

**Science and Communication:  
A critical analysis of the coverage by the  
Namibian press of the introduction of  
communal conservancies as a form of  
community based natural resource  
management (CBNRM).**

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**George Claassen  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

## **Abstract**

Science forms an integral part of our lives. It is tied to social practices, public policies and political affairs. Yet, very little is reported on it unless it is making hard news.

This thesis was written from the premise that the public requires as much accurate information as possible to make choices and decisions. In many instances, they solely depend on the news media to supply that information.

Journalists have a responsibility to reflect and explain the complexity of a world that is increasingly influenced by science. In Namibia the establishment of conservancies under the CBNRM programme of government, have an influence on many rural people's lives who would previously not have been too concerned about science news.

Through the Media and Publicity Strategy of the CBNRM programme, communication of the environmental message of conservancies has been successful to a large extent, especially in terms of reportage in the local press.

The messages conveyed in the press have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the system.

From the perspective of the level of journalism practised in this regard, the effort has not been that great. Publications in Namibia operate on very limited budgets and have to manage with a minimum number of reporters.

This means journalists are expected to cover a range of different beats, and are seldom offered the opportunity to develop as specialist writers in specific fields. The field of science and environment is generally not regarded as an area that produces hard news on a regular basis.

This was evident in the articles reviewed for the purposes of this thesis. The majority of stories were written from press releases or field trips organised by the CBNRM programme organisers. Stories that were self-generated were not very well researched, or did not follow through on potential hard news angles or ideas.

In a world of war, hunger, poverty, diseases and many other tragedies, the story of the development of communal conservancies is a wonderfully positive story that highlights the success of sustainable development, the upliftment of the rural poor and achievements in terms of conservation. It is a welcome change for journalists to tell a positive story to the world.

However, as journalists should know, every story has two sides. The purpose is not necessarily to find fault with the conservancy philosophy or to shoot it down or find sensationalism where it is not due. Their role is to present a full, unbiased account of the facts so that their readers can make up their own minds on whether they support the concept, or not.

If journalists failed to inform their readers about the problems experienced by the implementation of conservancies, then they have failed to give their readers the full picture.

The conclusions drawn in this thesis on the level of science or environmental reporting in Namibia, serve to emphasise the urgent need for specialist writers in the profession.

A handful of dedicated and committed science writers that increasingly raises the level of reporting will make a vast difference in the fields of science and environment in Namibia.

## Opsomming

Wetenskap vorm 'n integrale deel van ons lewens. Dit is gebind aan sosiale gebruike, openbare beleidsrigtings en politieke sake. Tog word daar baie min daaroor geskryf, behalwe wanneer dit harde nuus is.

Hierdie tesis is geskryf vanuit die oogpunt dat die publiek soveel as moontlik akkurate inligting nodig het om keuses te maak. In baie gevalle vertrou hulle uitsluitlik op die nuus media om daardie inligting te verskaf.

Joernaliste het 'n verantwoordelikheid om 'n wêreld wat al hoe meer beïnvloed word deur wetenskap te verduidelik. In Namibië het die daarstelling van bewareas deur die CBNRM-program van die regering, 'n groot invloed op die lewens van baie plattelandse mense se lewens gehad wat voorheen nie veel sou omgee het oor wetenskapnuus nie.

Die daarstelling van bewareas het 'n hele nuwe wêreld met baie nuwe uitdagings tot by hulle voordeur gebring. Dit was belangrik om hulle genoegsaam in te lig oor die voor- en nadele van die stelsel om hulle in staat te stel om te besluit of hulle wou betrokke raak of nie.

Die boodskap wat die pers oorgedra het, was oorweldigend positief met baie steun vir die stelsel.

Vanuit 'n joernalistieke perspektief gesien, was die beriggewing nie so noemenswaardig nie. Publikasies in Namibië werk met baie beperkte begrotings en moet klaarkom met 'n minimum aantal verslaggewers.

Dit beteken daar word van joernaliste verwag om oor 'n wye verskeidenheid onderwerpe te skryf. Wetenskap- en omgewingsberiggewing word oor die algemeen gesien as 'n gebied wat nie werklik harde nuus op 'n gereelde basis produseer nie.

Dit het duidelik gebleik uit die artikels wat ontleed is vir die doel van die tesis. Die meerderheid van die stories is geskryf van persverklarings en uitstappies georganiseer deur die CBNRM. Die stories wat wel self gegenerer is, was nie baie goed nagevors nie.

In 'n wêreld van oorlog, hongersnood, armoede en siektes, is die ontwikkeling van bewareas 'n wonderlike positiewe storie wat dien as bewys van die sukses van volhoubare ontwikkel, die opheffing van plattelandse arm mense en wat bereik kan word met bewaring. Dit is 'n welkome verandering vir joernaliste om vir 'n slag 'n positiewe storie aan die wêreld te vertel.

Maar, soos joernaliste behoort te weet, het elke storie twee kante. Die doel van 'n joernalis is nie noodwendig om fout te vind met die filosofie van bewareas nie, of om dit af te skiet of sensasie te soek waar dit nie nodig is nie. Hulle rol is om 'n volledige, onsydige verslag van die feite weer te gee sodat hulle lesers self kan besluit of hulle die konsep ondersteun of nie.

As joernaliste daarin gefaal het om hulle lesers in te lig oor die probleme wat ondervind is met die implementering van bewareas, dan het hulle daarin gefaal om die volledige prentjie aan hulle lesers te skets.

Die slotsom van die tesis oor die vlak van wetenskap- en omgewingsjoernalistiek in Namibië is dat daar 'n dringende tekort aan spesialis skrywers in die professie is.

Selfs net 'n handvol toegewyde wetenskapskrywers sal al klaar 'n groot verbetering bring in die kwaliteit van verslaggewing in die wetenskap- en omgewingsvakgebied in Namibië.

# Contents

**Abstract**

**Opsomming**

**Abbreviations**

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter 2: Background and theoretical overview of CBNRM</b>	3
2.1 History	3
2.2 CBNRM in Namibia today	7
2.3 Conclusion	10
<b>Chapter 3: Shortcomings of communal conservancies</b>	11
3.1 Problems and challenges	12
3.1.1 Definition of community and conservancy boundary	13
3.1.2 Competing interest groups	14
3.1.3 Competition between conservancies and existing institutions	15
3.1.4 Uncertain land tenure	16
3.1.5 Unequal levels of support	16
3.2 Other concerns	17
3.3 Conclusion	20
<b>Chapter 4: Media Strategy</b>	22
4.1 CBNRM Media and Publicity Strategy	23
4.2 Review of the CBNRM Media Strategy	26
4.3 Conclusion	28
<b>Chapter 5: The Press</b>	30
5.1 Press overview	30
5.2 Press coverage	32
5.3 Results	32
5.5 Conclusion	34
<b>Chapter 6: Critical analysis of press coverage</b>	35
6.1 Level of journalism	35
6.1.1 Experience	35
6.1.2 Time and sources	37

- Official sources	38
6.2 Science news versus hard news	42
6.3 Choice of words	43
6.4 Public relations and journalism	46
6.5 Critical reporting	48
6.6 Conclusion	51
<b>Chapter 7: The role of the press</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Bibliography</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Addendum (map of conservancies)</b>	<b>60</b>

## **Abbreviations**

CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
GPTF	Game Products Trust Fund
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
LIFE	Living in a Finite Environment
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NACSO	Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
NANGOF	Namibia NGO Forum
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TNN	Travel News Namibia
UNAM	University of Namibia
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

## 1. Introduction

In Namibia 38 000 people or two per cent of the population are members of communal conservancies. The registration of ten more communal conservancies by the government in July 2003 brings the total number to 29. This means the total land mass that is under conservation management, including national parks, is nearly one quarter of the country.

The science of conservation is therefore influencing the daily lives of more and more people. In a developing country like Namibia with a large rural population, the importance of science and an understanding of its role in society is easily disregarded or even ignored. Furthermore, people in rural areas generally have little or no education, which also contributes to a simple disregard and ignorance of science.

Science, whether we find it interesting, difficult to understand, or dull and boring, has become so integral to our lives that we cannot survive without it. The popularity and growth of communal conservancies indicates that more people, mostly from remote rural locations, are realising the value of conservation science to improve their livelihoods. Many communities have embraced the conservancy idea and its possibilities.

“Abandoning science means abandoning much more than air conditioning, CD players, hair dryers and fast cars,” says Carl Sagan in *The Demon-Haunted World* (1997:13). Instead, he argues, “the methods of science, with all its imperfections, can be used to improve social, political and economic systems...”.

Non-scientists prefer not to think about it too much. That is why they depend on the media to explain science news to them in simple terms. Dorothy Nelkin says in *Selling Science*: “For most people, the reality of science is what they read in the press. They understand science less through direct experience or past education than through the filter of journalistic language and imagery. The media are their only contact with what is going on in rapidly changing scientific and technical fields, as well as a major source of information about the implications of these changes for their lives (1995: 02).

Modern day life has become enormously complex, especially for rural communities who are not exposed to new developments and modern technology on a daily basis. In remote rural communities, the media is largely absent, and information flow very limited. When these communities are confronted with choices that require some scientific understanding, they are easily baffled or have to depend on the opinion of others.

When new legislation provided for the establishment of communal area conservancies under the community-based natural resource management programme (CBNRM) of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in Namibia, the communication of this environmental message to the public formed a critical aspect towards the success of the programme. This new concept in conservation was not only going to affect the daily lives of those directly involved, but also many other stakeholders, and the public, needed a thorough understanding of this radical new idea.

As Nelkin explains: "Information and understanding are necessary if people are to think critically about the decisions they must make in their everyday lives." (1995: 02)

A Media and Publicity Strategy was drawn up for the CBNRM programme. The aims of this thesis are to determine how successful this strategy was in its implementation, and how thorough the press coverage was of this scientific programme in communicating a balanced message to its readers.

In order to introduce the concept of communal conservancies and orientate readers, the historical background of the CBNRM programme and its development is explained in chapter 2.

In chapter 3 an overview of the problems and shortcomings of the conservancy programme is given. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the media and publicity strategy and its implementation, and chapter 5 looks at actual press coverage.

The overview of problems and concerns in chapter 3, formed, among other points, the basis of the critical analysis of press reports in establishing to what extent these issues were covered. In chapter 7 the role of the press in science is explored.

## 2. Background and theoretical overview of CBNRM

*“It is both futile and an insult to the poor to tell them that they must remain in poverty to protect the environment.”*

- World Commission on the Environment and Development 1987

### 2.1 History

Africa’s world-renowned game parks have been hailed for their conservation efforts and achievements for many years, but in the 1980s the continent’s conservation policies and agencies came under heavy fire.

According to Hulme and Murphree (2001:01) a set of radical ideas of international provenance was introduced to the conservation agenda, comprising of three particular strands.

- The first is that conservation should involve the community rather than being purely state-centric. “No longer should rural Africans be seen as degraders of the environment but as local heroes.”
- Secondly, the concept of sustainable development has promoted the notion that what needs to be conserved should be viewed as exploitable natural resources that can be managed to achieve both developmental and conservation goals.
- The third idea is that markets should play a greater role in shaping the structures of incentives for conservation.

