.

► **Advocacy to further expand CBNRM in Namibia.** In its early years, NACSO was characterised by its fighting spirit. The programme was championed by the energy and vision of a leadership team who may have disagreed

on methods, but were completely aligned on their goal to dismantle unjust Apartheid era policies that prevented Black Namibians from access and rights to natural resources. Today the fight continues to be complex; for example there are multiple instances where similarly vulnerable and marginalised communities are competing for access to land and grazing or where the government's support for oil exploration in the Kavango Region have elicited very diverse responses from the conservation sector. Despite the increasingly nuanced context, there remain burning issues, and efforts by communities to further expand their 'bundles of rights' and secure their livelihoods that are worth the fight. NACSO is not small and powerless; it has demonstrated its resolve and should be at the forefront of researching, advocating for, and influencing the conservation agenda in Namibia.

► **Alternative funding sources for Members.** Opportunities exist for Members to attract alternative sources of income by highlighting that CBNRM is not solely about nature conservation but also drives the diversification of rural income streams, reinforcing good governance, and the promotion of skills, innovation and empowerment of rural people amongst other things. Funding, for example, exists through sectors such as climate change and the green economy. This has already been and could be a much larger entry point for alternative funding. The past few years have seen a massive upsurge of donor interest in financing large-scale initiatives to secure environmental

sustainability (e.g. Legacy Landscapes and multiple high-profile commitments by high wealth individuals to give large sums to conservation). Indigenous people and local communities are now recognised for their vital role in conservation. These global trends - if Members are able to position themselves strategically - should channel more funding towards the type of work that NACSO has been doing for years.

► **Deepen CBNRM in Namibia through community voices.**

An opportunity exists for the bottom-up amplification of community voices. By increasing the voice of communities, they are empowered to improve governance in their conservancies. Furthermore, a bigger voice is needed to influence Western countries on contentious issues such as hunting. The NACSO Secretariat and Members would play the role of facilitators since NACSO is not mandated to represent conservancies or communities.

► **Accreditation of training material, standardisation of**

**material and training.** NACSO has since its last strategic plan looked into ways to standardise and ensure quality of training material. Some of these training materials and standards that have been developed (e.g. Game Guard Unit Standards) will be accredited under a new legal entity focused on providing the training currently conducted by the working groups.

► **Building the next generation of NACSO leaders.** Despite the commendable impacts of NACSO's Conservation Leadership programme which has facilitated on-the-job training for 18 young professionals. Approximately 50% remain engaged in the broader conservation sector at a national level. Having more youth involved in key leadership positions promotes longevity and rejuvenation of the programme. NACSO Members need to create further career growth opportunities for young professionals who can bring fresh views and technical skills within their organisations. They also need to look into ways to retain young talent.

## Threats

*The following internal and external threats exist for NACSO:*

► **Perception of decline in funding/change in funding landscape.**

**landscape.** There is a perception that the funding landscape has changed which has resulted in less available funding. This has prompted fears that the NACSO Secretariat and Working Groups will collapse once the current funding ends as it is currently too dependent on very few donors. An alternative, and equally valid, perspective may be that the majority of the NACSO Members have not organised themselves properly to access funds in the longer term since they have had a steady flow of funding for many years. Worth noting however, is that NACSO has survived the incremental decrease in funding by its long-term donor, WWF in Namibia, in recent years, demonstrating an unanticipated level of resilience.

► Capacity and resources of Secretariat, and service providers. NACSO's Secretariat, Members and Working Groups have been unable to keep up with the needs of the conservancies as they grow and evolve, and as the number of conservancies - now 86 - outstrips the capacity of Members to provide support. Furthermore, several Member organisations are under immense pressure to maintain and further increase their financial and human

resources to address the current needs of communities. This may result in NACSO being "left behind" as the programme and conservancies expand into different sectors. In addition, the needs are immense but NACSO's Secretariat is currently being run by a single person. NACSO's ability to sustain its strong communications is also under threat; the current communication position is split between WWF Namibia and NACSO. It is unclear who will be responsible for NACSO's communications in the mid- to long-term if WWF were unable to keep co-financing that position.

