Women's participation in Conservancy Activities: A Case study of Nyae Nyae and Gamaseb conservancies

Selma Nangulah

March 2004
The Multidisciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre (MRCC) of the University of Namibia (UNAM) produces research reports and discussion papers to present preliminary and new research information and ideas for discussion and debate. The Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Research Programme of the MRCC produced this report. The views expressed in this document are the views of the author and not necessarily those of the University of Namibia.

Citation
Please cite this publication as:


Contact details:

The Programme Coordinator
CBNRM Research Programme
Contact: Alfons Wabahe Mosimane
Tel: +264 61 206 3954/3051
Fax: +264-61-2063050/2063684
E-mail: amosimane@unam.na

The Librarian
MRCC Resource Centre
University of Namibia
P/Bag 13301
Windhoek
Namibia
Tel: +264 61 206 3051/2
Fax: +264 61 206 3050/3684
Email: tginas@unam.na

This publication was made possible through support provided by Namibia’s National Association of CBNRM Supporting Organization (NACSO) under the agreement between the US Agency for Development (USAID) Namibian mission and the Namibian Nature Foundation (NNF) in the cooperative agreement No. 690-A-00_02_00209_00 on “The Living in an Infinite Environment Phase II Programme. The views expressed in this document are the views of the author and are not necessarily those of the USAID, NACSO or NNF.
# Table of Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms .................................................................................................................. 1

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................................. 2

Executive Summary ................................................................................................................................. 3

1.0 Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 5
  1.1 Background .................................................................................................................................... 5
  1.2 Methodological approach .............................................................................................................. 7
    1.2.1 Study Areas .......................................................................................................................... 7
    1.2.2 Sampling .............................................................................................................................. 7
    1.2.3 Data Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 7

2.0 An overview of Gender issues in Namibia ....................................................................................... 9
  2.1 Legislative support for women's participation ................................................................................ 9
  2.2 An experience from the Community Resource Monitor (CRM) Programme ............................ 10

3.0 Understanding Women's Participation in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies ............... 12
  3.1 Involvement of women in the conservancy activities ................................................................ 12
  3.2 Rating women's participation ..................................................................................................... 13
  3.3 Existing Women's organisation in the two conservancies ......................................................... 14
  3.4 The need for improving participation of women in CBNRM .................................................... 15

4.0 Conclusions .................................................................................................................................... 17

5.0 Recommendations .......................................................................................................................... 18

6.0 References: ..................................................................................................................................... 19
**Abbreviations and acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Conservation Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBNRM</td>
<td>Community-based Natural Resources Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>Conservancy Management Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Community resource Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRDNC</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>Living in the Finite Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACSO</td>
<td>Namibia Association for CBNRM Support Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West African People's Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEBNAG</td>
<td>Tsumkwe East Bednet Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women Action in Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

The communities of the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies allocated their precious time to the research team during the data collection period. My special appreciation goes to members of the conservancy management committee and Traditional Authorities who made work easy in their communities.

I wish to extend my sincere thank you to Alfons Mosimane the Programme leader of this project for proof reading and comments made on the first draft of this report. His comments shaped the content of this manuscript.

I would like to thank the research assistants who assisted with data collection: Mathew Haufiku, Otto Hill, Regina Gorases, Angela Tjomombokura, Leefa Ndilula.

I also would like to thank the researchers of the CBNRM research programme of SSD for their assistance and support during the production of this report.
Executive Summary

The participation and empowerment of women has proved to be vital in successful natural resources management in Africa (USAID/AFR/SD, 2002). Participation is defined as “the act of sharing in activities of a group”. In the context of development, FAO defines it as “a process of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities”. To allow for a more equitable development process, disadvantaged stakeholders need to be empowered to increase their participation, level of knowledge, influence and control over their own livelihoods, including initiatives affecting them (Internet, FAO). This report examines the role and participation of women in the local management of natural resources with special reference to the conservancy approach in Namibia.

The study was conducted in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies. The Nyae Nyae conservancy is situated in the Otjozondjupa region, in the northeastern part of Namibia. As a part of the Tsumkwe constituency, the conservancy is vast (9 023 km²) and the first conservancy in the country to be registered in 1998. The San people form the majority of the Nyae Nyae community, although Damara/Nama, Herero and Rukavango speaking people are also found in the area.

The //Gamaseb conservancy, which was recently registered in 2003, is a relatively young conservancy as compared to Nyae Nyae. It is located in the southern part of the country, about 5 km from the Karasburg town in the Karas region. The conservancy falls under the jurisdiction of the Bondelswarts Traditional Authority of the far south. The Nama speaking population dominates the area, although some Oshiwambo speaking people are also found in the area.

The data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the case of the quantitative survey, a structured questionnaire was administered. In the //Gamaseb conservancy, households interviewed were randomly selected from the four zones into which the community is partitioned. These zones include: (1) !Haib (2) Gabes (3) Grootwolts; and (4) Satco area. A total of 81 households were completed from the four zones of the //Gamaseb conservancy. Similarly, a total of 144 households were interviewed in the Nyae Nyae conservancy from 13 main villages of the 32 villages in the area. The questionnaires were completed with the assistance of well-trained field assistants.