In taking these radical ideas further Adams and Hulme (as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001:09) suggest that conservation in Africa does not simply need a new ‘privileged solution’: “it requires a policy process that is more effective for meeting contemporary and future challenges. What is needed are broadly based enabling policies that promote the creation and strengthening of networks of institutions and organisations that have the flexibility to deal with contingency and complexity.

The question is not of whether state action or community action is better: both are essential, along with private sector support, and the challenge is how to develop effective mixes of state, community and private action in specific contexts.”

In Namibia, this recipe has been followed with much success in the formation of communal area conservancies. It was a long and arduous process to reach the position at which CBNRM is today, with the programme hailed as one of the best on the continent.

The history of nature conservation in Namibia took much the same course as many other African countries. Land distribution was skewed by the country’s colonial history. Under German rule from 1888 to 1917, white settlers appropriated much of the central part of the country, and began the process of developing ‘reserves’ for black tribal groups (Jones & Murphree as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001:39). The German regime also introduced the first hunting regulations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and proclaimed the first four game reserves in 1907 (Turner, 1996:11).

The South African administration, which replaced the German colonial government, continued the process and consolidated the reserves into a system of black homelands based on apartheid policy. Even now, commercial farmland is held under freehold title, while the state owns communal land.

According to Jones and Murphree (as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001: 40) rights over wildlife were conferred on white commercial farmers in 1968 and consolidated by the Nature Conservation Ordinance (1975), which is still the country’s primary legislation for protected areas and the conservation and utilisation of wildlife.

The ordinance meant farmers gained ownership over the more common species of game and limited use rights through a permit system. “This combination of ownership and economic opportunity led to a significant increase in many commercial land owners’ commitment to wildlife conservation, and to the development of a substantial commercial hunting industry that supported the expansion of the Namibian tourism sector (Turner, 1996:12).

None of these rights was given to people in communal areas. For hundreds of years traditional authorities managed wildlife populations by declaring hunting seasons only under certain conditions.

The introduction of fire arms, a succession of wars and the declaration of all game as 'state property' led to a disastrous decrease in wildlife in these areas.

People had little incentive to tolerate animals that threatened their livelihood. It was inferred that the state valued wildlife above people. Residents were arrested as poachers when they killed animals that had killed people, their livestock or destroyed valuable crops and water installations (CBNRM information booklet, 2001: 02).

After independence in 1990, the new government wanted to remove discrimination and rectify the inequities. Driven by the success of the commercial farmland initiative, and other early initiatives such as the establishment of a community game guard network in the northwest, government developed a new conservation approach for communal land. This is set out in the Policy on Wildlife Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas.

The policy that emerged from a process of socio-ecological surveys and studies of programmes in neighbouring countries became known as one of the most innovative approaches to CBNRM in Africa (CBNRM Information booklet, 2001: 02).

Legislation tabled in 1996 allowed for the formation of communal area conservancies. Two important objectives were to enable rural communities to gain the same rights of use and benefit from wildlife as commercial farmers, and to gain rights over tourism concessions. These rights would be conferred on a community that formed a collective management institution called a conservancy. (Jones, 1999: 09)

According to the legislation, conservancies require a defined membership, a representative management committee, defined boundaries and a legally recognised constitution that makes provision for the development of a wildlife management strategy and an equitable benefits distribution plan (CBNRM information booklet, 2001: 06).

Communities that meet conditions for registration receive limited rights of ownership over certain animal species and use rights over others. Conservancies can also apply for hunting and tourism rights.

Nyae Nyae Conservancy became the first to be gazetted in February 1998. At the official launch of communal area conservancies in October 1998, the President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma received the coveted Gift of the Earth Award from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for the contribution the conservancy programme has made to global conservation.

He said at the occasion: "Conservancies empower local people to make their own decisions about their own resources, while enabling them to benefit from these resources. Conservancies should be seen as creating an institutional infrastructure in helping to diversify rural economies. Through the conservancy system, my Government has created an environment and an opportunity for natural resource based industries to develop" (Nujoma's speech, 1998: 01).

By May 2001, 14 conservancies were legally recognised, covering an area of 38 500km<sup>2</sup> of communal land, which represented about five per cent of Namibia's landmass (CBNRM information booklet, 2001:06).

The programme was successful and more and more conservancies became legal entities. On July 24, 2003, the Namibian government gazetted another 10 communal area conservancies to bring the total to 29. The total area covered by conservancies now accounts for nine per cent of the country's total landmass or 74 052 km<sup>2</sup>. This is more than the combined size of the Kingdoms of Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa's Kruger National Park.

With 13,8 per cent of Namibia proclaimed as parks, the addition of communal conservancies means nearly one quarter of the country is under conservation management. The total membership of the 29 conservancies is 38 063 people (//Garoes, September 2003: 01).

Tsukhoe //Garoes, Head of the CBNRM sub-division in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism said in the press release announcing the 10 newly gazetted conservancies in July 2003: "The significant growth in the conservancy programme reflects the overwhelming desire expressed by rural residents to see a return of wildlife to their areas. It also shows that communities are prepared to take on the responsibility of managing game and other natural resources which were denied to people during colonial times."

## **2.2 CBNRM in Namibia today**

As the programme gained momentum and interest, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) was established in 1999, consisting of 11 NGOs and the University of Namibia (UNAM).

NACSO works in close co-operation with the MET. Confirming MET's commitment and support to the programme, a dedicated division within the Directorate of Parks and Wildlife was established. The CBNRM Sub-Division was launched in May 2002, consisting of a staff of 32 people based in the 13 regions, with its headquarters in Windhoek (CBNRM report, March 2003: 03).

The key focus of the sub-division is setting policy and legislation, and supporting and monitoring established and emerging conservancies which need to meet legislative requirements and standards.

Natural resource management is one of the major components of the CBNRM programme. It has resulted in vast improvements in wildlife numbers, a dramatic reduction in illegal hunting (poaching), the population growth of important species such as black rhino and desert elephant, and steps have been taken by conservancies to manage human-wildlife conflict.

In June 2002, the third annual game census was conducted on more than 5 million hectares of existing and emerging conservancies in northwest Namibia. The results of the census found massive increases for most wildlife populations, with some species such as gemsbok and springbok having increased by more than 25 per cent over the past years.

Springbok, gemsbok and Hartmann's zebra increased from less than 1000 animals in 1982 to more than 95 000, 27 000 and 14 000 respectively by 2002. The total value of species counted in the census was more than N\$21 million (CBNRM report, March 2003: 07).

Another important development for natural resource management in communal conservancies is game translocation. In 2002 the largest efforts ever were undertaken when 1 645 animals, commercially valued at N\$2.8 million, were moved into six communal, and one commercial, conservancy.

Eleven species were captured and translocated. A further 19 emerging conservancies have requested wildlife translocations, including predators such as leopard and cheetah (personal notes taken at Wêreldsend Quarterly Conservancy meeting, July 2002).

An innovative human-animal conflict conservancy compensation/insurance scheme, which began in 2003, is being tested in four conservancies. The MET's Game Products Trust Fund (GPTF) offers financial support to projects which aim to improve relationships between people and wildlife. The fund received revenue from the sale of animal products, such as skins and ivory, the sale of trophy hunting concessions and head levies from the export of live game.

Financial independence is what conservancies are aiming for. So far, four conservancies have attained this status enabling them to cover their own operational costs. Revenue to local communities has almost doubled from N\$6 million in 2001 to over N\$11 million in 2002.

The highest earning sector is community-based tourism enterprises/campsites accruing 28 per cent of the income. Trophy hunting and meat accounts for 22 per cent, joint venture tourism for 20 per cent and thatching grass sales for 10 per cent. Other activities, including game donations, craft sales, own-use meat and live sale of game, account for between nine and one percent (CBNRM report, March 2003: 10).

The value of tourism-related employment created within conservancies and rural communities has been significant. In 2002, 374 people held full-time jobs in tourism ventures, while more than 3 000 worked part time. These include craft makers and hunting trackers.

In joint venture operations, only local community members are employed. Some have worked themselves up to managerial positions.

For many it might seem that the frenzy surrounding conservancies has been fired by the financial benefits that they will bring to people living in areas with no alternative economic opportunities.

While the conservancy programme has received widespread support from concerned communities, many have so far seen little, if any, direct benefits. In some instances, the initiative has caused them more problems because of an increase in wildlife, which in turn increases the risk of predator or elephant threats and damage.

Vaughan and Katjiua (2002: 01) concluded in their study of key livelihood issues in the #Khoadi //Hoas conservancy in the Kunene region that the community has so far seen limited and few tangible and direct benefits.

According to the CBNRM 2003 report (14), four conservancies have begun the process of distributing cash benefits to conservancy members.

- Nyae Nyae has made two cash payouts totalling N\$99 375: N\$41 250 was paid to 550 members in 1999 and N\$58 125 was paid to 775 members in 2001.
- Salambala handed out N\$47 500 of their trophy hunting revenue to members in 2002. Each of the area's 19 villages received N\$2 500 which was used according to needs decided by each village.
- Torra conservancy paid a dividend of N\$630 to every member in January 2003 totalling N\$200 000, which represents approximately 30 per cent of the conservancy's income for 2002. Torra has also made grants to a local school and crèche.
- For several years Marienfluss has annually distributed N\$600 to each household from their campsite revenue. Members of this remote area are recorded to be using the cash on annual buying trips to the regional centre at Opuwo.

People working on the programme insist that it is not just economic benefits that are driving the programme. The fact that the Namibian government has provided a framework that enables rural people to actively manage their resources is a significant change from the days when they had no rights. "It is for a variety of deeper social reasons that a lot of communities chose to go this way," Anna Davis, CBNRM coordinator of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) is quoted saying in the *Conservation* 2002 magazine (28).

Davis says rural people are taking charge of their lives in an organised, proactive way through the CBNRM programme. One of the main benefits for communities is the creation of a strong social structure, which provides a firm institutional base from which the community can manage its affairs.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

Conservancies are one of the ways in which Namibians can benefit from natural resources. The CBNRM programme was initiated after independence in Namibia to enhance the equality of life of rural Namibians while improving biodiversity in long-neglected areas. It has moved from a series of pilot activities to a well-developed and cohesive programme that relies on a proven but flexible approach to conservancy development.

The conservancy legislation enables farmers living on state (communal) land to establish legally gazetted conservancies, giving them rights over resources, in particular, wildlife. Before this can be done, they have to fulfil a series of requirements laid down by government. Once a conservancy has been gazetted, the focus shifts to land-use planning and the development of integrated natural resource management.

The phenomenal growth of conservancies from the first registered one in February 1998 to a total of 29 gazetted conservancies in July 2003, is proof of not only the need for such an initiative, but also the success of it. 'Conservancies' has indeed become a buzz word in Namibia that is heard from the shiny, polished offices in government to dusty gathering places of cattle herders in remote rural areas.

### **3. Shortcomings of communal conservancies**

The community conservation narrative has diffused particularly fast across Africa, and has become more solidly entrenched there than in many other regions (Adams & Hulme as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001: 18).