► Poor conservancy governance. The weak management of conservancy revenue generated by wildlife and tourism enterprises by some committees is the most significant challenge facing the programme and therefore indirectly NACSO. NACSO has since its last strategy, where this threat was highlighted, worked through the Institutional Development Working Group to improve conservancy governance by increasing the capacity of members to hold committees accountable. There is recognition that more long-term funds dedicated to conservancy governance work is required.

# Values

*NACSO's Members, Secretariat and Working Groups firmly believe that we can achieve more by working together. We are committed to deepening our partnerships - working together to secure and expand Namibia's hard-won community conservation gains - and continuing in the culture of honesty, trust, and passion for the communities we serve, that has characterized our relationship over several years.*

## **The Problem**

In the past, rural communities in Namibia were excluded from access and rights over their natural resources. NACSO has worked extensively since its inception, to ensure that communities are given the rights to manage their natural resources and fully participate in conserving these resources and generating income from them. Although participation has increased and certain rights to manage their natural resources have been given, there remain some legislative barriers and communities still do not have the full capacity to participate in, and benefit from, community conservation.

## **NACSO's Approach**

## Our Solution

As a solution to the problem, we bring together, coordinate and sustain an active Membership, a representative Secretariat and collaborative Working Groups with passionate people who are able to sustain appropriate and coordinated services to communities at all stages of their development towards participating fully in community conservation.

## Our Collective Vision

Our vision is a NACSO that is constituted by an active Membership with passionate individuals, represented by a well resourced and accountable Secretariat and Working Groups that are able to sustain appropriate and coordinated services to communities at all stages of their development towards participating and benefiting from community conservation.

## Our Mission

We aim to promote and support community conservation through collaborating and coordination between Members and partners, developing best practices and training modules, strengthening the rights of communities to participate in CBNRM and advocating for supportive policies and legislation.

## Our Purpose

We strive to strengthen communities' capacity to fully participate in community conservation which includes safeguarding their biodiversity, benefitting from sustainably managing their natural resources, adapting to climate change and projecting their voice about the future of their environment.

# Our Value Proposition

### ► We are unique

Our Member organisations have different organisational mandates but we have been able to maintain the same overall vision and focus as an association over the last 23 years.

### ► We do great work in advocacy

Our advocacy at the national and international level has seen the Namibian CBNRM programme become an example of excellence around the world.

### ► We coordinate and collaborate effectively

Our effective coordination has resulted in Members sharing the same vision. This level of institutionalized collaboration has been key to the overall progress of CBNRM in Namibia.

### ► We collect and disseminate high quality data

Our high quality data collection, storage, and dissemination, which tells our story over several decades has played a key role in monitoring progress by government, NGOs, and communities.

### ► We provide a forum

We have provided a forum for reflection and learning around best practices, discussing our challenges as an association and working on solutions, sharing of innovations across the Membership, and questioning existing practices and models.

### ► Managing constant tension between conservation and social justice

There will always be tension on whether NACSO's primary role is poverty alleviation or that of securing natural resources. Sometimes our efforts will be more on the conservation agenda and at other times on improving people's livelihoods. We see the two as inextricably linked and interdependent.

# Theory of Change

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The core thematic areas for NACSO remain intertwined with the three key pillars of CBNRM. These are Natural Resource Management, Institutional Development and Governance, and Business, Enterprises and Livelihoods. We believe that we can provide support leading to successful community conservation by having a well resourced and well governed NACSO that is constituted by the three strands of an active Membership, a representative Secretariat and collaborative

Working Groups who serve our three thematic areas. Our 'triple helix' model makes NACSO a catalyst for coordinating essential activities and creating platforms for convening and collaborating to learn about and share experiences, and advocate for favorable national and international policies, which in turn leads to communities fully participating and benefiting from community conservation.