In the case of qualitative research methods, groups discussions and key informant interviews were conducted in both conservancies. Different groups (female, male, and young) were organized and issues regarding gender and women participation were deliberated. Few selected key people were also identified and interviewed.

The results revealed that women from the two conservancies are involved in various activities of their areas. However, the form of participation between the two conservancies is different. In the case of Nyae Nyae conservancy, the involvement of women in professions such as teaching is seen as an activity of the conservancy. The //Gamaseb conservancy which was emerging at the time of the study, limited the activities to the specific conservancy related activities, such as attending meetings, committee members and administration. As a result, it could be concluded that the development stage of the conservancy has an influence on how women participation is perceived by the community.

The study also reported the difference in the level of participation between the women from the two conservancies. Education emerged as the most important hindering factor for participation among women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy. Women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy are still guided
by strong traditional principles and have a lower literacy rate, and hence participating equally with
their husbands might be difficult or impossible. Literacy is a powerful weapon for empowerment.
The high literacy rate among women from the //Gamaseb conservancy has facilitated free and
easy participation. Hence, empowerment and cultural differences could be the contributing factors
for the differences in participation among women in the two conservancies rather than the develop-
ment stage of the conservancy.

Limited awareness on the existence of women’s organizations among community members of
both conservancies was reported. These organizations are either few in the area or their activi-
ties are not visible to the entire community.

The two conservancies have identified a need to improve the participation of women in the
conservancy activities. Capacity building through various training and educational initiatives
was reported to be a most important aspect that could enhance women participation. Hence,
the involvement of women in community activities or employment opportunities within the com-

The CRM programme that was initiated by IRDNC in 1994 in the Caprivi and Kunene regions
was developed to raise the capacity of women in CBNRM activities rather than promoting gen-
der balance or women quotas within the community organisations. It promotes active participa-
tion of rural women in natural resources management. This programme does not exist in the
Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancy. However, applying the CRM approach in these areas
especially in the Nyae Nyae conservancy could be essential to build the capacity and improving
the position of women in the society.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The devolution of natural resources management responsibility from the state to communities or local institutions has become a widespread trend that cuts across countries and resources sectors (USAID/AFR/SD, 2002). The Community-based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) in Namibia allows for the devolution of tenure, rights and authority over natural resources to communities at the local levels. The CBNRM Programme also promotes the establishment of local management institutions focusing on sustainable resources management and income-generating enterprises.

The conservancy

"A landmark policy on conservancies enacted by Namibia in 1996 and subsequent policy and legislative reforms and guidelines have established a relatively straightforward, transparent process for local communities in communal areas to:

- Mobilize and register interested community members
- Adopt a constitution and by-laws
- Identify boundaries of management areas
- Commit to a plan for sustained yield management of their natural resources
- Organize resource monitoring and planned harvesting
- Agree on a plan for distribution of benefits

The conservancy is then legalized and entitled to obtain the rights and benefits of managing wildlife and other resources within its area. These communities also agree on approaches to improve land use and receive support on negotiating joint ventures with private sector investors on various economic activities”.

Paragraph from Nature, Wealth and Power, August 2002

However, devolution of control over resources from state to local communities does not necessarily lead to greater participation and empowerment of all stakeholders. This is particularly common in highly differentiated and stratified communities. Views of communities as "homogenous groups that have common commitment to maintain their local resources base" (Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 1997) are not necessarily true for most Namibia’s rural communities. The theory of homogeneity ignores the effects of power differences within communities on who can participate in decisions regarding management and sharing of benefits (Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 1997).

The participation and empowerment of women has proved to be vital in successful natural resources management in Africa (USAID/AFR/SD, 2002). Participation is defined as "the act of sharing in activities of a group". In the context of development, FAO defines it as "a process of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities". To allow for a more equitable development process, disadvantaged stakeholders need to be empowered to increase their participation, level of knowledge, influence and control over their own livelihoods, including initiatives affecting them (Internet, FAO).
Although women’s participation in local initiatives has received considerable attention, there is very little done to understand participation of women in the community based management approach. The participation of women in organization activities in their communities is regarded as an extension of their domestic roles. Special attention also needs to be put on the barriers women face in achieving the control over resources, especially within local organizations. Gender differences in power and influence place women at a disadvantage and indicate that their participation in CBNRM is much lower than their male counterparts.

This report examines the role of women in the local management of natural resources with special reference to the conservancy approach in Namibia. In this context, women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of natural resources and this requires positive policies to address women’s specific needs and to equip and empower them to participate at all levels, including decision-making and implementation. At the same time, the vital nature of natural resources for both men and women highlights what is at stake in the process of devolution of resources control.
1.2 Methodological approach

1.2.1 Study Areas

This study was conducted in the Nyae Nyae and // Gamaseb conservancies. The Nyae Nyae conservancy is situated in the Otjozondjupa region, in the northeastern part of Namibia. As a part of the Tsumkwe constituency, the conservancy is vast (9,023 km²) and is the first conservancy in the country to be registered in 1998. The San people form the majority of the Nyae Nyae community, although Damara/Nama, Herero and Rukavango speaking people are also found in the area.

