



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 8TH PARLIAMENT



**REPORT ON THE OVERSIGHT VISIT TO CONSERVACIES IN ZAMBEZI,
KAVANGO EAST, AND KAVANGO WEST**

REPORT NO.2 OF 2025

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MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

- Monitor and enquire into and make recommendations to the Assembly on matters that affect the natural resources of Namibia and its people
- Promote sustainable utilisation of Namibia's Natural Resources
- Review and advise the Assembly on the activities and matters related to agriculture, water and forestry
- Review and advise the Assembly on matters related to mines and the energy sectors
- Promote sustainable tourism international protocols, conventions, and agreements that may affect Namibian's natural resources, mines and energy and tourism and where necessary make appropriate recommendations to the Assembly.

DUE TO OTHER COMPETING ACTIVITIES OF OTHER PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEES, THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE OVERSIGHT VISIT TO CONSERVACIES IN ZAMBEZI, KAVANGO EAST, AND KAVANGO WEST FROM 11 TO 15 AUGUST 2025

1. Hon. Dr Aupindi Tobie Ocean, Chairperson
2. Hon. Tuulikiki Abraham, Deputy Chairperson
3. Hon. Ferdinand Hengombe, Member,
4. Hon. Immanuel Nashinge, Member,
5. Hon. Rodrick Likando, Member,
6. Hon. Vetaruhe Kandorozi, Member,
7. Hon. John Likando, Member,
8. Hon. Sebastiaan Karupu, Member,

PREAMBLE

It is with great honour that I present this report on the oversight visit undertaken by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources to the Zambezi, Kavango East, and Kavango West Regions, from 11 to 15 August 2025. The visit was guided by the Committee's constitutional mandate to oversee the implementation of policies and programmes related to the sustainable management of Namibia's natural resources.

The visits provided the committee with a unique opportunity to engage directly with the Honourable Governors, Constituency Councillors, conservancy management committees, Conservancy Members, Community Members, their Royal Highnesses Traditional Leaders, and regional authorities. The discussions and findings highlighted are commendable progress made in empowering communities through the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme, as well as the persistent challenges that threaten the sustainability of conservancies.

Lastly, I extend my gratitude to the Members and the Secretariat of this Standing Committee for their dedication, participation, and formulation of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources undertook an oversight visit to the Zambezi, Kavango East, and Kavango West Regions scheduled from 11 to 15 August 2025. The visit was undertaken to evaluate the status of conservancies operating under the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme and to assess their contribution to conservation, rural development, and poverty alleviation.

The report presents the committee's findings from its visits to conservancies, focusing on the role of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme in empowering rural communities and how conservancies contribute to wildlife management, eco-tourism, and related natural resource enterprises. This has been proven by that the conservancies in the Zambezi region have made a combined income of N\$30 million in the previous financial year.

The report also highlights positive impacts such as increased community participation in decision-making, revenue generation through tourism and trophy hunting, and the creation of employment opportunities. It also outlines key challenges affecting sustainability, including human–wildlife conflict, delays in compensation, limited financial management capacity, dependence on hunting revenues, inadequate infrastructure, and governance weaknesses.

Strategically, the committee observed that the Community-Based Natural Resources Management programme (CBNRM), world-renowned as it is, needs urgent realignment from its inception concept in 1998, in order to meet the current demand of a fast-changing world.

The committee noticed that, despite a greater dependency on trophy hunting, these conservancies, either directly or through the Ministry of Environment, have not produced a single trophy hunter. Further, at the assessment of applicants for concession applicants, conservancy management committees are exposed to negotiating with knowledgeable potential partners, while communities, are do not possess such a pedigree. This may have a direct bearing on the prices per species, concessionaires agree on. This could be manipulated in favour of the concessionaires.

Other challenges highlighted include the need for diversification of income streams and stronger government support to ensure resilience and long-term viability, governance issues

within the conservancies themselves, frictions between various traditional authorities, the threats faced by the conservancies' core areas and many more.

The report underscores and reiterates the potential within these conservancies to continue to deliver tangible socio-economic and environmental benefits to the benefit of the greater society

1. INTRODUCTION

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources conducted an oversight visit to the Zambezi, Kavango East, and Kavango West Regions from 11 to 15 August 2025. The visit formed part of the committee's constitutional mandate to monitor the implementation of government programmes, policies, and legislation relating to the sustainable management of Namibia's natural resources.

The visits focused on communal conservancies under the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme, which was established to empower rural communities to derive direct socio-economic benefits from conservation. These conservancies play a crucial role in biodiversity protection, tourism, job creation, and poverty alleviation.

1.1 Terms of Reference

- a) To assess the performance of conservancies in implementing the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme and their contribution to conservation and rural development.
- b) To engage with communities, conservancy management committees to understand achievements, challenges, and opportunities on the ground.
- c) To evaluate the socio-economic benefits derived by communities from conservancies, including income generation, employment creation, and community development projects.
- d) To examine the challenges of human–wildlife conflict and the effectiveness of existing mitigation and compensation mechanisms.
- e) To review governance and management structures of conservancies, focus on accountability, financial management, and equitable benefit-sharing.
- f) To explore opportunities for diversification of income sources beyond trophy hunting, including eco-tourism, agriculture, and value addition.
- g) To gather inputs from stakeholders that will inform the Committee's recommendations to strengthen the policy and legislative framework for the sustainability of conservancies.