# NACSO's key function is to convene, collaborate and coordinate

**To build collaborations around a common vision** amongst its Members, partners and key stakeholders and provide a platform to discuss shared challenges and solve problems, and ensure that inclusive and informed decisions and actions are taken.

**To coordinate work** between national and field partners

**To create a platform for its Members to jointly fundraise** and coordinate financing for the CBNRM programme between the Members.

**To facilitate learning and sharing** by providing an engaging and interactive platform for Members, partners and key stakeholders to exchange experiences, reflect on outcomes and impacts, and develop innovations to improve Members' approaches to supporting CBNRM.

**To work with relevant partners in facilitating research** on CBNRM and draw on lessons to improve the support provided by Members and working groups, and also encourage science-based decision-making.

**To advocate on issues relevant to Members and represent the interests of its Members.** The strength of a collective voice of Members ensures their interests and needs are heard by key decision makers.

Through its Working Groups, **to provide technical expertise and pool collective capacities and extension services** that individual Member organizations cannot do individually.

# Strategic Goals and Objectives



# Goal 1: A well-functioning Members' Association capable of executing its mission

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- ▶ **Success:** A well resourced, functioning and accountable Secretariat, with Members and Working Groups delivering results to its membership, communities and the CBNRM programme at large.
- ▶ **Why:** An effective, high-capacity team is necessary to execute its mission and achieve the desired impact.

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## Objectives

- 1 : Members review and refine NACSO's structure and accountability mechanisms in the constitution, as well as clarify the Working Groups' roles and responsibilities, powers and reporting channels
  - **By 2023:** Constitution is reviewed and agreed upon by Members. Clear reporting and accountability lines are determined by the Members. A revised organogram is drawn up by the Secretariat.
  - **By 2026:** A well governed NACSO Secretariat and Working Groups, with clear reporting lines and accountability mechanisms.
- 2 : The Secretariat with support from Members develops a long-term resource mobilization plan to support NACSO's growth and sustainability. This includes investing in relationship building with key stakeholders and emerging donor groups that may lead to new funding opportunities.
  - **By 2023:** The resource mobilization strategy is designed and ready for implementation. Ensure the Secretariat is equipped to be active and effective fundraisers and its Members play a more active role in financing their Secretariat.
  - **By 2026:** The resource mobilization plan and strategy has been implemented.
- 3 : Further develop and strengthen NACSO Secretariat's internal M&E systems by strengthening data collection, data quality, and building staff's capacity to collect and use this data.
  - **By 2022:** Establish a fully operational management information system aligned with NACSO's strategic plan.
  - **By 2026:** Secretariat and Working Group staff have an understanding of impact and best practices and use the data they have collected to scale success and develop innovative future programmes.

# Goal 2: Providing quality services and creating a unified voice through coordination, collaboration, learning and sharing

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- ▶ **Success:** NACSO Secretariat with the Members, Working Groups, partners and key stakeholders regularly exchange experiences, reflect on the outcomes and impacts of their work to adapt and improve the support they give to communities, and sharpen service delivery for the CBNRM programme as a whole.
- ▶ **Why:** Creating a shared voice among all stakeholders and delivering top quality services, continues to be critical for NACSO to achieve its vision.

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# Objectives

- 1** The Secretariat and Working Groups reignite and facilitate conservancy forums at national and regional levels for reflection, learning and information sharing among partners and key stakeholders.

  - **By 2023:** Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key stakeholders. Hold one national and one regional forum with identified stakeholders.
  - **By 2026:** All key stakeholders and partners are well informed of NACSO's support and are working towards the same goals in the support they provide to communities.
- 2** Increase youth engagement and their understanding of CBNRM across the country

  - **By 2023:** Working Groups to complete a youth strategy and action plan with oversight from the Secretariat.
  - **By 2026:** Support at least two existing or new youth groups per landscape/region to conduct youth advocacy campaigns.
- 3** The Secretariat facilitates regular engagement with active regional Conservancy Associations and support for the establishment of a National Conservancy Association for continuous reflection, learning and information sharing

  - **By 2023:** Bi-annual meetings with active conservancy associations providing regular opportunities for cross learning and coordination, and ideas on how to strengthen them.
  - **By 2026:** Enhanced partnerships and collaboration between conservancy associations, and the establishment of a National CBO Association, leading to overall improved advocacy for community-based organizations.
- 4** The Working Groups, with oversight from the Secretariat, improve coordination with field partners to ensure alignment with - and between - field partners on projects and funding.