Looking at the phenomenal growth of conservancies in Namibia there is no denying it, community conservation has been successful.

Adams and Hulme (as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001: 15) identified five main reasons for this success. The first is that community conservation equates conservation with sustainable development “and hence captures the huge upwelling of policy commitment arising from the Brundtland Report and UN Conference on Environment and Development at Rio in 1992”.

The second reason is that community conservation draws on ideas about the ‘community’, and particularly about the need for local communities to be more involved in designing and implementing public policies than had been the case before. Thirdly, they say the initiative was developed at a time of significant shifts in the dominant discourse of development.

“During the 1970s top down, technocratic, blueprint approaches to development came under increasing scrutiny as they failed to deliver the economic growth and social benefits that had been promised. An alternative agenda emerged arguing that development goals could be achieved by bottom up planning, decentralisation, process approaches, participation and community organisation” (Hulme & Murphree, 2001: 17).

A fourth reason for the success of the approach lies in the renewed interest in the 1980s in the market as a means of delivering development. “What was required to achieve conservation goals, therefore, was less regulation, the acceptance that all ecosystems and species are ‘natural resources’ and more entrepreneurial action by local communities, individual businessmen and private companies.”

The final reason given by Adams and Hulme (17) is biological. “It was clear, from research in conservation biology and the genetics of small populations, that conservation goals can often not be achieved within the boundaries of protected areas, even if they are quite large. Large dispersal areas are needed so that species can move from ‘island’ to ‘island’ to feed, to ensure healthy breeding stock and to respond to local extinctions and climate change.”

### **3.1 Problems and challenges**

Was the move to the community in conservation more equitable, more efficient, more conservatory and more developmental than alternatives is the question asked by Hulme and Murphree (2001: 280) in the concluding chapter of their book.

At face value community conservation promises to create benefits, but when implemented, approaches differ markedly from stated policies and plans. The move to community-oriented approaches for conservation in Africa, has taken many different forms (296).

Namibia’s approach to CBNRM in the form of community conservancies, has been praised and recognised internationally as the most progressive initiative of its kind in southern Africa (Sullivan, 2001: 02). It does not mean though, that the programme is flawless and without problems.

Brian Jones (1999: 14) devotes a full chapter to an analysis of constraints to developing conservancies, in a discussion paper. The constraints highlighted by him include:

- the definition of community and of conservancy boundaries
- competing interest groups within communities
- competition between conservancies and existing institutions
- uncertain land tenure
- unequal levels of support

### **3.1.1 Definition of community and conservancy boundary**

The conservancy legislation leaves communities to define themselves and to negotiate boundaries with neighbours. “This has proved problematic in a number of cases because of existing land disputes and differences between various groups of people” (14).

Sullivan (1999:02) looks at interrelated areas of complexity in the implementation of conservancies, and names the first such area the “perhaps cavalier and opaque use of the label ‘community’ to describe heterogeneous groups or rural farmers”.

Land disputes that have resulted from this problem have delayed conservancy formation, especially in the Kunene Region of northwest Namibia. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the government agency responsible for legislation, did not want to get involved in land disputes. This led to a policy decision to register conservancies without the disputed land which could be added once the disputes were resolved (Jones, 1999: 14).

For other conservancies, internal community conflicts led to lengthy delays. Jones mentions the example of Sesfontein in the Erongo Region and Uukwaluudhi in northern Namibia.

Uukwaluudhi’s tribal authority insisted that the conservancy be comprised of all the tribe members, even though the area of the conservancy would be considerably less than the total area of the tribal land. “This means a conservancy membership of more than 40 000 people. Government officials realised that it would be impossible to meet the legal condition of registering the conservancy members” (15).

The Sesfontein story became the subject of a paper by Sullivan (2001) focusing on attempts by some members of the local community to bury an NGO working with communities on the formation of conservancies.

“The grave was dug at the culmination of a protest march which, together with a written petition, drew attention to a number of complaints regarding the establishment of a conservancy in Sesfontein/!Nani/uas and environs” (4). The protest and petition came about six years after the idea of a conservancy was first debated in the area.

Sullivan concludes that the example highlights the “intensely political and competitive atmosphere infusing conservancy formation, NGO and donor involvement and CBNRM as a framework for environment and development initiatives” (7).

### **3.1.2 Competing interest groups**

The second constraint discussed by Jones (2001:15) concerns wildlife advocates and livestock owners. He says conflicts between those who prefer traditional livestock ranching and those who would like to form wildlife conservancies are evident.

In Uukwaluudhi there was conflict over plans by the emerging conservancy committee to fence off a part of the proposed conservancy area for the establishment of a core conservation area for the reintroduction of wildlife.

Tribal groups had been given grazing rights by the traditional authority in the proposed core area and when asked to remove their livestock from the area, they refused. The ensuing conflict was eventually resolved by the Namibian President who declared himself in favour of a conservancy and development of a core area.

Conflict of a similar nature developed in the Salambala conservancy in the Caprivi region where the committee also wanted to establish a conservation area on land where people lived, grazed cattle and raised crops.

Four individuals complained via a lawyer’s letter that their human rights were being violated and threatened court action. Government supported the conservancy arguing that four individuals should not hold up the development of more than 2 000 registered conservancy members.

Another point of potential conflict raised by Jones is youth and ethnicity (16). Differences in aspirations between younger and older people have become clear in several communities forming conservancies. The youth tend to be in a hurry to find work to acquire material goods associated with urban lifestyles, while older people are more patient. They also seek indirect cultural benefits rather than money alone.

Ethnic conflict became apparent during the formation of the Torra conservancy. There were allegations that Riemvasmaker people were dominating the process and that the committee was unrepresentative of Damaras (the other major ethnic group in the conservancy).

A further point of conflict highlighted in a research report on the #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy (KHC) in the Kunene region by Vaughan and Katjiua (2002: 11) is the difference between the expectations of community members and the conservancy's ability to deliver against these.

“In terms of household and individual livelihood impacts it appears that few members of the community beyond committee members and conservancy staff have directly benefited from employment, exposure to development activities and empowerment through improved access to networks and negotiation processes. The majority of KHC members have as yet to receive any tangible livelihood benefits from the conservancy process and are still awaiting their perceived promised benefits.”

They further report that in some cases community members reported being marginalised from traditional, even if illegal, wildlife utilisation processes. One farmer said: “We no longer hunt like we use to under the MET days as we are scared of our own people now and the wildlife doesn't belong to the government or us, but to the committee and only they benefit” (2002: 11).

### **3.1.3 Competition between conservancies and existing institutions**

Traditional leaders have played an important role in conservation for many years in the Kunene region, particularly during the development of the highly successful community game guard programme (Jones: 2001: 17).

With the formation of conservancies, traditional leaders have voiced concern that they were being left out of the process they had initiated. The issue has been dealt with to some extent by assigning these leaders as patrons of conservancies to ensure committees do in fact act on behalf of the community.

Other community level institutions with which conservancies may compete are local development committees and local farmers' associations.

### **3.1.4 Uncertain land tenure**

Barrow and Murphree (as cited in Hulme & Murphree, 2001: 13) state the context of resource and land ownership has not been adequately analysed from the perspective of community conservation.

In Namibia the conservancy approach provides communities with resource rights but not land rights. This means there is little to stop outsiders from moving livestock on to conservancy land. The effects of this have been seen in the Uukwaluudhi and Salambala conservancies.

According to Murphree (1995: 50) the centrality of land tenure for CBNRM approaches is vital. "For long-term sustainability CBNRM requires a fundamental shift in national policies on tenure in communal lands. The core of the matter is strong property rights for collective communal units, not only over wildlife and other natural resources, but over the land itself."

Turner (1996:14) argues the most fundamental problem is that rural people building conservation systems still cannot claim to own the land in which their resources live.

Sullivan also lists an "uncertain land policy framework defining and supporting access and use rights to natural resources on communal land" as one of the areas of complexity in the implementation of conservancies (1999: 02).

The MET has addressed this problem by lobbying government to ensure that provision would be made for exclusive group land tenure in the new land policy and legislation. The result has been a clause in the Land Policy approved in 1998 by Cabinet which makes provision for legally constituted bodies and institutions to exercise joint ownership rights over land (20).

### **3.1.5 Unequal levels of support**

The CBNRM programme in Namibia has received substantial funding from international NGOs and donor agencies through the promotion of partnership agencies. USAID has donated US\$14 million between 1992 and 1999, while the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has provided technical assistance to implementers.

The NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), which pioneered community-based conservation in the Kunene region in the 1980s, is a major implementing partner.

“However despite the considerable financial and technical support which is being provided to CBNRM in Namibia, there is insufficient capacity to meet the needs of all communities that wish to form a conservancy or receive strengthening of their own resource management (Jones,1999: 21).

Jonga, Nott & Davis (2003: 12) agree that requirements of conservancies far outstrip the delivery of mechanisms and capacity of the support agencies. “In addition, CBNRM is a development process, and inputs will be required for many years to come if these initiatives are to be successful.”

Another constraint mentioned by Jones (21) is a lack of experienced Namibians involved in the CBNRM sector. “With a population of 1.6 million (1.8 according to the latest census) a large proportion of which was left poorly or uneducated during the apartheid era, there is only a small pool of expertise to be shared by government, the private sector and NGOs, throughout all sectors.”

Jonga et al state that communities acknowledge their lack of technical, commercial and managerial skills for wildlife and tourism related business, and have embraced the idea of forming alliances with private sector partners in their CBNRM activities. “These constraints essentially take the form of limited entrepreneurial skills, inappropriate administrative systems and procedures, lack of equipment, poor physical and social infrastructure, and above all; lack of experience” (2003: 12).

### **3.2 Other concerns**

Rural people are confident that CBNRM is a valid and workable concept, according to Turner (1996: 14), but the interface between community and government responsibility remains uncertain. He names distrust of community game guards among government staff as a concern, although higher officials are showing more commitment to community participation.

There are rural communities whose commitment to conservation is restrained by what they see as inadequate arrangements to deal with predation and crop damage by problem animals.

There are also communities who are eager to support the conservancy idea, despite problem animals. Mosimane (1998: ii) found in his study of the Kwandu Conservancy in the Caprivi region, where loss of crops and livestock to wildlife is a major problem, that the majority of respondents said a conservancy is a community initiative which they want to support.

Ashley and LaFranchi (1997: 61) looked at the benefits and costs of CBNRM activities and concluded that costs could include the following potential problems:

- Higher wildlife populations could lead to increased wildlife damage to crops, livestock and threats to people
- Competition between livestock and wildlife for water and grazing
- Risk of failure resulting in waste of time and loss of money
- Increased community conflict over management resources, poaching, or the distribution of costs and benefits within the community
- Over-use of natural resources and degradation due to increased profitability of harvesting without sufficient resource management

Sullivan (2000: 143) raises the role of women in CBNRM. She argues this initiative disadvantaged women by reinforcing conventionally gendered relationships between people and environment in favour of man the hunter or herder, as opposed to woman the gatherer or gardener.