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to present the findings and recommendations that emanated from the various consultations, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, to be discussed and approved by the National Assembly.

3. METHODOLOGY

- Meeting with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism,
- Meetings with regional governors, traditional authorities, conservancy management committees, communities and environmental stakeholders.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

ZAMBEZI REGION

4.1. Salambala Conservancy

Salambala Conservancy is one of Namibia's registered communal conservancies, located in the eastern Zambezi Region near the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers. It was formally established in 1998 as part of Namibia's Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme, which empowers local communities to manage and benefit from their natural resources. The conservancy covers an area of approximately 930 square kilometres, including woodland, floodplains, and grassland ecosystems that support diverse wildlife populations. Community members also raised concerns that, despite the vast size and importance of Salambala Conservancy, they are not recognised as beneficiaries of fishing quotas. They emphasised that this exclusion limits their access to important livelihood opportunities.

The Headman of Mutikitila village welcomed the delegation and encouraged the committee members to engage openly and constructively with one another. The chairperson of Salambala Conservancy, Mr Ignatius Kawana, informed the members that Salambala is a large conservancy that could be divided into four departments for more effective management. However, the community expressed its willingness to keep more wildlife within the conservancy, but the persistent shortage of water remains a major challenge. This situation forces animals to share water points with people and, in some cases, cross into Botswana in search of water.

4.1.1 Human Wildlife Conflict

The community reported with great concern that when they cultivate their fields, crops are frequently destroyed by elephants. This situation is highly frustrating and discouraging for the farmer. Furthermore, according to government policy, compensation is only provided when damage is caused by elephants or buffalo, but not any other animals. Losses caused by other animals are excluded, leaving many farmers uncompensated.

They expressed disappointment with the response of conservancy managers. When cases are reported, conservancy often delays responding to them, citing a lack of transport. Even when they do respond, their communication and attitude towards affected farmers are described as poor and unsympathetic. They explained that the compensation provided by the government is far less than the resources and effort invested in crop production. As a result, some community members resort to killing those problematic animals, which often leads to their arrest. The situation is worsened by masses of buffalo and elephants crossing from Botswana and destroying crops in the process.

4.1.2 Delays in Compensation of Crop Losses

Farmers who lost their crops as far back as 2023 are still waiting for compensation. The delay is attributed to the conservancy receiving insufficient funds from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism. Currently, the conservancy is not in a position to pay the farmers as its financial resources are strained, with most funds diverted to cover high legal expenses incurred through court cases. Community members also raised concerns about delays in receiving their financial benefits, which amount to N\$40,000 per beneficiary. This was a concern from the Ibbu community, who complained that they had not received their financial benefit that was received by other member communities. The Salambala management committee confirmed this as true. The management committee indicated that this was due to the delay in the submission of quotations by the Ibbu community. However, the management committee assured the community that the outstanding financial benefit of N\$40,000 per beneficiary will be made available to the community concerned.

4.1.3 Generation Income

Salambala Conservancy has largely depended solely on trophy hunting as its primary income stream. Key tourism activities such as photographic tourism have not been developed, and the anticipated community benefits in the form of tangible employment opportunities or educational support have not materialised since the conservancy's establishment.

Another challenge was the lack of lodges, camps, and related tourism infrastructure that could attract and retain visitors within the conservancy. As a result, tourists often pass through Salambala without staying, instead opting for nearby destinations for better facilities. This lack of capacity limits the conservancy's ability to diversify its income base, enhance local economic development, and deliver on its broader mandate of community uplift.

4.1.4 Distribution of meat to communities and Hippo threats

Concerns were raised regarding the unequal distribution of meat from problematic animals that are put down. While some members appreciated the provision of meat, others noted that only elephant and zebra meat are being distributed, which is not consumed by all members of the community due to religious contamination.

It was further reported that a hippo recently killed a person in the village of Mutikilila. This hippo was not killed by then; it continues to pose a threat along the Chobe River. Despite the matter being reported several times to the conservancy management, no decisive action has been taken. The Committee therefore advised the Chairperson of the Salambala Conservancy, Mr Ignatius Kawana, to ensure that the hippo is removed from the area with immediate effect.

4.1.5 Restrictions on Firearms and Access to Game Meat

The community expressed dissatisfaction with the ban on owning high-calibre firearms, noting that the permitted light firearms, such as shotguns, are ineffective against elephants and buffalo. Members also questioned why the conservancy has stopped selling game meat to residents, as this deprives them of an important source of protein and livelihood support.

4.1.6 Conservancy Constitution

Community members claimed that they were not familiar with the constitution of the conservancy. No proper sensitisation campaign was carried out to capacitate them on the constitution. The only time such an attempt was made was during the time of the constitutional review, which was only targeted at some sections of the constitution.

