

The Kunene Region Torra Conservancy

Addressing social and environmental problems with payments for ecosystem services in Namibia

The Torra Conservancy, a community initiated conservation and rural economic development project, was established in 1998 to protect the local ecosystem and encourage development of income-generating activities for the local community.

What Is the Torra Conservancy?

The Conservancy spans 352,000 ha, and consists of 450 members from four ethnic groups--Nama-Damara, Riemvasmakers, Herero, and the Owambo--in the Kunene region of Namibia. The residents in the area have had a history of marginalization due to forced relocations associated with apartheid, the remote nature of the region, and periodic episodes of severe drought. Prior to the establishment of the conservancy, unabated poaching quickly decimated local wildlife populations. To address these problems, the conservancy was established to protect the local ecosystem, and the development of income-generating ventures helped sustain local families. The conservancy has received a number of benefits from its establishment and subsequent business ventures. These include cash payouts, job creation, game meat, and livestock protection. The conservancy has also received training on Namibia's "Event Book Monitoring System," a nationally sponsored adaptive management program used to monitor wildlife populations in the park.



How Is the Conservancy Funded?

This initiative has received a combination of funding, which is characteristic of many successful payments for ecosystem service projects, especially when used in the context of poverty alleviation. This funding is initially provided by government organizations, international NGOs, or through foreign government aid schemes. In order to satisfy the requirement of long term funding for payment for ecosystem service projects, private partnerships have been established to maintain the economic sustainability of the venture. In the Torra Conservancy, three primary buyers of ecosystem services and goods have developed: a trophy hunting contract with a professional hunter, Namib Wilderness Safaris (NWS) (an ecotourism firm), and a consortium of other local conservancies that are purchasing live game from their parks. Torra was the first conservancy to be granted annual game harvest quotas from the Namibian government, which enabled it to enter into contracts for trophy hunting. In the partnership with NWS, the conservancy maintains a lodge staffed by members of the community called Damaraland Camp. Prior to the establishment of the conservancy, animal populations were dramatically depleted due to hunting and drought. A tenfold increase in wildlife populations has been reported through the "Event Book Monitoring System." This increase has allowed Torra to sell game to other conservancies. The conservancy has also been able to double their population of the critically endangered black rhinoceros. The conservancy earns N\$750,000 a year and has generated N\$1.5 million as of October 2003 from these ventures. Each member of the conservancy received N\$630 in cash (\$73 US) in 2003 through an established benefit distribution policy, as well as a quota of meat per capita for personal use.

Under What Conditions Has the Conservancy Come About?

Various NGOs including the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Save the Rhino Trust, IRDNC, the Legal Assistance Centre, as well as government agencies such as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Namibia were involved in the establishment of the conservancy. Without the legislative support from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism the conservancy would have been unable to flourish. Under analogous contextual circumstances, the project is certainly replicable.

For Additional Information:

- The Torra Conservancy Website: <http://www.nacso.org.na>



The Torra Conservancy, Namibia.

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