“The assumption of a patriarchal organisation of pastoral life that secludes women and assigns them to economically marginal roles, has been identified as one of the fundamental reasons why many dryland development initiatives have failed in sub-Saharan Africa” (Jowker et al as cited in Sullivan, 2000:149).

Sullivan says the focus has been on men as the main recipients of aid, a lack of utilisation of women’s knowledge of the local environment, and the reduction of women’s access to productive resources (149).

“In other words, community-based conservation perhaps perpetuates a dominant culture of men, even though its explicit aim is full community representation and empowerment.”

It thereby falls short of escaping the situation described decades ago by de Beauvoir (1949 (1988)), that public culture is male, with women located in the context of men, and men in the context of themselves” (155).

Two further problem areas Sullivan (1999:02) looks at concern the emphasis on wildlife and a lack of focus on how people use and manage natural resources. The emphasis on wildlife obscures wider dependence on other natural resources. This might act to further marginalise women who, as gatherers and cultivators, are typically linked with plant resources, while men are associated conventionally with animal resources, both domestic livestock and wildlife.

The lack of focus on details of how people use and manage natural resources will have a consequent value for biodiversity conservation. She suggests: “A re-focusing of ‘community-based conservation’ efforts so that they explicitly incorporate the full range of resources used and valued by a broad spectrum of people, might further a matching in practice of the inclusive rhetoric of ‘community-base natural resources management’” (1999:22).

Stuart-Hill (2003:12) also emphasised this point saying there is a need to expand CBNRM to include a wider range of natural resources, such as fish, forestry and veld products. He says however, “the effective management of these other resources will ultimately depend on policy changes that enable communities to benefit and control access to these resources.”

He further argues that an equally large constraint to integrative natural resource management is that legislation in most southern African countries does not yet appropriately recognise community rights or authority to these resources. “Consequently, the most well intentioned integrative field programmes will end up working within a legislative vacuum.”

In a paper delivered at a Regional CBNRM Conference in Windhoek in March 2003, Murombedzi (13) elaborated on this point saying: “While CBNRM in southern Africa is premised on a philosophy of linking conservation with development, the practise has been to limit development to a solely conservation-driven outcome, predicted on the success of this CBNRM enterprise to the express exclusion of other development activities in which the rural populations may want to engage.

“In addition, it has been observed that all the CBNRM programmes of the region have yet to develop clean and unambiguous rights to resources for communities.”

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Re-inventing conservation in Africa was never going to be a quick process that could be easily accomplished, say Hulme and Murphree (2001: 296).

The move to a community approach has already produced astonishing results, especially the communal conservancy programme in Namibia, which has been hailed by many as an international success story.

The development of community-based conservation in Namibia has been evolutionary and dynamic, at both community and national policy level. Unfortunately no new programme is perfect, as has been highlighted in this chapter by outlining the major concerns and problems the conservancy programme has encountered.

Jones (1999: 26) says: “The experience so far has shown that local communities are remarkably resilient in their attempts to overcome these problems. Mostly they have been pragmatic in their approach to overcoming boundary disputes and in trying to define the conservancy community. This would appear to indicate a belief that the benefits of forming a conservancy outweigh the considerable costs.”

A major lesson from CBNRM in Namibia, according to Jones (1999: 28) is to be wary of donors and the arrogance of academia in trying to categorise and judge the lives of rural Africans and the work of the people at the coalface of conservation.

While Jones compliments local communities on their resilience, he also expresses some doubt over their true commitment to managing wildlife sustainably or whether they will simply remain passive recipients of financial benefits (1999: 27).

Hulme and Murphree argue that a conservation that can protect Africa's unique species and habitats; that can reduce the costs it imposes on, and increase the benefits it provides to rural people; and that can make conservation less socially illegitimate than it presently is, for the citizens of African countries, is many decades away.

They however, acknowledge that a knowledge base from which a more effective institutional framework for conservation can evolve, has been created. "We urge those engaged with conservation in Africa to take a long-term view and to continue with this experiment" (2001: 296).

## 4. Media Strategy

*“For most people, the reality of science is what they read in the press.”*

- Dorothy Nelkin

The media plays a vital role in the world of science. Nelkin (1995: 02) says people understand science less through direct experience or past education than through the media filter of journalistic language and imagery. Science writers have also commented on the role of the media and its importance.

David Bodanis argues in his book *E = mc<sup>2</sup> - A biography of the World's Most Famous Equation* that the perception that only a handful of people fully understand this equation came about because of a journalist.

When Einstein published his work in London in 1919, the *New York Times* did not have a science specialist there and the paper's golfing specialist was sent to cover the story. In an attempt to make the story more interesting, he made up the fact that Einstein had written a book which was only understood by a handful of people. The headline read: “A book for 12 wise men: No more in all the world could comprehend it, said Einstein when his daring publishers accepted it” (Bodanis, 2000: 215).

Bodanis says the journalist started the equation's track record of poor public comprehension from which it never entirely recovered. Once a journalist himself, Bodanis says in an interview he tried to rescue some of Einstein's work from that legacy by writing his book.

Author of the best seller *Cosmos* that became the most widely read science book ever published in the English language; and presenter of the award winning television series of the book, Carl Sagan, has his say on stories published in tabloids in *The Demon-Haunted World* (1996: 58).

According to him science stories in tabloids, especially on aliens, make it difficult for the public to distinguish real perils from tabloid fiction “and conceivably impede our ability to take precautionary steps to mitigate danger”. He believes a concerted effort is necessary to convey science to every citizen via radio and TV, movies, newspapers, books, computer programmes, theme parks and class rooms (40).

Thomas (in Comley et al 1987: 684) agrees that an appreciation of what is happening in science today, and how great a distance lies ahead for exploring, ought to be one of the rewards of a liberal arts education. He believes it is time to develop a group of professional thinkers, who can create a discipline of scientific criticism.

He sees the emergence of a few people ranking as philosophers of science and historians and journalists of science as the start, but hopes this number will increase in the future. “Part of the intellectual equipment of an educated person, however his or her time is to be spent, ought to be a feel for the queerness of nature, the inexplicable thing, the side of life for which informed bewilderment will be the best way of getting through the day.”

#### **4.1 CBNRM Media and Publicity Strategy**

In embarking on the CBNRM programme, in September 1995, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism employed a consultant of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) to create a comprehensive media and publicity strategy.

According to the document, it was recommended that the local media be used, rather than the international media, as national awareness was vital for the success of the programme. “Without the support of the average Namibian, and in particular, decision makers, the programme could be in serious trouble” (Baker, 1995: 01).

She said it would be unwise to attract international attention before teething problems were solved. She further argued that using the mass media, as opposed to publications, which formed a smaller part of the strategy, was preferable due to its outreach.

“The idea was to use the media as one of the ways of giving information to the people to help them make up their own minds about CBNRM. Prioritising the local media was important, as people on the ground had to know first. We saw the local media as our bread and butter” (Baker, personal interview, July 2002).

In the strategy analysis of the Namibian media, Baker states there is good potential to utilise the local media from previous experience when keen interest was shown for the publication of environmental issues, despite limited human resources at most institutions (1995:03).

She further notes that many journalists in the country have few or no professional qualifications, which means complicated concepts behind CBNRM would need to be carefully explained. “Failure to do so could be potentially harmful to the publicity campaign” (03).

Most journalists also have several beats of which environmental reporting is not a priority area. She suggests that individuals who have shown specific interest in environmental reporting should be “carefully cultivated as correspondents” (03).

The document considered readership statistics in determining how to reach target audiences. In a survey conducted by the Social Impact Assessment and Policy Corporation (Siapac) in conjunction with the Namibian Non-Governmental Organisation Forum (Nangof) in 1994, more than a thousand people were interviewed about their choice of newspapers.

Siapac found that 66 per cent of respondents in urban areas read *The Namibian* compared with 64,7 per cent for the *Republikein*. In peri-urban areas, *The Namibian* was read by 69.8 per cent compared with 45,8 per cent for *New Era* and 32.3 per cent for the *Republikein*.

“It is clear that *The Namibian* and the *Republikein* lead the field in the print media stakes in urban areas. *The Namibian*, however, has by far the largest rural readership of all newspapers” (Baker, 1995: 05).

The strategy adopted in using the print media for the CBNRM publicity campaign included:

- Regular contact with print journalists
- Provision of regular news releases on events and decisions concerning CBNRM
- Providing features to newspapers on request, as well as opinion pieces on the values of CBNRM

- Taking media on press trips to areas where CBNRM programmes were operating
- Holding news conferences for major events

The strategy document further outlines activities for the electronic media (radio and television), but for the purposes of this thesis, only the print media has been included. The strategy incorporated alternative communications and activities, which would target smaller audiences. These included churches, MET officers and suitable NGO extension officers, theatre and enviro-messengers, formal events for decision-makers, and competitions.

The consultant arranged with *The Namibian* editor for a regular environmental column in the popular Friday supplement, *The Weekender*. The aim was to increase knowledge of various environmental initiatives in the country and to publicise the CBNRM, which “should result in greater support for the CBNRM programme” (Baker, 1995: 15).

The motivation for the field trips to project sites was that it would serve to cement ties with the media. It would give the consultant the opportunity to learn the needs and perspectives of journalists. There would also be sufficient time to explain the background to the programme, and to stimulate discussion among journalists about the projects.

“These informal discussions provide the media with the necessary background on projects, ensuring more informed and thorough coverage of events” (Baker, 1995: 16). The cost of food, transport and accommodation for Namibian journalists was covered during these trips, as many newspapers would not send staff if there were costs involved.

“By using the media and alternative communications, the benefits of CBNRM will be explained to other line ministries, decision-makers and the general public, resulting in increased national support for the programme. For this reason, most publicity will target a national audience, as opposed to concentrating on an international audience” (Baker, 1995: 18).

## 4.2 Review of the CBNRM Media Strategy

In a grant close-out final report of Life 1 (Living in a Finite Environment) submitted in July 2000, feedback on the media component is included. The feedback is outlined as accomplishments against the activities laid out in the Media and Publicity Strategy for the CBNRM programme.

(This review will again only focus on the print media, as stated in the previous section, for the purposes of this thesis.)

The strategy recommended regular contact, updates, news conferences, media trips and off-the-record briefings with the media. “Progress in this regard was significant, and the CBNRM has undoubtedly become one of the best covered environmental sectors in Namibia as a result of these efforts” (LIFE 1 report:, 2000: 16).

The report states that several features were written mainly for *The Namibian* and *New Era* newspapers. “Articles written or placed on the editorial pages of the two mentioned newspapers undoubtedly assisted in informing decision-makers and others about the CBNRM programme” (LIFE 1 report, 2000: 16).

During the period of review, about eight news conferences were organised for partners ranging from MET, USAID, WWF, SSD, and Nacobta, to the SADC Wildlife Coordination Unit. All the conferences enjoyed prime media coverage and were attended by about 75 per cent of the local news media. A news release and information package was handed out at each of the conferences.

Further coverage was given to five personality features of people working in the field of CBNRM, in a special column in the *Weekender* section of *The Namibian*.

The media outings proved to be one of the most successful activities of the strategy. Scores of articles resulted from these excursions. About 15 field trips were undertaken during the period under review (1995 – 1999).