4.1.7 Poaching within the Conservancy

The conservancy management committee raised concerns regarding poaching activities by community members. This is a serious problem threatening the effective management of the conservancy. Regardless of awareness campaigns carried out by the conservancy management, poaching within the conservancy remains on the increase. Amongst the contributing factors are the community members residing within the core area of the conservancy.

4.1.8 People Residing in the Core Conservancy Area

The Salambala Conservancy was officially gazetted in June 1998 to conserve wildlife and support community development. However, a serious challenge facing Salambala is the encroachment of individuals from Isuswa, Masikili, and Ngoma into its core area. The matter was taken to court, but the conservancy lost the case, resulting in a financial loss of several million Namibian dollars. The Chairperson of Salambala Conservancy expressed deep concern over the future viability of the conservancy, warning that this ruling may encourage further illegal settlement and uncontrolled hunting. The lack of control over the core area has also reduced the conservancy's ability to protect wildlife effectively.

4.1.8 Challenges

- Residents living within the conservancy are disturbing wildlife, creating risks for both humans and animals.
- Wildlife is causing significant damage to community crops.
- Compensation for crop damage is minimal and delayed, leaving affected households vulnerable.
- No camp facilities

4.2. Meeting with Ministries, Stakeholders, and Conservancy Representatives at the Regional Council's Office

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources held a meeting with senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, and representatives of conservancies in the Zambezi Region. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism informed the Committee that there are currently fifteen (15) conservancies in the region, which collectively generated approximately N\$30 million and provided employment to over 1,200 people. Each conservancy is allocated a hunting quota that runs for three (three) years. However, the overlapping of traditional lands continues to pose a major challenge and conflict to effective conservancy management.

The Chairperson of Kabulabula conservancy raised concerns about the reduction in its hunting quota allocation from 24 elephants to 18, noting that this has significantly disadvantaged the conservancy's income. He further stressed that the compensation fee for livestock losses caused by wildlife remains insufficient. Concerns were also expressed about the government's moratorium on fishing in Namibia, particularly since communities on the Zambian side of the river continue fishing freely, leaving Namibian communities at a disadvantage.

Wildlife-human conflict was emphasised as one of the biggest challenges faced by the conservancy. Despite these constraints, Kabulabula managed to generate over N\$2 million in the past year. The conservancy, with over 1,000 members, has contributed to community development through drilling boreholes, offering grants to support 48 students, and providing N\$30,000 to the Masubia Traditional Authority.

The Chairperson of Sobbe Conservancy informed the members that the conservancy has 1,343 members and 23 staff and relies primarily on hunting activities for income. It contributes N\$58,000 annually to the Masida Kuta and provides support to churches and other community institutions, in addition to distributing meat to local communities. However, Sobbe only qualifies for two elephants per quota period, which limits its revenue base. To support wildlife management, the conservancy drilled three boreholes specifically for elephants. It was explained that the price per elephant is determined through a bidding process, with the highest bidder receiving the hunting quota. All funds generated remain within the community, and not a single cent is remitted to government coffers.

Stakeholders expressed concern about the reliance on concession holders, arguing that conservancy officials should be capacitated to manage concessions directly. They highlighted that the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism does not audit concessionaires to verify how much revenue they generate, which allows concession holders to under-declare income and pay minimal amounts to the conservancies. The current minimum price for a trophy elephant, set at US\$17,000, was described as far below its actual market value, and the government was strongly urged to review this policy to ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

Other cross-cutting challenges raised during the meeting included resource constraints within the Ministry of Environment, which limit staff capacity to support and monitor conservancies effectively. It was also noted that many conservancy representatives lack the minimum qualifications required to negotiate fair agreements with concession holders, often resulting in contracts that disadvantage community members. The meeting underscored the importance of conserving natural resources such as mopane trees and devil's claw for the sustainable development of both communities and the nation. The reduction of hunting quotas was again emphasised as a matter of grave concern among conservation leaders.

Land disputes were also reported within community forests. While wood is said to be collected mainly from dead trees, mopane wood has become increasingly sought after in urban areas, placing the species under threat. Illegal harvesting of mopane timber, both by Namibians and foreigners, was highlighted as a growing problem. The meeting concluded by noting the urgent importance of tree-planting initiatives as a measure to counteract deforestation and protect community forests for future generations.

4.3. Mashi Conservancy

These conservancies are granted rights to manage and sustainably utilise wildlife resources in line with legislation, while also bearing responsibilities and obligations towards their members. Mashi Conservancy is located in the Zambezi Region, was officially registered on 1 March 2003 after local traditional leadership and residents initiated the process in 1998. It became the sixteenth conservancy to be registered in Namibia and the fifth in the Zambezi Region. The conservancy covers 297 square kilometres, situated between Mudumu National Park to the south and Mayuni Conservancy to the north, with a current membership of 3,350 people.

4.3.1 Governance and Management

The conservancy is managed by a committee of seventeen members supported by nine office bearers and sixteen game guards who make up the Natural Resource Monitoring Team. In total, the conservancy employs twenty-five staff members, of whom nine are female and sixteen are male. Each of the five areas, namely Sachona, Lubuta, Ngonga, Namushasha and Lizauli, is represented by two elected members together with one representative from the traditional authority. Elections are conducted at the sub-khuta level. The Vice Chairperson and Chairperson are elected at the Annual General Meeting.