  - **By 2023:** Quarterly updates on activities of field partners as they align with those at national level.
  - **By 2026:** Alignment with and knowledge of new projects and programmes, and funding opportunities has been strengthened in all regions.
- 5** The Secretariat facilitates platforms for debate, research and innovation, and through the Working Group and Members, identifies research needs of the programme in collaboration with relevant institutions.

  - **By 2023:** Research needs assessment conducted and one MSc/PhD student attached to the Secretariat.
  - **By 2023:** Quarterly panel discussions on contentious issues and talks facilitated by NACSO Secretariat to drive and energise the conservation agenda.
  - **By 2026:** NACSO Working Groups and Members actively contribute to research by publishing peer reviewed and gray literature, adapt their support, based on the findings, and ensure key findings are incorporated into policies.

## Goal 3: Developing leaders at all levels

► **Success:** NACSO Members have created growth opportunities for young professionals and produced outstanding leaders at different levels who are working in different institutions supporting the CBNRM programme.

► **Why:** Having more youth involved in key leadership positions allows for longevity and rejuvenation of the programme. Young professionals can bring fresh views and technical skills within their institutions.

### Objective

1 : Members identify and place potential leaders using and expanding on the existing Conservation Leadership Programme.

- **By 2023:** Three interns or fellows are placed into different institutions and receive active mentorship.
- **By 2026:** At least 12 motivated young professionals or emerging leaders are being actively mentored and have moved into various leadership positions and can visualise their career trajectory.

## Goal 4: Expanding the impact of CBNRM beyond wildlife

► **Success:** NACSO has a more diverse membership and its services extend to a more integrated approach to CBNRM.

► **Why:** This will allow NACSO to deepen its impact, diversify its funding, and increase its network and reach through building new partnerships.

### Objective

1 : Members actively accept and collaborate with more diverse members working in the different sectors including but not limited to land and agriculture.

- **By 2023:** Two new members with institutions working in non-wildlife sectors.
- **By 2026:** A diverse Membership and partnership portfolio extending beyond wildlife.
- **Secretariat and** Members develop partnerships with other government agencies
- **By 2023:** One new partnership with a government agency (aside from MEFT).
- **By 2026:** Active partnerships with a wide range of government agencies. MOUs developed and agreed upon with more government agencies.

# Operational Implementation

## Our Structure



The Working Group coordinators will move to the Secretariat who will coordinate their activities. This transition will require a planned approach and will be done in phases since two of the three Working Group coordinators are currently housed and hosted by Member organisations and the third Working Group is hosted by WWF. Terms of references are currently being developed for the Working Groups in an effort to better clarify their roles and responsibilities, as well as their governance structure. The Secretariat will require additional human and financial resources (discussed below) in order to effectively coordinate the Working Groups.



# Resourcing Needs

## 1 Human Resources

The Secretariat currently has one full-time employee (the Director) and ad-hoc CLP intern/s. For it to fully function, three additional roles, aside from the Director, whose role is oversight of strategy, advocacy and fundraising, need to be added:

- ▶ A high-level technical full-time Operations Manager is required to oversee the operational needs of the Secretariat. This role would be responsible for administration and fundraising with donors, as well as providing oversight and coordinating the activities of the Working Groups who actively liaise with field members.
- ▶ An administrator and accountant.
- ▶ A part-time communications officer.

Two Working Groups each have full-time staff members who work as coordinators. An additional staff member is needed to fill the coordination role of the Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group. Furthermore, three technical administrators are required to provide logistical and programme support to the coordinators and their respective working groups.