“Although expensive and time consuming to organise, the benefits to the programme are innumerable. Journalists who have participated become acquainted with the programme, issues and field staff. Future articles written by these journalists reflect an interest and knowledge in CBNRM issues and are written with more authority and accuracy than by those who have not been exposed to the programme at field level” (LIFE1 report, 2000: 23).

“The media trips gave journalists the opportunity to get into the heart of a story and write from their own experience. It is very important to experience and be part of that culture – to wake up in a different environment. I found journalists normally became more interested in the topic and more supportive of the cause” (Baker, personal interview, July 2002).

According to the LIFE 1 report (17), one of the biggest constraints of implementing the strategy was the frequent change of staff at the various media institutions. “Much time has been invested in individuals, many of whom have subsequently become nationally recognised environmental journalists. However, some institutions, particularly NBC reshuffle staff on a regular basis. This hampers continuity.”

The strategy did not set out to target international media, as the main task was to familiarise Namibians, from grassroot level to decision makers, with the aims and achievements of the programme. However, some international coverage was achieved.

These included two articles in the *Independent Group of Newspapers*, followed by a visit from an international journalist in 1996. Several articles in southern African newspapers were published following a joint media trip with ART in 1999; and more articles appeared in the SADC Wildlife Coordination Unit’s *Resource Africa* following a trip organised for a correspondent from that publication.

*Reuters TV*, *BBC TV*, *ABC TV* and the *Discovery Channel* produced news and programme inserts on CBNRM activities. At least five stories about CBNRM activities in Namibia were screened on *CNN World News*. News releases were circulated on the Internet, specifically to *Wildnet Africa*. The Gift to the Earth event was the prime story on the world’s biggest environmental pages, ENN and WWF during 1998.

The Gift to the Earth Award, when President Sam Nujoma not only received the prestigious award from the President of WWF-US Kathryn Fuller, but also launched the first four communal area conservancies, was probably the event that received the most coverage of all.

It was listed in an NBC programme on the country's 10-year independence celebrations as one of the highlights since Namibia gained independence in 1990. The event itself enjoyed substantial national and international publicity and was the front page headline in most local newspapers.

No follow-up strategy or plan is currently in place for CBNRM. According to the LIFE 1 report, attention has shifted to providing communal area residents with information on conservancies by way of local language brochures and relevant radio programmes (25).

Media trips continued in 2000 and 2001, covering mostly the launch of newly registered conservancies and other events such as a donation by a conservancy to a school and game donations to conservancies.

Since 2002, no media initiatives have been forthcoming from the side of the CBNRM programme. It appears as if the move of the responsible consultant to another NGO, played a significant role in the absence of a follow-up strategy. She was not replaced and no one was made responsible for media communication.

The only indication of a possible follow-up strategy was given by Tsukhoe //Garoes, Head of the CBNRM sub-division of MET. According to her a new communication plan is being worked on (personal interview, July 2003).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The Media and Publicity Strategy for the CBNRM programme has been hailed as largely successful in the LIFE 1 report making CBNRM one of the best covered environmental sectors in Namibia.

Most of the proposed activities in the strategy were completed with good results, and the desired media coverage was attained in the main. Journalists were "cultivated" into environmental reporters.

Of the unexpected results from the planned media coverage, were individual role players in CBNRM who became celebrities, “without much being done to promote that” (Baker, personal interview July 2002).

While the international media were not specifically targeted, there was a lot of interest and subsequent coverage on CBNRM activities in Namibia in various publications and on well-known and respected television programmes.

Of the constraints mentioned in the LIFE 1 report, and by Baker, are the frequent changes of staff at media institutions and the average poor standard of journalism in the country. These hampered efforts to ensure continuity and good quality reporting.

The bottom line remains that the role of the media is of vital importance. According to Jantjie Rhyn, chairperson of Torra Conservancy: “Communication is extremely important, especially the message carried out by the media. Much more could be done with the media. Our people (in the Torra conservancy) have seen and experienced the benefits of a conservancy. There are still many out there who do not comprehend the idea completely – they need to be told – seeing is believing” (personal interview, October 2002).

//Garoes feels the communication effort has been successful to a certain extent. “The President has mentioned communal conservancies in his State of the Nation address and it is often featured on TV, but we could do better. We can still improve. People are at different levels of understanding the concept” (personal interview, July 2003).

The absence of any structured communication plan for the programme since 2000 has brought the process to a virtual stand still. It is a vital flaw in the otherwise oiled engine of the communication machine of CBNRM.

## 5. The Press

The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyse the communication of the environmental message of communal conservancies by analysing news reports from three different publications.

This chapter gives an overview of print run and distribution figures of each publication, as well as the results of a comprehensive survey that will help to put each publication into perspective in terms of the Namibian context.

The second part of the chapter looks at a comparison of the actual frequency of coverage of CBNRM news by the three publications.

### 5.1 Press overview

The publications under consideration for the study are two daily newspapers: the English daily *The Namibian*, the Afrikaans daily, the *Republikein*; and a specialist monthly magazine, *Travel News Namibia (TNN)*.

*The Namibian* is the biggest newspaper in Namibia, in terms of readership and print run. According to the latest figures, the English daily's print run is more than double that of the *Republikein* (personal correspondence, October 2003).

*The Namibian* distributes 21 000 copies per day, from Monday to Thursday, to all corners of the country, and 31 900 on Fridays. The paper goes to 12 towns in the south, three in the east, four in central Namibia (including the capital), seven in the west, four in the north, three in the far north and six in the rural north.

In comparison the *Republikein* prints about 15 000 per day, with its peak on Thursdays with a print run of 17 000. It is distributed to mostly the same towns spread across the country (personal correspondence, October 2003).

*TNN* caters mainly for the tourism market and distributes all over the world. The print run is 15 000 per edition. Of this 4 000 is sent to 72 countries to people involved with tourism in Namibia either as tour operators, travel agents, travel wholesalers, travel journalists and investors. It is also sent to university libraries, people involved in conservation, and NGOs.

In Namibia, the magazine goes to political/corporate decision makers, people connected directly and indirectly to tourism, tourism establishments, school libraries and information offices (personal correspondence, October 2003).

As far as readership is concerned, the Namibia All Media and Product Survey (NAMPS) commissioned by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in 2001, makes for interesting reading. A sample of 2 809 people was drawn from all walks of life for the study.

The results revealed 23 per cent (up from 16 per cent in 1998) of all respondents had read a newspaper in the last seven days (at the time of the study). The leading newspaper was *The Namibian* with 37 per cent of those interviewed saying they had read a copy in the last six months, making it the most widely-read newspaper in the country – a growth of 76.2 per cent from the 1998 survey.

According to Field (October 12, 2001) the major growth in print media consumption has come about primarily as a consequence of the popularity of *The Namibian* across the eight Living Standard Measure (LSM) groups taking part in the survey.

(The division into eight different groups enables the surveyors to provide a single means of measurement across all demographics strata. Each LSM group comprises between 12 and 13 per cent of the population, and is comprised of very low income, uneducated rural people at the one end, LSM 1, to high income educated urban people at the other, LSM 8.)

It is only in areas where Afrikaans dominates, that the *Republikein* sells more newspapers. “Given the fact that the first four LSM groups are made up primarily of residents in the North, *The Namibian* can claim to be the only truly national newspaper,” writes Neville Field (October 12, 2001).

The study further established that *The Namibian* has an average readership of ten people per paper, resulting in more than 319 000 people reading the Friday edition.

Language prevalence, according to the study results, proved Oshiwambo (44%) to be the most dominant home language. The most understood language is English (80%) and the most regularly spoken language is also English (54%).

## 5.2 Press coverage

Press coverage on CBNRM and communal conservancies only started in earnest from 1998. Before this, there were only isolated reports mainly covering two organised media trips. These were the launch of Nacobta in 1995 and a visit to the Etendeka Mountain Camp and Damaraland Camp in 1996.

For the purposes of this study, the three concerned publications were scanned for press reports from 1998 to August 2003. The reports have been divided into two categories:

1. own/related reports
2. reports written from press releases and media trips

## 5.3 Results

It is clear that *The Namibian* newspaper has outdone the other two publications in its reportage of CBNRM activities. Almost 60 reports were published by this newspaper during the period of study. These included 29 own or related reports and 28 generated by CBNRM. Spread out over the study period this breaks down into almost one report every month.

*TNN* takes second place with almost 40 reports. The magazine has done extremely well, generating 25 of its own, or related reports, in comparison to 12 CBNRM-specific reports.

The *Republikein*, with a total of 20 reports, has relied heavily on CBNRM-generated reports, accounting for 13 articles. Only seven own, or related articles, were published.

It might be worthwhile to mention that the launch of the *Youthpaper* in 2001, a weekly supplement in *The Namibian* which is aimed at young people, contributed to the coverage of CBNRM articles in this newspaper. The supplement has a page devoted to environmental matters every week, and has focused on the different aspects of communal conservancies a number of times.

A feature that sets the *TNN* magazine apart from the newspapers is its specialised field of focus, namely tourism, with environment to a lesser degree. Each issue provides for a dedicated environmental section in which specific topics, such as vegetation in a conservancy, are put under the spotlight.

The tourism focus also gives scope to different articles, such as reviews of community campsites. These campsites have become an important source of revenue for communal conservancies. News of joint ventures with tourism establishments were featured as headline news in *TNN*.

While *The Namibian* produces a dedicated environmental page every fortnight, the majority of CBNRM reports appeared in the news and other sections of the paper. These included hard news stories and features, or general interest stories in the *Weekender* supplement and the *Youthpaper*, as mentioned earlier.

One of the aims of the media strategy was to avoid dedicated environmental pages in publications. "The idea was to get articles onto news pages to ensure a broader audience. Many readers who do not have a specific interest in environmental issues tend to skip these pages" (Baker, personal interview, July 2002).

Articles in the *Republikein* were mostly published on news pages, unless a full page was dedicated to an event, such as the launch of a conservancy. It is often custom in this paper to give a full page to one news event, using several photographs to fill the page.

When the dates of the reports are taken into consideration, it is clear that the CBNRM media trips were a major source of news, as reported in the LIFE 1 report. All three publications recorded the highest number of reports in 1999 and 2001, when a number of media trips were organised.

*The Namibian* reported most consistently on CBNRM. The least number of articles appeared in 2000 when only five were printed. The next year the number shot up to a total of 15, of which eight were CBNRM-related stories. For the remaining three years reports varied between seven and nine per year.

The *TNN* figures mirror more or less that of *The Namibian* with only one report published in 2000. The years 1999 and 2001 and 2003 to date, each saw nine stories published, while the remaining two years had four and five articles respectively.

The figures for the *Republikein* also mirror the effectiveness of the CBNRM strategy. In 2002 when the Media strategy was no longer followed, or no follow-up plan had been implemented, no CBNRM reports appeared in the paper. The best year for CBNRM publicity was 1999 when eight stories were published. In 2001 five stories were published. Of the three stories that have appeared in 2003, two were related stories and one was a report on the CBNRM conference held in Windhoek.