The conservancy is guided by several policy tools and instruments, including its Constitution, Zonation Plan, Benefit Distribution Plan, Game Management and Utilisation Plan, Staff Policy, Financial Policy, Business and Financial Sustainability Plan, Human-Wildlife Management Action Plan and an Asset Register.

4.3.2 Income generated

In 2024, Mashu Conservancy generated a total income of N\$3,343,636.36. Of this amount, N\$1,401,111.00 came from trophy hunting through Omujeve Hunting Safaris, N\$1,498,163.60 from tourism joint ventures with establishments such as Namushasha Lodge, Kazile Tented Lodge, Camp Kwando, Sharwimbo Lodge and Kazondwe Camp, and N\$444,361.76 from bank interest and social responsibility contributions.

The conservancy operates three financial accounts, namely the Income or Call Account, the Operational Account and the Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) Account. Each account has three signatories, bringing the total to nine. The Income Account signatories are elected at the Annual General Meeting, the Operational Account signatories come from the management committee, and the HWC Account signatories are elected from a sub-committee of the management committee.

4.3.3 Meat distribution

Meat from hunted species is shared equally among all registered members, while certain species are allocated to the Traditional Authority at Chinchimane for the Lusata Festival. In line with MEFT directives, generated income is distributed on a 50/50 basis, with half allocated to member benefits and capital projects, and half to conservancy operations. In the 2024/2025

financial year, a total of N\$2,094,953.37 was allocated to social benefits and capital projects. This included the Namushasha Area electrification project valued at N\$1,500,000.00, funeral cover support of N\$120,000.00, education assistance to schools and scholarships, support to kindergartens, youth sports, sub-khutas, churches and traditional authorities, as well as N\$300,000.00 allocated to Human-Wildlife Conflict offsets. Some sub-communities, specifically the Lizauli community, feel excluded from benefits such as money, meat and jobs.

4.3.4 Achievements

The conservancy has also achieved notable milestones. Cutlines have been established for wildlife monitoring and patrols, and Human-Wildlife Conflict mitigation measures such as lion-proof kraals, crocodile fences and tin fencing have been introduced. The electrification of the Namushasha Area is ongoing. A kindergarten was built at Mulanga for N\$30,000.00. Importantly, members now directly benefit from fifty per cent of the conservancy's income. With support from the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN), a lion-proof kraal and three boreholes worth N\$1,475,000.00 were established. The conservancy also acquired patrol and monitoring equipment, including tents, uniforms, binoculars, GPS devices and torches through Human-Wildlife Conflict projects.

Despite these achievements, Mashi Conservancy continues to face challenges. Wildlife corridors are being cleared for resettlement and farming purposes, which threatens conservation objectives. A lack of water for wildlife further exacerbates human-wildlife conflicts. The formation of new sub-khutas has placed pressure on resources, while the conservancy's governance documents remain outdated and require urgent review. Human-Wildlife Conflict is increasing, particularly livestock losses caused by lions, with compensation per head of cattle now raised to N\$8,000.00. Other challenges include uncontrolled bushfires and a reduction in the wildlife utilisation quota.

4.3.5 Livelihood Challenges, Poverty and Food Security

Many households are highly dependent on subsistence agriculture, natural resource harvesting and government aid. Employment opportunities are limited. The coping mechanism used is more reliant on wild products, fishing and illegal hunting, which is putting pressure on natural resources.

KAVANGO EAST

4.4. Presentation by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) is mandated to oversee the management of communal conservancies in Namibia and implement the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme. This programme empowers communities to manage natural resources sustainably through conservancies and community-based organisations. In the Kavango East region, there are four active conservancies, one association, and one conservancy that remains dormant due to its small size.

4.4.1 Conservancies in the Region

The active conservancies are Joseph Mbambangandu, Kapinga Kamwalye, Muduvu Nyangana, and George Mukoya, alongside the Kyarumacan Association. The Shamungwa Conservancy remains dormant. These conservancies hold Annual General Meetings, which are generally well attended. Women form the majority of participants, although men dominate most discussions except within the Kyarumacan Association. Governance has improved over time, with constitutions, management plans, and other guiding documents regularly reviewed and adopted by members.

4.4.2 Governance and Member Engagement

The Ministry continues to support governance structures in conservancies. Village meetings are organised before AGMs, constitutional reviews are conducted, and elections are held when terms end or by-elections are necessary. Conservancies also host awareness-raising events, including sports tournaments, and participate in regional and cross-border forums to exchange knowledge and share best practices. Representation in regional associations further strengthens collaboration and accountability.

