

The Business of Preserving Wildlife In Namibia

Challenge

Namibia is a dry and arid country. Income generating opportunities for people who live outside the major urban areas are sparse. One of Namibia's most marginalized rural groups of people are the San. Also known as Bushmen, these traditional hunter/gatherers are no longer able to maintain the lifestyles of their ancestors as their desert homelands are swallowed up by the ever growing need for more land among other population groups.

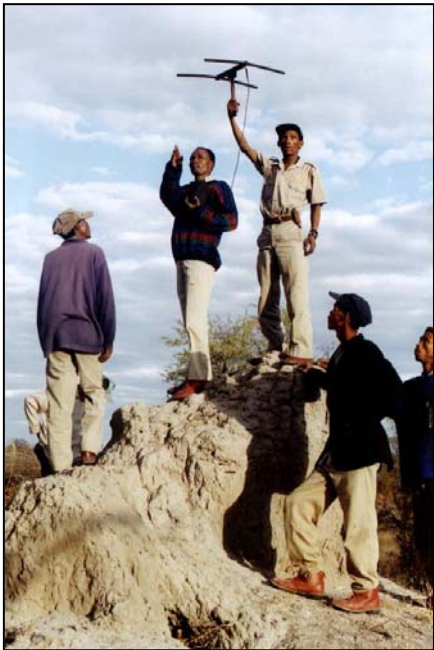


Photo: WWF/Chris Weaver

Nyae Nyae Conservancy rangers with an antenna to monitor the movement of introduced eland and oryx.

Initiative

With USAID assistance, provided through the World Wildlife Fund, legislation was passed in Namibia that allows community rights over wildlife if community members can meet the standards of and register as communities.

The first community to take advantage of the legislation was the Ju/'hoansi San, who formed the Nyae Nyae conservancy in 1998. Once Nyae Nyae was registered, USAID was able to assist the conservancy in electing a management committee, adopting effective game management practices, negotiating with the private sector, and benefiting from tourism.

“By linking conservation and rural development, communal area residents are deriving direct income from the sustainable use of natural resources.”

– Minister of Environment and Tourism, Philemon Malima.

Results

Today, the Nyae Nyae Conservancy has a campsite and one of Namibia's most lucrative trophy hunting contracts. Its members are also benefiting from handicraft sales and game meat distributions. In 2003, conservancy activities provided 35% of total cash income to residents and 28% of the area's employment.

With the financial incentive to protect game, coupled with a USAID-supported program to boost the numbers of certain species in the conservancy through game transfers from other conservancies and elsewhere, wildlife numbers have increased significantly. From 1998 to 2003, springbok has been reintroduced into the area, with numbers rising from 0 to 880; oryx numbers have risen from 430 to 1170; and kudu numbers have risen from 280 to 950. The Nyae Nyae Conservancy also has Namibia's largest population of roan antelope and valuable herd of buffalo.