A longer-term vision, strategy and design needs to be developed for the Conservation Leadership Programme to identify institutional support needed, how to effectively work with partners, attracting and retaining excellent candidates in the programme and preparing them for leadership positions.

## 2 Financial Resources

NACSO will only be as effective as the availability of financial resources to meet our mission. In line with this strategy we aim to ensure the coordination of financial resources between the Members, the Secretariat and the Working Groups to effectively meet the funding needs at minimum cost.

The Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN) was set up by a NACSO Task Force as a mechanism to secure long-term funding for the sustained support services that conservancies will always require. However, in order to avoid the potential for conflict of interest, neither one of the three components of NACSO is represented on the CCFN

Board, and Members have experienced a gradual disconnect from CCFN following its establishment. Subsequent to a consultative process in 2021/2, the CCFN Board has agreed to set up an advisory committee which will include NACSO. This has, however, not been finalised.

Developing a fundraising strategy that identifies new donors and funding opportunities, areas of collaboration between Members (and partners), and one that determines how the NACSO's Membership and Secretariat can play a more active role in fundraising is, therefore, key in realising this strategy.

## 3 Partnerships

An MOU is being developed with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism. This MOU will outline the partnership between NACSO and MEFT, and state the roles and responsibilities of each party.

NACSO, through the Secretariat and Members, will continue branching out to other thematic areas as it looks at contributing to conservation more holistically. A stakeholder mapping exercise will be conducted by the Secretariat to determine further key stakeholders with whom the NACSO Secretariat and Working Groups should be working. NACSO, through the Working Groups, plans to work more closely with other relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Trade and Industry as

well as other key stakeholders, which include but should not be limited to:

- ▶ Resource Africa - UK and Southern Africa office for policy and advocacy
- ▶ Southern African Trust - marketing as they work with SADC
- ▶ Other like minded organisations including institutions working with land and land rights
- ▶ Conservancy associations as they act as the regional voice of communities
- ▶ Private sector - looking beyond tourism
- ▶ Community Leaders Network of Southern Africa (CLN)
- ▶ African CSO Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA)

## 4 Systems

NACSO Secretariat's and some Members' IT infrastructure ability to use virtual platforms can be improved. COVID 19 has shown the importance and need for good IT infrastructure. Much can be done virtually without reducing impact.

Central components to knowledge management and learning are an M&E plan and an information management system. This includes clearly identified indicators and data collection protocols. In order to ensure we provide consistent, timely

and accurate data, our systems for capturing data needs to be improved. For this, we will establish and maintain an effective monitoring, evaluation and learning system.

Furthermore, a communications plan, and fundraising strategy will be developed to ensure we effectively communicate our impact and in turn raise the needed funds to carry out our work.

# The Working Groups

The Working Group coordinators will move to the Secretariat who will coordinate their activities. This transition will require a planned approach and will be done in phases since two of the three Working Group coordinators are currently housed

and hosted by Member organisations and the third Working Group is hosted by WWF. Furthermore, the Secretariat will require additional human and financial resources (discussed above) in order to effectively coordinate the Working Groups.

## Natural Resources Working Group

The Natural Resources Working Group (NRWG) is an organised group of specialists from Members, other NGOs and government ministries under the umbrella of NACSO who work collectively to support community conservation areas and improve natural resource management in Namibia. Services provided to conservancies by the NRWG can be separated into development activities and maintenance activities.

The main activity of the NRWG is supporting monitoring, adaptive management and reporting on the status of natural resources within the conservancies of Namibia. Conservancies use the Event Book system to monitor their resources. The NRWG supports training, material development, technical support, annual natural resource management (NRM) audits, and discusses management strategies. The event book database holds summary data, giving a national picture of natural resource management within the conservancies.

sustainable management and utilisation of wildlife. The WG also provides a platform for coordination and collaboration between communities and other stakeholders.