4.4.3 Benefits to Members

The CBNRM programme has brought tangible benefits to communities. Over 15 tons of game meat are distributed annually, providing much-needed protein to households. Conservancies also provide financial support for students, with more than N\$50,000 allocated in 2022 and N\$62,000 in 2023 to assist learners in Muduvu Nyangana and George Mukoya. A clinic is currently under construction at Muduvu Nyangana using conservancy funds, while funeral assistance worth N\$50,000 is provided annually. The George Mukoya Conservancy has further

established a disaster relief scheme, and the Kyarumacan Association has invested more than N\$3 million in social projects for community benefit. Some communities feel the state is pushing conservancy formation more as a mechanism to speed up offset payments without first dealing with the root problem

4.4.4 Employment Retention

Employment creation and retention remain central to the programme. No retrenchments have been recorded in the region's conservancies since the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, new contracts in tourism, hunting concessions, and donor-funded projects have created additional temporary jobs. Gender inclusivity has also been prioritised, with equal opportunities provided for men and women. Together, the conservancies and the Kyarumacan Association generated over N\$6 million, with nearly N\$1 million invested in social projects. During 2024 and 2025, 135 temporary jobs were created, while 127 permanent positions were retained.

4.4.5 Natural Resource Management

The Ministry works closely with conservancies to strengthen natural resource management. Patrol routes have been established, monitoring systems are in place, and annual game counts are conducted using both line transects and full-moon waterhole counts. Conservancies also participate in monitoring activities in protected areas, particularly in Khaudum National Park. Training has been provided to staff on human-wildlife conflict investigations, while integrated audits are conducted twice a year. An informant system has also been activated to address poaching, which has already led to arrests.

4.4.6 Institutional Development

Institutional development remains a key focus area. Conservancy management committees receive induction training, while staff are trained in contract negotiations and management. Monthly planning meetings are held to improve coordination, and close engagement with MEFT regional offices ensures that conservancies receive continuous support. Emphasis is also placed on maximising economic returns by applying supply and demand principles when entering into agreements with private partners.

4.4.7 Challenges

Despite progress, conservancies face several challenges. Illegal fencing in wildlife corridors, poor land-use planning, and allocations made without proper consultations remain common issues. Human-wildlife conflict is on the rise, while poaching continues to threaten wildlife resources. Incompatible land uses, illegal occupations, and a lack of effective community policing also undermine conservation efforts.

4.4.8 Way Forward

The Ministry and conservancies plan to invest in reliable transport to strengthen operational activities. The student support programme will be expanded, and efforts will continue to support education, cultural development, and sports activities. Completion of the Muduvu Nyangana clinic remains a priority, as it requires additional funding to meet Ministry of Health standards. The Ministry also plans to assist community hostels where possible, explore opportunities for value addition to natural products such as devil's claw and mangetti nuts, and establish a taxidermy plant to increase local economic benefits.

4.5. Bottom of Form Muduva Nyangana Conservancy

Muduva Nyangana Conservancy was registered in September 2005 and is located in the Kavango East Region. It is named after the late Gciriku Chief and soldier, Muduva Nyangana, who resisted German colonial forces. The Conservancy generates income from a variety of activities and projects. These include conservation hunting, operation of a community camping site, and harvesting and marketing of Devil's Claw, generating N\$700,000 annually. It comprises eight villages: Shamaghembe, Shanyashi, Shamambungu, Shamburu, Ncakuma, Ngcima, Ngcwa, and Livayi.

4.5.1 Income Generation

According to the conservancy Manager, Mr Max Muyemburuko, income is derived from conservation hunting, campsites, devil's claw harvesting, and donations. These funds support various community initiatives, including the construction of a community clinic, education support through the provision of stationery for schools, payment for weeding projects, and financial assistance for tertiary and vocational students. Since 2022, the conservancy has supported 40 students at the International University of Management (IUM) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), and 10 students in Vocational Training.

The conservancy also provides social benefits such as funeral assistance for members and contributions to the Ngciriku Traditional Authority to support its daily operations, it also maintains a community borehole, and engages in orchard development and small antelope farming schemes. In addition, it has introduced a compensation scheme weeding programme for 320 farmers whose crops are damaged by wild animals, expanding beyond the national policy that currently covers only elephants and hippos.

The conservancy undertakes annual game counts, natural resource and hunting monitoring, fire management, and regular consultative meetings. It conducts Devil's Claw harvesting, training workshops, and joint patrols with MEFT to combat illegal activities, while maintaining strong engagement with traditional authorities, government, NGOs, and neighbouring communities.

Strategic priorities include establishing wildlife corridors, increasing hunting quotas, strengthening market linkages, developing a depot for non-timber forest products, improving road access, enhancing health facilities, and ensuring inclusive decision-making for community members.

4.5.2 Progress

Although the conservancy has made progress in income generation and conservation management, it continues to face challenges such as crop damage caused by antelopes, which is not covered under the current policy. Illegal hunting and human settlement in wildlife-exclusive areas further strain conservation efforts. Limited resources and inadequate infrastructure also hinder the implementation of planned activities, lack of capacity building, health services and enterprise development. The conservancy members expressed a desire to be more involved in decision-making regarding its operations. Opportunities exist in expanding the processing of non-timber forest products, developing stronger market linkages, and enhancing joint management with government and development partners.

