



U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Environment Project Profile



Africa

Namibia

690-0251.73

## Living in a Finite Environment

**S**igned in 1992, USAID's six-year (FY 1992-97), \$10.7 million *Living in a Finite Environment* (LIFE) project in Namibia is a major component of USAID's eight-year (FY 1989-96) *Southern Africa Regional Natural Resources Management Project* (NRMP) (see separate project profile). LIFE aims to (1) help communities become stakeholders in protecting wildlife and other natural resources by sharing in revenues from protected areas and wildlife-based economic activities and (2) support changes in national legislation, social and economic improvements in marginal agricultural areas and buffer zones, research and education, and regional information exchange.

## Highlights for FY 1993-94

- Launched operations in May 1993. Established oversight committee representing Ministry of Environment and Tourism, USAID, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), subgrantees, and experts in social sciences, environmental and land tenure law, and ecotourism.
- Set up monitoring and evaluation system in which residents note wildlife sightings and elephant crop damage, monitor poaching, and report craft sale and campsite income.
- Funded four subgrants totalling \$466,000 to nongovernmental or academic organizations to research or help organize community-based natural resource management efforts.
- Held planning workshops in early 1994 on activities in Caprivi and Bushmanland. Collaborated on system to monitor impacts of income-generation and tourism on women and men.
- Supported the Etosha Ecological Institute's research on declining ungulate populations in the Etosha watershed, providing important environmental data for the project.
- Supported study of possible conservation trust fund, financial and economic analysis of community game harvesting, and methods for sharing park revenue with communities.
- Encouraged bilateral sharing of experience in community natural resource management by visiting and hosting activists from Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique.

### Project at a Glance

**Funding:** Life-of-Project \$10,700,000  
Biodiversity Percentage N/A

**Project Duration:** FY 1992-97

**Implementors:**

World Wildlife Fund  
Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism  
World Learning  
Management Systems International  
Rossing Foundation

**USAID Project Officer:**

Barbara Belding/USAID/Namibia

## Background

Namibia, newly independent from South Africa in 1990, is struggling to overcome inequitable distribution patterns that have left most of the rural black population in communal areas near the northern border with Angola and Zambia. The government believes that transferring governance and management of natural resources in these areas may be one way to redistribute resource ownership while maintaining local users' interest in conservation. The communal areas are home not only to people but to many of Namibia's native animal and plant species, including giraffes, wild dogs, white and black rhinos, and thatch grass. These are threatened, however, by the growing need of local residents for subsistence farmland and alternative income sources.

## Project Implementation

In cooperation with Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism and USAID/Namibia, WWF launched LIFE project activities under a cooperative agreement (\$8.03 million from USAID and \$2.67 million from WWF) in May 1993. World Learning, Management Systems International, and the Namibia-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Rossing Foundation are also involved in the cooperative agreement.

The four components of the project are: community-based environment and development initiatives, research, information sharing with other Southern Africa Development Community member-nations, and environmental education in three northern areas. Caprivi, Bushmanland, and the buffer zones of Etosha National Park, an important water catchment area, each provide a distinct pilot focus area in which these four components play a role.

General outputs in community-based natural resource management will

include expanded government, NGO, and community-based organizational capacity to implement and strengthen environmental efforts; establishment of community-based natural resource management projects in marginal areas and protected area buffer zones; and increased participation of women in planning and implementing natural resource management efforts in communities.

Under the planning and applied research components, WWF will target improvement of the quality and geographic coverage of data collection on resource management, socioeconomic baseline data from participating communities, and dissemination of findings on a national and regional level.

The environmental education component, consisting of community-level activities carried out by local NGOs in the target regions, is bolstered by national-level activities under USAID's *Reaching Out with Education to Adults in Development* project. For this, the Rossing Foundation is helping to produce environmental education materials, train NGOs, and organize events at the Etosha and Waterberg National Park environmental education centers.

Under the information exchange component, USAID, WWF, and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism are attempting to integrate regional and national efforts under USAID's *Southern Africa Regional Natural Resources Management Project* by networking and disseminating information on project results across borders.

## Project Progress

Project activities were launched with the establishment of the LIFE Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, USAID, WWF, subgrantee organizations, and experts in the social sciences,

environmental and land tenure law, and ecotourism. This committee will direct overall project activities.