### 5.3 Conclusion

*The Namibian*, as the biggest newspaper in Namibia (in terms of print run and readership), covered CBNRM news the most regularly and thoroughly.

The paper spread its coverage from hard news pages to a regular environmental page, and feature pages in its popular weekly supplements. The paper also did well in generating just over half of its own reports. The rest were sourced from CBNRM-related activities and news releases.

*TNN*, as a specialist magazine in tourism, and conservation to a lesser degree, followed *The Namibian* by publishing the second highest number of articles concerning CBNRM. The magazine however had a disappointing coverage of CBNRM stories in general.

This monthly magazine which does not have the stress of daily deadlines, could do much better in planning stories and appointing specialist writers. However, the magazine did well in generating its own CBNRM-related stories.

The *Republikein* did not do very well in generating its own stories. The paper relied heavily on CBNRM-initiated reports. The spread in the paper was generally contained to news pages. More coverage was given, though, in terms of photographs, when a full page would be dedicated to the launch of a new conservancy for instance.

Coverage of CBNRM-related news in the three publications has been good overall.

## 6. Critical analysis of press coverage

*“The media can play an important role in enhancing public understanding, but they have failed to do so. Too often the coverage is promotional and uncritical, encouraging apathy, a sense of impotence, and the ubiquitous tendency to defer expertise.”*

- Dorothy Nelkin

There are many factors that influence the end product of an article published in the press. Much takes place behind the scenes that plays a role in what is presented to the reader as a final product.

Nelkin says good reporting can enhance the public’s ability to evaluate science policy issues and the individual’s ability to make rational personal choices. On the other hand, poor reporting can mislead and disempower a public that is increasingly affected by science and technology and by decisions determined by technical expertise (1995: 02).

In analysing the reports in the press on community conservancies, consideration will be given to these factors. These include the level of journalism in Namibia, science news opposed to hard news, the role of public relations; and how journalists have treated the issues and problems raised by scientific research.

### 6.1 Level of journalism

#### 6.1.1 Experience

As Baker has rightfully noted in the CBNRM Media and Publicity Strategy (1995: 03) many journalists in the country have few or no professional qualifications. There is a tendency to consider the post as a stepping stone to a better paid career, mostly in the corporate world of public relations. The result is a high turnover of reporters at most media institutions, leading to a cycle of more experienced journalists being replaced by those who are younger and inexperienced.

The level of speciality is another factor that influences the quality of an article. Although the two newspapers used for analysis in this thesis are Namibia's two largest, they could be classified as small newspapers in terms of circulation numbers and staff complement.

The papers cannot afford specialist writers. Journalists are expected to cover several beats. "... engaging a specialised reporter to cover science is so costly. Only the largest papers are likely to have separate specialists for say, environment, medicine, and energy" (Nelkin, 1995: 106). In Namibia, most journalists remain general reporters expected to cover science and environmental reporting as one of several beats.

"...most journalists, who cover science and technology, especially those working for small-town newspapers, write about science, only part of the time. These generalists often find the science beat confusing (Nelkin, 1995: 94). The environmental or science and technology beat often features low on the agenda for these reporters.

In the Namibian context, this beat does not often produce hard news or even headline news. Journalists, therefore, do not pay too much attention to the subject as they have to divide their limited time between several beats.

This was evident from the variety of journalists who covered CBNRM news. Though the *Republikein* did not always attribute stories, it showed the most continuity. Most of the reports were written by one journalist, who covered environmental stories as one of her specialist beats.

Articles in *The Namibian* were written by about ten different journalists, which left little space for continuity and specialist reporting.

Finally, *TNN* as a specialist publication focusing mainly on tourism with environmental stories to a lesser degree, also does not have a dedicated environmental writer. Reports were done by different writers during the period of study.

It is obvious, therefore, that in terms of journalistic experience, the field of science and technology is inadequately covered.

### 6.1.2 Time and sources

Time constraints and limited knowledge and understanding of the subject, mean journalists rely heavily on press releases and other handouts when covering the beat. Information in press releases is often merely copied and not questioned or further explored. “Inexperienced writers are most likely to rely on press conferences and to passively accept the material provided” (Nelkin, 1995: 121).

The constraint of getting out daily stories leaves little time to focus on something that is not breaking news. Very few journalists have time to focus on long-term issues that require research and background knowledge.

The focus on breaking news further limits the analysis of the methods and processes of science, says Nelkin (1995: 105). There is rarely time to get more than one source in a story. She says non-specialist reporters would use sources or scientists who are the most accessible. This often means little attention is given to ensuring balanced or fair reporting, or getting comment from an opposing or alternative side.

According to Nelkin (1995: 09), “a surprising feature of science journalism is its homogeneity. ... most articles on a given subject focus on the same issues, use the same sources, and interpret the material in similar terms.”

This was clearly reflected in the three different publications under analysis. Overall the content of reports is similar, the same sources are quoted and stories are written from the same angles.

In an analysis of the number of sources quoted in each story, *TNN* fared the worst. More than half of the magazine’s stories only had one source, while several did not mention any sources. Only approximately four stories had two or more sources.

The *Republikein* did not do much better with single source stories making up 40 per cent of its total. The majority of *The Namibian’s* stories (21 per cent) quoted two sources, while 17.5 per cent had three sources. Single source stories accounted for 15.7 per cent.

The success of the CBNRM Media and Publicity is evident when articles in the three publications are sorted according to own stories and provided stories, resulting from media trips, press conferences and releases.

The majority of reports (45 per cent) in the *Republikein* originated from the handouts and trips, and were covered by the other two publications as well. In *The Namibian* 21 per cent of its stories resulted from these handouts, while *TNN's* portion of shared stories is 32.4 per cent.

*The Namibian* takes the lead in generating own stories. The majority of its articles (24.5 per cent), including subjects related to CBNRM were own stories. This could largely be attributed to the paper's dedicated environmental page every fortnight on which many of the stories appeared (19.3 per cent). The *Republikein* only produced 15 per cent of its own stories.

While *TNN* has the advantage of being a specialist magazine without the time constraints of daily deadlines and the race for hard news, only 16 per cent were own stories. There is much scope to look into the many different aspects of CBNRM-related activities, which *TNN* managed to a certain degree.

With dedicated environmental pages in every edition, the magazine covered non-events, such as the variety of vegetation in a specific conservancy, a review of community campsites, and new technology used by community game guards. The coverage is not well planned though, and does not really follow a theme to ensure some kind of consistency and continuity.

Overall, little initiative was shown by journalists to produce something different or new, although they knew their "opposition" received exactly the same information.

### **Official sources**

Nelkin refers to survey results when she looks at sources of information used. Surveys conducted on the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, found that 46.5 per cent were officials in government agencies, 4.1 per cent were from state and local agencies, and 14 per cent from non-governmental groups. A content analysis of press coverage of the environmental controversy over PCBs in the Hudson River found that 43 per cent of the sources cited were government bureaucrats (1995: 122).

Illustrating the reluctance of journalists to interview non-official sources, such as people directly affected by a decision or incident, Nelkin describes the example of a dramatic incident that took place at a shipyard in Connecticut. It was announced that 1 200 workers were found to have traces of asbestosis. This generated 50 stories in local newspapers, but only one reporter interviewed the afflicted asbestos workers themselves (1995: 96).

“Middle class journalists who are used to dealing with middle class officials won’t get off their asses to make the difficult effort to find people on the other side... not because they’re uncaring people, but because they’re middle class and don’t want to struggle with speaking another language with different people” (Karen Rothmeyer of the *Wall Street Journal* as cited in Nelkin, 1995: 97).

This appears not only to be a problem among journalists in the United States. Of the numerous reports analysed for this study in the three publications, 99 per cent of sources used were official, namely government and NGOs directly involved with CBNRM, and conservancy committee members.

What makes this so much more extraordinary is the fact that journalists were offered the opportunity, on a silver plate, on numerous occasions when they went on the CBNRM-organised media trips to interview other sources, such as community members, communal farmers and others.

The media trips, often lasting two or more days, provided journalists with ample time to get to the heart of the story, live in the environment of the affected community and get a taste of the lifestyle. Still, hardly ever did they venture into asking community members what they felt, what problems they were encountering and how they saw the outcome.

The media trips received extensive coverage in all three publications, as indicated earlier, but over and over again, only official sources were quoted. These quotes mostly came from speeches made at official occasions and statements made in press releases.

The officials’ statements were in the majority of cases very positive and complimentary of the process and reported as such by journalists. In one or two cases, where a minister mentioned a negative aspect, the journalists did not take the issue up to explore it further.

An example is the launch of the Tsiseb conservancy in August 2001, which was covered by all three publications. In *The Namibian* the story was the lead on page 3 and the journalists used a warning issued by the Minister of Environment and Tourism in his introduction.

The Minister warned that game utilisation rights of conservancies that utilised wildlife irresponsibly, or were involved in the mismanagement of funds, would be withdrawn. Although he elaborated on this point made by the Minister, he did not follow up on this warning by asking the conservancy committee for their reaction, or comments from community members who attended the launch.

The *Republikein* merely mentioned this warning, which formed part of the Minister's speech, about half way through the story. The focus was rather on the fact that the community had received the right to look after their wildlife.

*TNN's* coverage of the event only quoted the chairperson of the conservancy. The Minister's presence was only noted by a photograph of him with the chairperson and traditional leader of the area. His name was not mentioned in the story.

This is typical of the magazine's non-confrontational, non controversial style. Issues are not raised or reported on and very few questions asked, especially sensitive or controversial ones. Facts are merely presented for the consumption and information of readers. Unfortunately, journalistic basics are lost in the process as these facts and statements are often not attributed to a source.

The only report found in *TNN* that expressed opposing views and raised some concerns over joint ventures was in a column called "The Awareness Forum" in which contributions were invited from readers. In the Oct/Nov 2001 issue, the contributor expressed his thoughts on the financial implications of joint venture agreements between private tourism operators and communities in conservancies.

A second example that illustrates the point of journalists not following up on potential issues or hard news, is taken from reports on the launch of the first conservancy – in the south, called Oskop, during May 2001.

The event was covered by all three publications. Again all three reports quoted the Minister of Environment and Tourism as saying there was a general misconception, even among his staff, that conservancies would not be viable in the south. He said that many people thought that the presence of large numbers of game, especially elephants and rhinos were a prerequisite for the creation of a conservancy.

*TNN* further quoted the Minister as stating that a conservancy was about conservation of all natural resources, but it did not take the issue of game variety raised in the first place, any further.

*The Namibian* report mentioned the absence of outstanding natural beauty, the absence of elephants, lions or any of the big five; and the fact that the conservancy was out of the way for tourists as serious problems. The reporter then stated that these comments “might be missing the point” and quoted the Minister regarding people’s misconceptions. No further exploration of the topic was done, no other opinions were sought or experts approached.

*The Republikein* also quoted the Minister’s comment about misconceptions about the south and his further comments on why a conservancy was justified. Right at the end of the report another newsworthy issue was raised, but no additional reporting was done on it.