4.5.3 Achievements

In terms of activities, the Conservancy carries out annual game counts, natural resource monitoring and monitoring of hunting activities. It implements fire management and awareness campaigns, and holds Annual General Meetings as well as other consultative meetings with its members. The harvesting and monitoring of Devil's Claw remain important, while training

workshops are conducted to strengthen capacity. Communication is maintained with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the Traditional Authority, the Kavango East Regional Council and NGOs. Joint patrols are conducted in collaboration with the Ministry to curb illegal activities. The Conservancy also engages in ongoing educational campaigns, including outreach to neighbouring communities and across borders. Efforts are made to identify and establish additional wildlife corridors, to advocate for increased hunting quota allocations, and to source resources from NGOs and donors.

The Conservancy emphasises creating market linkages for community enterprises and has identified the need for a processing depot for non-timber forest products. It has also highlighted the importance of improving road networks to access markets and has prioritised the development of health facilities for community members. A key principle guiding its operations is ensuring that community members are included in decision-making processes.

Although the Conservancy has made progress in income generation and conservation management, it continues to face challenges such as limited market access, inadequate infrastructure and the need for greater support in capacity building, health services and enterprise development. Nonetheless, opportunities exist in expanding the processing of non-timber forest products, developing stronger market linkages, and enhancing joint management with government and development partners.

4.5.4 Compensation and Support

Farmers feel that the amount paid out to them does not fairly respond to the damage done to their fields. There is often slow or inadequate intervention by the state to mitigate wildlife impact.

4.5.5 Department of Forestry and Tourism Activities (2024–2025)

The Directorate of Forestry, under the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), is mandated to conserve forest ecosystems, support economic development, and enhance community livelihoods. From 2024 to 2025, key achievements included tree planting and afforestation at Siya Substation through the establishment of new boreholes, strengthening of community-based forestry management in Kavango West with six gazetted community forests, and the implementation of the NILALEG Project in Mpungu Constituency. These initiatives supported rangeland restoration, small-stock improvement, water infrastructure, and

nature-based enterprises such as Devil's Claw harvesting, Manketti nut processing, and carpentry training.

4.5.6 Challenges

Challenges persist, including uncontrolled sand mining, poor waste management, farmland allocation within gazetted forests, outdated management plans, inadequate fire management equipment, illegal logging, cross-border timber trade, and weak financial oversight in some committees. To address these issues, the Directorate recommends increased funding for fire management, stronger stakeholder dialogue, improved operational capacity, and independent financial audits to ensure accountability and sustainability.

4.6. George Mukoya Conservation

The George Mukoya Conservancy and Community is located in the Kavango East Region, within Ndiyona Constituency. Together with the Muduva Nyangana Community Conservancy, it forms part of the Khaudum North Complex. The conservancy lies west of the Kavango River, on the northern border of Khaudum National Park, and adjacent to Muduva Nyangana Conservancy to the east.

It was established after a Conservation Awareness meeting held at Dosa Village in May 2002, conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The conservancy was officially gazetted in September 2005 and later integrated with the Community Forest on 21 August 2012. The total combined area is 478 km².

4.6.1 Sources of Income

The main sources of income are sustainable hunting based on quotas approved by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, in line with game count statistics. The conservancy also benefits from tourism concessions through Khaudum Lodge, various campsites, and Shikarete Campsite.

4.6.2 Employment and Community Benefits

The conservancy employs 19 permanent staff, of whom 13 are male and 6 female, while an additional 50 casual workers are engaged in seasonal activities such as bush clearing and fire management. A management committee of 10 members, including representatives from

traditional authorities, oversees operations. The conservancy provides funeral assistance and supports community development projects. It further assists learners by offering scholarships for tertiary education and regularly distributes meat to community members. Further, Capacity-building programmes are conducted in areas such as financial management, leadership, and natural resource monitoring, particularly through patrols.

4.6.3 Challenges

- The wildlife quota remains low, as it is shared with Muduva Nyangana Conservancy, resulting in limited income.
- Poaching incidents are still reported, with poachers entering through the Botswana border and areas outside the western part of the conservancy.
- Poor road access, particularly for 4x4 vehicles, and weak communication networks make operations more difficult.
- Education in the area is also a concern. Out of six schools, two have been closed, forcing learners to travel long distances without sufficient teaching materials.
- Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) claims have remained unresolved since 2021. Although N\$120,000 was released to offset some claims, many farmers are still awaiting compensation.
- The conservancy also lacks vehicles due to low income, which limits mobility. Timber harvesting is restricted because the Directorate of Forestry does not issue permits, even when trees are destroyed by fire. Annual veld fires continue to destroy natural resources. Water shortages at the conservancy office and campsite further hinder operations.
- It was strongly recommended to improve road and communication infrastructure and to ensure fair allocation of wildlife quotas. The government is further urged to review policies on timber harvesting to allow for regulated use that can generate income. In addition, support through the provision of vehicles and funding for community projects is considered essential.

KAVANGO WEST

4.7. Maurus S. Nekaro Conservancy

The Maurus S. Nekaro Conservancy was established in 2016 in Musese Constituency and named in honour of the late Hon. Maurus Nekaro, the first Governor of the Kavango West Region. It was officially gazetted on 1 August 2017 by the former Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Hon. Pohamba Shifeta. In 2021, with the support of the Namibia Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the conservancy was demarcated into two zones, namely the settlement and cropping zone, and the multiple-use hunting priority zone. The conservancy is managed by 19 Conservancy Management Committee members, one Traditional Authority Representative, and 18 staff members.