### *Mission*

To provide resources and credible NRM information in a timely manner to conservancies and other stakeholders for decision making and adaptive management

### *Targets: by 2026*

#### **The NR Working Group has:**

- ▶ Strengthened its NRM coordination for implementation of annual programmes in collaboration with community based organisations and other stakeholders
- ▶ Established good relations with other community based organisations (community forests, community fisheries)
- ▶ Supported emerging and gazetted conservancies with resources and NRM information
- ▶ Expanded its capacity (technical and financial) to support transboundary conservation
- ▶ Kept up to date with landscape level developments
- ▶ Supported national parks with monitoring and mapping services
- ▶ Facilitated the adoption of sound adaptive management practices that have led to generally stable and/or increasing wildlife numbers.
- ▶ Empowered local communities to take ownership and accountability for the implementation of their game management and utilization plans through capacity building and mentoring programmes

### *Vision*

We envision the NRWG as a hub of NRM technical experts which supports community conservation at a national and regional level to enable communities to manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner that delivers benefits and shares best practices at international level.

### *Purpose*

To provide specialised NRM support and capacity building opportunities to local communities, NACSO Members and other stakeholders to promote wildlife conservation and

- ▶ The NRWG, BEL and IDWG has a fully functional interactive online data hub easily accessible to managers and decision makers
- ▶ The working group has developed field applications of

- topographic data
- ▶ The working group has secured sufficient financial resources to support NRM activities

## Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group

The Business, Enterprise and Livelihoods Working Group (BELWG) is a voluntary association of business and enterprise development specialists from NGOs and Government Ministries who work collectively to support conservancies and communities in Namibia to develop and improve business enterprises.

The BELWG comprises a loose alliance of smaller sub-groups which each focus on different enterprise sectors or opportunities - such as tourism, joint ventures, hunting and natural products. The sub-groups operate through meetings and workshops which are held as often as required. The full working group - with all sub-groups - holds a feedback and planning workshop at the beginning of each year.

### *Vision*

Conservancies can unlock value from natural resources to cover the cost of conservation and contribute to social development for current and future generations.

### *Purpose*

Our purpose is to promote and facilitate financial **sustainability** and **resilient** business systems in

conservancies.

- ▶ **Sustainability** = balance between current and future and balance between business, social and environmental needs.
- ▶ **Resilient** = endure shocks and stress in systems.

### *Mission*

Our mission is for the BEL WG to provide specialist technical services to: i) facilitate private sector partnerships with and investments to conservancies in natural resources based enterprises and ii) facilitate SME natural resource based enterprises.

### *Targets: by 2026*

- ▶ BEL WG activities are coordinated, managed and administered successfully
- ▶ Joint venture enterprises are generating funds for conservation costs and local communities' livelihoods.
- ▶ Additional value from wildlife and tourism generates funds for communities
- ▶ Business and financial planning and monitoring is facilitated for conservancies

## Institutional Development Working Group

The Institutional Development Working Group (IDWG) is aimed at creating a platform for CBNRM support organisations and government technical staff, responsible for supporting conservancy institutional development and governance to share experiences, approaches, methodologies and materials. The working group acts as a forum for discussion and debate on institutional development issues. It facilitates and sets standards for more cost effective and accountable service delivery, management systems and locally appropriate performance monitoring and evaluation systems in conservancies. Ultimately, all the NACSO working groups strive for increased ownership and commitment to CBNRM by Namibia's rural communities.

### *Vision*

We envision being a beacon valued first-choice supporting platform for effective CBO governance in Namibia

### *Purpose*

Our purpose is to be a platform for collective sharing and

learning in order to determine best practices and develop tools for its members to support the prioritised governance needs of CBOs.

### *Mission*

Our mission is to share analytical skills and cutting-edge governance tools that build strong and resilient institutions.

### *Targets: by 2026*

- ▶ CBOs are well governed with strong institutional capacity
- ▶ IDWG's project outcomes are well documented and are informing learning and sharing
- ▶ The roles and responsibilities of the working group members are clear
- ▶ The working group has the ability and capacity to predict and effectively adapt to changing circumstances
- ▶ The working group is an all-inclusive learning and sharing platform
- ▶ Identified governance support needs are well financed





Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations

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