The reporter mentioned that according to “written communication” it appeared as if the creation and launch of the conservancy did not carry the approval of all community members. She reported there were differences of opinion over the size of the area, and concern over its viability as a conservation area for animals as a large part consisted of a “kalkplato”.

This was only mentioned in the last two paragraphs of her story. She left the issue without approaching any community member, or the conservancy chairperson, for comment.

The only report found during the period of study that included a comment from a community member was published in *The Namibian* and covered the pay out of a dividend by the Torra Conservancy to its members.

“Now we understand more about our conservancy and the importance of conserving our wildlife. In future we will take even greater care of our precious animals,” said Josef Somseb, who is wheelchair-bound (Baker, January 9, 2003).

## 6.2 Science news versus hard news

Science and technology news do make the front page, especially when about discoveries, health or reviews of economic trends and business. Controversies over biotechnology, AIDS therapies, cloning, and incidents of fraud have become newsworthy events, while technology-related policy issues such as environmental quality and public health also attract the media's attention.

The CBNRM programme and creation of conservancies do not fit into any of the above categories and is therefore not front page news as such, unless of course a controversy develops in a community or other more newsworthy incidents take place. These events are mostly negative and therefore not desirable from the programme's point of view. The challenge for the CBNRM Media and Publicity strategy was to garner as much positive publicity as possible.

Apart from being expected to cover a range of beats, journalists also compete to write the front page lead. Journalists soon learn a natural instinct for stories that make good front page material, and therefore do not spend too much time and energy on a topic that will not bring them the desired result.

Unless the journalist has a particular interest in science and technology, these types of stories would, in general, not receive too much attention in Namibia. This point is proved by the fact that only two CBNRM headline stories appeared during the period of study, both in *The Namibian*.

The first reported on the land row that had erupted over the creation of a conservancy at Uukwaluudhi (Shivute, July 16, 1998). Unhappy members of the community had gone to the paper's reporter who took the story up. It is one of the few stories on the CBNRM programme that has highlighted discontent in the community about a proposed conservancy. The other two publications did not follow up on the story.

The second headline story covered the award President Sam Nujoma received from the WWF and the launch of the first four conservancies (Sutherland, August 29, 1998). The story received wide coverage, but *The Namibian* was the only publication to use it as headline news.

*TNN* had two CBNRM-related lead stories, and used the launch of the Tsiseb conservancy as a second lead story in its September 2001 issue. The two front page stories concerned international acclaim for the Damaraland Camp (a joint venture with the Torra Conservancy) and community-based tourism.

The first story published in the Dec 1997/Jan 1998 issue features the Damaraland Camp winning a Silver Otter Award from the Guild of British Travel Writers for the best ecoproject in the world. The two newspapers did not report on this.

The second lead story featured community-based tourism in its November 1998 issue. The article explained the creation of conservancies and used the IRDNC as its main source.

The CBNRM programme as such did not provide much scope for hard news or even front page news, as has been proved in this analysis. There have been some missed opportunities, though, that journalists did not take up.

### **6.3 Choice of words**

According to Nelkin, journalists convey certain beliefs about the nature of science and technology, investing them with social meaning and shaping public conceptions of limits and possibilities by their choice of words and metaphors.

“Was Chernobyl a ‘disaster’ or an ‘event’? Is dioxin a ‘doomsday chemical’ or ‘potential risk’? Is embryo research a means to ‘enhance’ fertility or a way to ‘manipulate’ persons” (1995: 11)?

She says the selective use of adjectives can trivialise an event or render it important; marginalise some groups, empower other; define an issue as a problem or reduce it to a routine. The choice of headlines and leads can legitimise or criticise policies and programmes.

Images and ideas conveyed to the public about CBNRM by journalists, reflect the characteristics of the profession in the country; the judgements of news editors about what will grab the public's attention; and above all: the control and effectiveness of the programme's media and publicity strategy.

Looking at the word usage and headlines of stories covering CBNRM in the three selected publications, an overwhelmingly positive tone is set by headlines and word choice. The only report that falls on the other side of the balance scale is the lead front page story in *The Namibian* on the Uukwaluudhi conservancy land row.

The use of words immediately sets the tone and tells of a deep divide in the community. The headline reads: "Land plan sparks wild row" and the second lead: "Community plan divides communities in North". The introduction states that residents and Government officials are "locked in a major dispute".

Word usage in *The Namibian* report, mentioned earlier, which took up the Minister's warning to communities on game utilisation, is more neutral and mild.

The headline states: "Communities urged to take care of wildlife resources". The introduction merely states what the Minister had said using words such as "withdraw" and "irresponsibly". The journalist continues in the second paragraph saying the Minister "sounded the warning" (Inambao, 14 August, 2001).

Even the one article in *TNN* that raised some concerns has a non-confrontational and extremely neutral headline, and very careful usage of words in the rest of the column. (Oct/Nov 2001). The headline merely states "Joint Ventures with Conservancies".

Although the contributor wants to raise some concerns over the joint ventures, he starts on a positive point saying: "Fenata is very positive about tourism development plans within conservancies, but concerned about raising unrealistic expectations within the communities involved." The rest of the column continues in the same tone of expression with the author treading very carefully on concerns.

The remaining articles in all three publications are generally very positive and supportive of the CBNRM programme in both the headlines, and use of word in the story. The second and only other front page lead story, published in *The Namibian* states: "Top award for Namibia, Enviro initiative of 'global significance'".

Other examples of headlines in *The Namibian* that further boost the achievements and work of CBNRM are: “Reconciling community and desert elephants...”, “Torra on threshold of brighter future”, “Residents celebrate new Salambala conservancy”, “Wild initiative takes leap forward”, “Nyae-Nyae given huge game boost” and “Enviro monitoring system hailed”.

The two CBNRM-related front page stories in *TNN* are both positive: “International acclaim for Damaraland Camp” and “Community-based tourism – An ideal becomes reality”. The same tone and style is followed through with all stories in the magazine.

The *Republikein*, which featured no ‘negative’ reports on CBNRM, generally paints a positive or neutral tone. Examples of headlines are: “Wildlewe in Damaraland - Gemeenskap in beheer”, “Salambala verrys in Caprivi”, “Nujoma vereer vir sy rol in natuurbewaring”, “Verdwene wild keer terug – Vreugde groot in Caprivi” and “Nuwe landmerk in Suide”.

An interesting problem regarding word usage crept up in the *Republikein* reports. As a mainly Afrikaans language paper, there seemed to have been problems finding an Afrikaans translation for ‘conservancy’. In the very first reports, it was called “bavaria” – the incorrect spelling of the term “bewarea” – a combination of the words “bewaar” and “area”.

In 1998 reports, the term “bewaringsgebied” is used, in 1999, one report refers to a “wildreservaat”, and in the following reports, the term “bewaringsgroep” is used.

To the benefit of the CBNRM programme, the choice of words and headlines used in the vast majority of reports in the three publications has been supportive, complimentary and positive of the process. This in turn has probably swayed public attitude towards conservancies to being favourable, especially in the absence of any stories of major problems, disasters or difficulties.

“Public beliefs about science and technology tend to correspond with the messages conveyed in the media, though the direction of cause and effect is not clear” (Nelkin, 1995: 69).

## 6.4 Public relations and journalism

More corporations and organisations are recognising the importance of the press in creating a favourable public image. In the United States, the American Cancer Society started hospital and laboratory tours for journalists as early as 1952.

Since the 1960s professional societies, academic institutions and research organisations have all increased their public relations activities in order to enhance institutional prestige, encourage support of research, and influence public policy with respect to science and technology (Nelkin, 1995: 128).

The relationship between public relations professionals and the media has developed to such an extent that the practitioners see themselves as an important arm of the media and a means to save editors hours of work tracking down the news. Public relations officers have become a useful source of information for journalists.

“Presenting complex material in a manageable form, they serve as liaisons between scientists and journalists, easing the job of reporting science” (Nelkin, 1995: 141).

This was the main motivating factor for the CBNRM Media and Publicity Strategy, “to inform the general public about successful project activities, so that the political constituency of support is beyond the communities directly involved in project activities” (Baker, 1995: 01).

The LIFE 1 Report (2000: 32) states: “The incorporation of a media component in any CBNRM programme is, in our view, vital to the success of the programme.” The report echoes Nelkin’s statement about the presentation of complex material. She says: “Simple explanations of complicated texts are invaluable, as are flow-charts and the use of artwork” (2000: 34).

One of the methods of the Media Strategy to make the science of CBNRM more accessible and understandable to the Namibian press, was to invite them on field trips. According to Baker, the trips succeeded by making journalists more interested and supportive (personal interview, July 2002).

The LIFE report’s evaluation of the trips was that although they were expensive, “these events have untold benefits and are highly recommended” (2000: 34).

The *Republikein* and *TNN* both published stories from five media trips, while *The Namibian's* journalists went on eight trips.

From the perspective of the media, and according to norms contained in a code of ethics for journalists, going on a sponsored trip could raise some moral issues. A code of ethics normally expects of journalists to perform with “intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness” and to free themselves from all obligations, favours, or activities that could compromise their integrity (Nelkin, 1995: 84).

Many newspapers therefore place constraints on journalists to assure their neutrality. They are required, for example, to avoid involvement in politics, or community affairs that could compromise their ability to report with fairness. Nelkin names a Sigma Delta Chi survey of 900 newspaper executives that found half of the editors would not allow reporters to accept free trips under any circumstances (1995: 84).

In Namibia, where newspapers and magazines have to operate on small and limited budgets, there is hardly ever money to send journalists on trips. Sponsored trips, such as those organised by the CBNRM programme, offer the opportunity to send journalists into the field and obtain stories they would otherwise not be able to report about.

This is why it was decided to organise the sponsored field trips. As Baker put it in the Media Strategy: “Many newspapers will not send staff if they have to cover their own costs” (2000: 17). The costs of food, transport and accommodation, which involved mostly camping, were covered on the trips.

In defending the trips, Baker said journalists were not put under any obligation to only report on CBNRM activities and had the freedom to follow up on any other story they had “picked up” on the trip (personal interview, July 2002). On several occasions, non-CBNRM reports that journalists had encountered in the communities and areas they were visiting during the field trips were published in the two newspapers.

According to the Media Strategy, the costs of international journalists were also covered (1995: 17). Life reported that by 2000, field trips for at least five international journalists from reputable media houses including *Reuters*, *Gemini News Agency*, *BBC* and *ABC-TV*, had been organised.

The Namibian press made good use of the field trips. Stories generated by the trips in the three publications considered in this study account for between 13.5 and 25 per cent of all articles written on CBNRM. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the journalists have overwhelmingly reported favourably on CBNRM.

While the trips offered journalists the opportunity to interview community members and explore possible contentious issues, this did not really happen, as discussed earlier. The question whether journalists felt obliged to report positively because of the free trip, or whether it was merely a lack of interest, knowledge of the subject and journalistic experience and skills, is a topic for a separate study.

## 6.5 Critical reporting

So far, the analysis has highlighted the fact that Namibian journalists are mostly generalists. They know too little about science or the environment to ask the right questions and to tackle complex matters in their reporting. They are also too inexperienced and lack the skills to further explore statements and issues that have the potential to become major stories.