Since its establishment, the conservancy has implemented several projects that benefit both wildlife and communities. Four boreholes were drilled for wildlife in Magongo, Siparangwe, Paranyime, and Sipwi villages, and water point protection structures were built at Siparangwe, Nkaka, Sipwi, and Ehafo boreholes.

Despite this progress, the conservancy faces several challenges. The previous hunting operator failed to complete guaranteed payments and still owes the conservancy significant amounts of money dating back to 2019. Since 2023, elephants included in the hunting quota have not been hunted due to the absence of resident elephant populations. Illegal fencing and poaching remain serious threats, and the planned construction of the Siko–Gcaruhwa gravel road through the hunting priority zone poses risks to wildlife conservation.

A serious concern was raised regarding the construction of a clinic intended to benefit the people of the Maurus Nekaro Community. While the community welcomes this important development, the issue arises from the fact that the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication constructed the access road through the core area of the conservancy, which is not acceptable and inconvenient. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Land, together with the Regional Council, had agreed to build the clinic for the benefit of the community without the concern from the conservancy members.

However, the road leading to the clinic remains a concern, as it passes through a sensitive core conservation area. The conservancy members advised that an alternative route be used to avoid disturbing wildlife and damaging the environment. Unfortunately, stakeholders dismissed this advice, arguing that consultations had already been completed.

The decision was taken without properly engaging conservancy members. The community members have therefore appealed to the Ministry and the Regional Council to reconsider the matter, as the road may drive wildlife away from the conservancy and could also endanger the workers constructing it.

In conclusion, the Maurus S. Nekaro Conservancy has made notable progress in delivering benefits to its members, improving access to water, and supporting vulnerable communities. However, financial, operational, and conservation challenges remain and require urgent attention.

4.7.1 Challenges

- The hunting operator did not complete the hunting guaranteed payment and still owes the conservancy hundreds of thousands of Namibian dollars since 2019.
- Elephants on the approved hunting quota have not been hunted since 2023 due to the unavailability of elephant residents.
- Illegal fencing and Poaching.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

- The conservancies remain at an elementary level, with limited capacity to meet concession standards or to develop and implement professional hunting plans. Since the majority of conservancy revenue is derived from trophy hunting, the lack of expertise in concession management prevents communities from fully benefiting from the value chain.
- The conservancies have not sufficiently aligned themselves with new economic opportunities and products available on the market. While conservancies continue to operate under their original and basic frameworks, there is an urgent need for them to adapt to changing environmental and economic realities.
- The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme has not been updated to address current economic and environmental realities.
- Conservancies still operate under outdated frameworks for management, communication, and human–wildlife conflict.

- Strategic issues such as concession management and the wildlife/tourism value chain require urgent attention.
- Conservancies have limited capacity to meet concession standards or develop professional hunting plans.
- Overreliance on trophy hunting limits community benefits due to weak concession management expertise.
- Conservancies have not aligned with new economic opportunities or diversified products.
- Conservancies remain overly reliant on trophy hunting, with limited diversification into tourism, non-timber forest products, or value-added enterprises.
- Governance frameworks are outdated and often undermined by nepotism, tribalism, and weak management capacity.
- Human–wildlife conflict is increasing, while compensation systems are slow, inadequate, and limited to elephants and buffalo, leaving many losses uncompensated.
- Encroachment, land-use conflicts, poaching, and illegal timber harvesting remain widespread, undermining conservation objectives.
- Despite challenges, conservancies collectively generate substantial income (over N\$30 million annually in Zambezi alone) and fund critical social services, education, and infrastructure.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1. Conservancies are important for protecting wildlife and supporting community development. They provide jobs, income, and social services, but they still face many challenges, such as weak management,
- 6.2. The CBNRM programme is vital for ecological health by protecting biodiversity and natural habitats, while also empowering local communities through job creation, income generation from tourism and resource management, and support for traditional lifestyles.
- 6.3. Though the programme has done relatively well, too much reliance on trophy hunting has limited the income generated. Further, human wildlife conflict and human migration limit new opportunities.

- 6.4. To succeed in the future, conservancies need stronger support, better governance, and new ways to benefit from natural resources in a fast-changing environment, including sustainable co-existence with other economic sectors such as mining, growing of new forests rather than just depending on what nature has provided, and the need to grow plants such as the devil's claw. In fact, certain companies are already cloning devil's claw around the world.
- 6.5. Most importantly, conservancies still possess the ability to foster self-reliance, enhance social cohesion, and drive economic growth by enabling members to take control of decisions affecting their lives and communities.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