World Learning helped set up financial management systems and an oversight system for project subgrants. Management Systems International began helping to develop a set of programming and planning indicators to be used in the overall monitoring and evaluation plan for the LIFE project at grassroots, NGO/subgrantee, project, and national levels. Community-level indicators, measuring benefits to project participants and ecological impacts of projects at the local level, are being developed by community members and subgrantee NGOs. Residents are counting sightings of wildlife such as black rhinos and ungulates, noting elephant crop damage, monitoring poaching incidents, and reporting income generated from local crafts, campsites, and other projects to NGO staff. The evaluation plan is expected to be completed over the next six months. WWF is also currently reviewing the overall project's planned outputs and will reflect its revisions in future reports.

**Community-based natural resource management.** During FY 1993-94, WWF made four subgrants totalling \$466,000 to three NGOs and an academic research organization with experience in community-based natural resource management.<sup>1</sup> For example, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, a local NGO, has worked since 1990 in East Caprivi, setting up a community conservation program to strengthen local support for the region's wildlife. In December 1993 the LIFE project provided the NGO a \$138,000 subgrant for a seven-month extension of their work and will be reviewing their proposal for an additional three-year period in the near future. In February 1994 the group met with WWF and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for a planning workshop for East and West

Caprivi and began collaborating on design of a field-level project tracking system. The system will be assessing the impact of a "traditional village" set up to familiarize tourists with the area's history and culture, as part of in-depth surveys to be conducted periodically. Project staff are specifically monitoring impacts on local women, who provide many of the crafts sold there, and on the link between community benefits and conservation. They are also assessing commercial harvesting of thatch grass on several fronts: its economic and ecological viability, its potential impacts on gender relations (for example, if women cut and sell the grass now, will men allow them to continue if the practice becomes profitable?), and the local demand for grass under export conditions.

A similar workshop was held in Eastern Bushmanland in March 1994. Working with the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation, the Ju/'hoansi people, a hunter/gatherer society dependent on the endangered natural resource base, are trying to alleviate environmental pressures in their area through the development of alternative income-generating sources, such as tourism. The foundation received a six-month, \$83,000 grant to design a three-year community natural resource management program with the Ju/'hoansi.

Other community conservation subgrants included an 18-month, \$100,000 grant to the Namibia Nature Foundation, starting in January 1994, to strengthen its institutional support services to community-based natural resource management projects and a

one-year, \$144,000 grant (with the potential for extension to three years) to the University of Namibia's Social Sciences Division to expand its capacity to conduct applied socioeconomic research on and for community-based natural resource management activities in LIFE focus areas. Each subgrant incorporates economic and social assessments into project design and has a gender component to increase participation of women in community projects.

**Research.** Under the LIFE project's research component, USAID has been supporting studies on existing fauna and flora, community socioeconomic issues, and possible tourism and other revenue-building efforts in the three target areas. A USAID grant agreement with the Zoological Society of San Diego to support research by the Namibian government's Etosha Ecological Institute terminated in June 1993; USAID's support to the institute is currently continuing under a special interim grant. The institute's research on declining ungulate populations in the Etosha catchment area is being studied in collaboration with WWF for possible long-term funding. USAID is currently working with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and WWF to develop a funding strategy specifically for these long-term plans.

WWF initiated an investigation into establishing a conservation trust fund to support ongoing activities under the LIFE project. In addition, it initiated studies to support community natural resource management efforts, including a financial and economic analysis of community game harvesting in

Sesfontein in northwestern Namibia and an exploration of methods for returning park revenues to neighboring communities. In preparation for the latter, project organizers hired the Namibia Legal Assistance Center to review national wildlife legislation to determine whether communities can legally establish and govern their own wildlife conservancies—areas with defined boundaries and management plans developed and implemented by residents of the area—and how they can become involved in managing local resources through gate-fee sharing. Although this is currently not legally feasible, other options are being explored.

**Information exchange.** WWF, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and USAID/Namibia provided comments on Malawi's midterm natural resources management project evaluation, made contact with Zimbabwe's natural resource management project, and shared reports from Namibia's workshop on community-based natural resource management and the 1993 Ministry of Environment and Tourism annual meeting with other interested parties. Organizers visited and hosted activists in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique to share experiences on community natural resource management.

—Kara Page, *Datex*  
6/1/94

<sup>1</sup> World Wildlife Fund et al., *Namibia: Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE)*, semiannual progress report for the period October 1, 1993, to March 31, 1994 (Washington, D.C.: WWF, April 1994).