As a result, they prefer to avoid complex issues and are unable to ask substantive questions, as they are often unable to evaluate what they are told. They are also vulnerable to manipulation by their sources of information. Nelkin sums it up: “Preoccupied with reaching a basic understanding, they have little time or energy to interpret underlying issues” (1995: 94).

Uncritical acceptance of anything said by authorities in the science field has been an issue in journalism worldwide. John Lear, editor of the *Saturday Review* wrote: “The spirit of untrammelled inquiry and scepticism required of journalism in other fields must become a standard in science writing” (as cited in Nelkin, 1995: 89).

David Perlman’s take on science reporting was: “We are in the business to report on the activities in the house of science, not to protect it, just as political writers report on politics and politicians” (as cited in Nelkin, 1995: 89).

Although there has been a move to more critical investigation of scientific and technical information that looks at the social implications of new technological developments and reporting on disputes, many journalists still present a narrow range of coverage, says Nelkin.

“Many journalists are, in effect, retailing science and technology rather than investigating them, identifying with their sources rather than challenging them” (1995: 164).

Chapter 3 of this thesis looked at numerous scientific studies on various aspects of communal conservancies and highlighted the shortcomings of the system as pointed out by the studies.

These constraints include, among other, land disputes, competition among interest groups, the uncertainty of land tenure, support from NGOs and donor agencies, and the role of women and utilisation of natural resources.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the grand majority of press reports has been very positive and supportive of CBNRM, and has therefore failed to address these constraints.

The one and only report of a controversial nature appeared as a front page lead story in *The Namibian* on 16 July 1998. The report addressed the land dispute that was brewing in the Uukwaluudhi conservancy.

It is interesting to note that even newsworthy events that do not need specialist understanding or an experienced reporter to notice it, have been missed by journalists on several occasions.

One example is the digging of the grave at the culmination of a protest march and a written petition at Sesfontein as a result of internal community conflict. None of these dramatic events made it into the papers. The only possible excuse for the non-reporting of this could be the remote location of the town or that the news never reached the ears of the ‘news hounds’.

The same goes for events in the Salambala conservancy in the Caprivi where individual community members threatened court action in a lawyer’s letter. They complained that their human rights were being violated in the conservancy formation process.

In the Torra conservancy, ethnic conflict reared its head when allegations were made that the Riemvasmaker people were dominating the process and that Damaras were not properly represented on the committee.

Not a word of any of these events appeared in the news. This perhaps confirms the fact that there are no dedicated science/environmental journalists in Namibia who are able to follow such developments closely.

Other potential problems and issues that have not been widely addressed in the press are, for example, competition between livestock and wildlife for water and grazing, and predation and crop damage caused by animals.

A feature appeared in *The Namibian* about school children in a rural area who are scared to walk to their school at Otjapitjapi (north east of Sesfontein) because of the return of elephants to the region (Barnard, August 1, 2003). The feature highlighted the problems encountered by rural communities caused by higher wildlife populations that lead to damaged crops, livestock predation and threats to life.

The role of women in CBNRM, as addressed by Sullivan, did not receive any attention from the press. She argues that the focus has been on men as recipients of aid, and that the women's knowledge of the local environment is not utilised.

Overall, press coverage of women in CBNRM, and quoting of women on CBNRM issues has been minimal. Of the few examples found women mostly featured in stories about the craft industry, which is an area they have traditionally been associated with, or female officials working in CBNRM.

The *Republikein*, for instance, quoted the female director of an NGO, in a report on a craft market that was opened in the Caprivi (Brand, March 23, 1999). In a report on the launch of the #Khoadi //Hoas conservancy a picture was used of the first female community game guard. She was not interviewed or quoted on the challenges of the job (September 8, 1999).

Another example of an official female voice was found in the front page lead story of the WWF award given to President Sam Nujoma. *The Namibian* quoted the President of WWF who handed over the award (Sutherland, September 28, 1998). Further quotes from women found in *The Namibian* include the NGO director and a female government employee in the Caprivi craft story (Schutz, March, 19 1999).

The first female community game guard of #Khoadi //Hoas also received coverage in a caption story in *The Namibian* giving more details about her and her work (Lotter, September 9, 1999).

In a caption story *The Namibian* featured a woman who has benefited from the IRDNC entrepreneurship programme that focuses on mobilising rural women through craft-making (October 22, 2002).

The same paper carried a picture of a woman on the community committee of the Brukkaros community campsite, while the role of women was emphasized in a report on the Brukkaros campsite (Taylor, June 26, 2001; July 3, 2001).

In a report on the quarterly meeting for conservancies in the Kunene region, the role of women in conservancies was highlighted by the Director of the CBNRM division in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, a woman herself (Barnard, July 31, 2003).

The poor showing of women's voices as quoted sources in CBNRM reflects a key finding of the gender and media baseline study in southern Africa that was initiated by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa) in 2003.

The study revealed that women constituted only 17 per cent of news sources, which is one per cent less than the global average of 18 per cent. Women constitute 52 per cent of the population in the region of study, which makes it obvious that the media disregards the opinions of women or do not consider them as potential sources.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

While the development of CBNRM in Namibia has been evolutionary and dynamic, it has not been a smooth ride all along. There have been concerns and problems, and new ones are encountered as the programme continues to grow.

The press has not presented a balanced picture of the process in its coverage as many of the constraints and problems have mostly either been ignored or overlooked by journalists. As the print media is considered to be a primary source of news, the public has not been given the full and comprehensive perspective of CBNRM in Namibia.

According to Baker the role of the media is to give information to the people so they can make up their own minds (personal interview, July 2002). As a result of the CBNRM effective and extensive Media and Publicity Strategy the public has been given mostly positive news about conservancies over the past five years.

As the public depends on the media for science news, few would be aware of the constraints and problems of CBNRM as studied by scientists, because little of these findings was made available to the press, and published.

## 7. The role of the press

People are continually confronted with choices that require some understanding of scientific evidence. They need to decide whether to allow the construction of a toxic waste disposal dump in their neighbourhood, or how to respond to a child with AIDS in their school.

Choices could affect personal health, such as whether to eat high fibre cereals or to reduce consumption of coffee. “Information and understanding are necessary if people are to think critically about the decisions they must make in their everyday lives” (Nelkin, 1995: 2).

A Nepalese science journalist, Prakash Khanal argues in an Internet article on effective science communication, that people need to be made scientifically literate in order to avoid becoming the victims of their ignorance. “Science journalists have the power to tear off the veil of ignorance and rescue them” (Islamonline.net).

Khanal says people will continue to suffer and languish in poverty for as long as they are unaware as to how they could turn the power of information to their own benefit. He uses the example of Vector Borne Disease (VBD) and malaria that are still the cause of many deaths in Asia and Africa, despite the provision of free medication by many governments.

“Ignorance, and not the diseases, is to a large extent the major cause of high mortality rates. What they need is information on simple measures that could help protect them from these diseases. They need to be made scientifically aware.”

He further argues for the usage of simple explanations and language use when writing about scientific subjects. “There is a need to use street language to write about science and scientific discoveries and technologies, but what we do is make it more complicated by copying the scientists.”

Nel explains that it is best that journalists do most of the interpreting themselves, “since experts tend to speak expert-ese, a language foreign to most audiences” (1994: 57). This specifically applies when writing about complex and controversial issues.

Nelkin agrees by saying: “The media can play an important role in enhancing public understanding, but they have frequently failed to do so” (1995: 162).

In Namibia, with its small population, there are times when there is a shortage of hard news and editors struggle to fill up pages. This has led to a tendency to either fill up pages with photographs of events, or to give prominence to stories that have not been properly sourced or written. At times of news shortages, press releases are very useful and are often almost used as is.

Coupled with the fact that there are hardly any specialist writers, including science journalists because of the size of newspapers and limited budgets, many issues go unchallenged or are simply not reported on.

Tabloids are also guilty of misrepresenting scientific news. Sagan does not have much time for tabloid stories and pulls them apart saying their stories on aliens specifically make it difficult for the public to distinguish real perils from tabloid fiction, and “conceivably impede our ability to take precautionary steps to mitigate danger” (1997: 58). According to the managing editor of the *Weekly World News* “scepticism does not sell newspapers... we are a tabloid, we do not have to question ourselves out of a story” (as cited in Sagan, 59).

Sagan further argues that such reports persist and proliferate because they sell. Moreover, they sell because there are so many of us who “want so badly to be jolted out of our humdrum lives, to rekindle that sense of wonder we remember from childhood”.

Sagan maintains that scepticism must be part of the toolkit, “or we will lose our way. There are wonders enough out there without our inventing any” (1997: 60). Nel also cautions journalists to always remain sceptical (1994: 70).

Nelkin sums it up: “It is not merely enough to react to scientific events, translating and elucidating them for popular consumption. To comprehend science or technology, readers need to know its context: the social, political and economic implications of scientific activities, the nature of evidence underlying decisions, and the limits – as well as the power – of science as applied to human affairs” (1995: 171).

Sagan writes in the introduction of *A brief history of time* by Stephen Hawking: “We go about our daily lives understanding almost nothing of the world. We give little thought to the machinery that generates the sunlight that makes life possible, to the gravity that glues us to an Earth that would otherwise send us spinning off into space, or to the atoms of which we are made and on whose stability we fundamentally depend” (1988: ix).

Science journalists therefore have a major role to play in helping people to understand a little bit of the world they live in. Khanal takes it further by saying he believes the popularising of science and raising scientific awareness of people will help to alleviate poverty (Islamonline.net).

The process of reporting more extensively and critically on science will have to start with editors and managers of publications. Unless the people in charge are committed and convinced of the role science reporting can play, journalists will not have much scope and say in what gets published and what not.

Once an editor or manager has taken on the challenge, the publications’ science writers will hopefully be exposed to more training and opportunities to improve their reporting. In the case of smaller publications where specialist writers are a rarity, journalists interested in the field could at least be assigned to training and given opportunities to expand their knowledge.

Berger illustrates this point in an essay on ethics saying journalists are not free agents in full control of their production. He says many decisions are made for them – by traditions, by the nature of their work, by formal strictures, and by order of their employers (Nel, 1994: 198).

With the advent of HIV/AIDS and its devastating effect, especially in southern Africa, editors can no longer afford to ignore the important role specialist or science writers need to play in daily reporting. The pandemic has become so part of our lives, that the newsworthiness of issues related to the topic can easily be overlooked.

It is therefore vitally important to train and expose specialist writers to the HIV/AIDS field for instance, to enable them to continuously find new angles to report on the disease. This would ensure readers do not skip HIV/AIDS related stories thinking they have nothing new to offer. The educational, as well as informative role publications can play in this regard, has been emphasised on many an occasion.

The primary role of journalists is to put all the facts on the table for their readers to enable them to make up their own minds. The process of finding all the facts, while keeping a sceptical mind, and presenting it in an easy understandable format is a complex task that needs skill and experience.

For as long as journalists are assigned to a range of beats and not allowed to specialise in one or two fields, reporting on science and environmental news will remain at a basic level, and will most probably be biased.

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# Addendum

## Registered Communal Conservancies