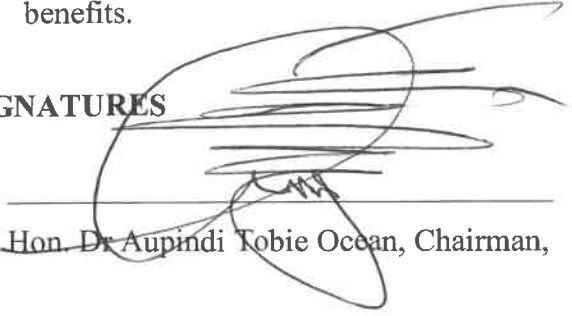
7.1. Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

- a) The Ministry of Environment should urgently address the issue of residents living within core wildlife areas, as human presence in these zones disturbs wildlife habitats and undermines conservation objectives. Measures should be taken to relocate or properly manage settlements in a manner that balances community needs with biodiversity protection.
- b) The Ministry should strengthen wildlife management by constructing and maintaining appropriate fencing to prevent animals from straying into villages, crop fields, or other areas where they cause conflict with local communities. Proper fencing will also help protect both people and wildlife.
- c) The Ministry should ensure the provision of reliable water sources for wildlife within concessions by drilling and maintaining boreholes. This will reduce the pressure on animals moving into human settlements in search of water and help sustain healthy wildlife populations.
- d) The Ministry should support Salambala Conservancy in establishing camp facilities to diversify income and reduce reliance on trophy hunting.
- e) The Ministry assists conservancies in creating a standardised pricing framework for trophy hunting to promote fairness, prevent unhealthy competition, and ensure communities gain maximum benefits from wildlife resources.
- f) The Ministry should provide capacity-building training to conservancies to enable them to manage concessions effectively and eventually operate as concession holders.
- g) The Ministry should consider constructing proper roads as the current ones are sandy tracks which are impassible in rainy seasons, making access to health, markets,

schools and other services difficult. Remote communities are isolated, affecting service delivery.

- h) The Ministry should seriously look into wildlife crimes such as poaching, habitat fragmentation, and unsustainable use of wildlife.
- i) The Ministry should put measures in place against deforestation and unsustainable timber harvesting, with weak enforcement and low penalties.
- j) The Ministry should look into curbing poverty, unemployment, and lack of alternative livelihood, especially in remote communities.
- k) The Ministry should look into tourism in underdeveloped areas that have insufficient integration of community benefits and strengthen those communities.
- l) The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, together with the University of Namibia (UNAM), should collaborate to engage researchers to develop medical products from the devil's claw that is locally produced.
- m) The Ministry should ensure that all conservancies have ten (10) professional hunters by the next financial year 2026/2027
- n) The Ministry should modernise conservancy governance frameworks to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, while addressing issues of nepotism, tribalism, and weak management.
- o) The Ministry should intensify law enforcement and community awareness initiatives to address poaching, encroachment, land-use conflicts, and illegal timber harvesting.
- p) The Ministry should support conservancies to realign with emerging market opportunities and adopt innovative, sustainable economic models.
- q) The Ministry should establish effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of conservancy revenues and continued investment in social services, education, and infrastructure.
- r) The Ministry should develop strategic interventions to optimise the wildlife and tourism value chain, ensuring that communities derive maximum and sustainable benefits.

8. SIGNATURES

1.  Hon. Dr. Aupindi Tobie Ocean, Chairman,

Date

Abraham

15-10-25

2. Hon. Tuulikiki Abraham, Deputy Chairperson

Date

Ekingo

15-10-25

3. Hon. Ephraim T. Nekongo, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-2025

4. Hon. Ferdinand Hengombe, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

5. Hon. Armas Amukoto, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

6. Hon. Immanuel Nashinge, Member,

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

7. Hon. Rodrick Likando, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

8. Hon. Otilie Haitota, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

9. Hon. Vetaruhe Kandorozi, Member

Date

10. Hon. Fenni Nanyeni, Member

Date

11. Hon. Aina Kodi, Member

Date

[Signature]

15-10-25

12. Hon. Clemencia Coetzee, Member

Date


13. Hon. Elder Filipe, Member

15-10-25
Date


14. Hon. George H. Kambala, Member

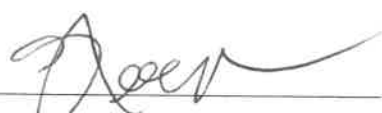
15-10-25
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15. Hon. John Likando, Member

Date


16. Hon. Modestus Amutse, Member

15-10-25
Date


17. Hon. Sebastiaan Karupu, Member

15-10-25
Date


18. Hon. Willem Amutenya, Member

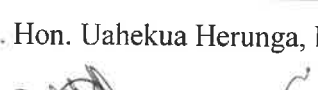
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19. Hon. Ester Haikola-Sakaria, Member

Date


20. Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, Member

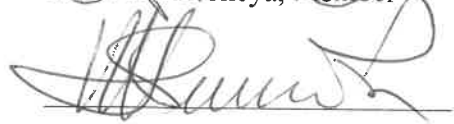
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21. Hon. Uahekua Herunga, Member

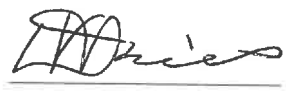
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22. Hon. Marius Sheya, Member

15-10-25
Date


23. Hon. Longinus Iipumbu, Member

15-10-25
Date


24. Hon. Diederik Vries

15-10-25
Date