The //Gamaseb conservancy, which was recently registered in 2003, is a relatively young conservancy as compared to Nyae Nyae. It is located in the southern part of the country, about 5 km from the Karasburg town in the Karas region. The conservancy falls under the jurisdiction of the Bondelswarts Traditional Authority of the far south. The Nama speaking population dominates the area, although some Oshiwambo speaking people are also found in the area.

These two cases were selected based on their registration status and location. At the time of the investigation, the Nyae Nyae conservancy was the registered conservancy while the //Gamaseb was an emerging conservancy. The San community is among the most marginalized communities in Namibia and it was felt important to look at the participation of San women in the conservancy activities. Similarly, CBNRM is a relatively new approach in the southern part of the country and it was important to understand the women’s participation in this approach.

1.2.2 Sampling

The data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the case of the quantitative survey, a structured questionnaire was administered. In the //Gamaseb conservancy, households interviewed were randomly selected from the four zones into which the community is partitioned. These zones include: (1) IHaib (2) Gabies (3) Grootwortels; and (4) Satco area. A total of 81 households were completed from the four zones of the //Gamaseb conservancy. Similarly, a total of 144 households were interviewed in the Nyae Nyae conservancy from 13 main villages of the 32 villages in the area. The questionnaires were completed with the assistance of well-trained field assistants.

In the case of qualitative research methods, groups discussions and key informant interviews were conducted in both conservancies. Different groups (female, male, and young) were organized and issues regarding gender and women participation were deliberated. Few selected key people were also identified and interviewed.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires was entered into the SPSS statistical package. Frequency tables were produced for analysis.
Figure 1: The location of the study areas

Registered Conservancies March 2004
2.0 An overview of Gender issues in Namibia

There are slightly more women than men based on the latest National population census of 2001, since they make up 51% of the country's population (CBS, 2003). According to the same report, about 67% of the Namibian population live in rural areas. Of the 1,226,718 rural inhabitants, 639,336 are women, again, slightly more than men.

Education is a very important aspect for the development of any country. Namibia recently reflected a very high literacy rate (81%) in the population census of 2001. More importantly, the literacy rate among men and women is equal. Literacy in this context refers to the ability to read and write in any language with understanding (CBS, 2003).

This study focuses on the Otjozondjupa and Karas regions. The large scale of diversity among inhabitants of Otjozondjupa region makes it difficult to generalize. The Ju/'hoansi community under investigation makes up a small component of the region and there are limited commonalities with the other groups in that region. The Karas region, on the other hand, exhibits less diversity among inhabitants of the area. In both regions, the literacy level is slightly higher among women than men.

The Otjozondjupa region has a population of 135,385 inhabitants while the Karas has a lower population of 69,329 people. Contrary to the national population, men are slightly more than women in the two regions. Women make up about 48% and 47% of the population in the Otjozondjupa and Karas region, respectively (CBS, 2003).

Despite the high national literacy rate, variations among different regions are observed. More people above the age of 15 years are more literate in the Karas region (87%) than those in the Otjozondjupa (67%) region. However, both regions show that women are slightly more literate as compared to men in both regions (CBS, 2003).

According to lipinge, et al (2000), men play a much more leading role than women in community activities in the country. Men, therefore dominate the leadership role in Namibia, which in turn means that crucial decisions affecting the environment and even households are likely to be made by men than women. With the exception of religious activities, men are dominating in the community, the political, cultural and economic sectors. The difference is even higher in the cultural, social and economic sectors.

2.1 Legislative support for women’s participation

Gender advancements in the country are encouraged, supported and sustained through the National Gender Policy of 1997. The objective of this policy is to “ensure equal opportunities between men and women, to empower women by recognizing, accepting and valuing their contributions to the general good of the society and to remove obstacles which hamper their development, or deny them their entitlement” (lipinge and Lebeau, 1997). The National Gender Policy also seeks to recognize and address the priority needs of women, identify targets and actions that will increase women’s access to resources and facilities and ensure growth in participation of women in decision-making.

Rural development, management of the environment, education and training and women in decision-making are some of the gender priority areas of the National gender policy. Hence, the policy will strive to support strategies to promote and facilitate equal representation of men and
women at all levels of decision-making structures and all spheres of social, economic and political life. Programmes such as the affirmative action policies have been implemented to ensure the presence of women on government decision-making bodies. Other programmes include public awareness campaigns, attempts to improve women’s access to resources, introduction of local capacity-building and self-help organizations and donor support in gender developments.

For example the Living in the Finite Environment (LIFE) programme has set target for the percentage of women playing a significant role in the management of conservancy: 20% by 1999, 25% by 2000, 30% by 2001 and 35% by 2002. Such a role includes, for instance, the participation of women on the conservancy committee and the needs of female-headed households being considered by conservancies in the development of benefit distribution plans (Flintan, 2001). Whether these targets are met is a question that requires investigation.

The CBNRM programme is facilitated through the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1975, which was amended in 1996. This gives rural communities the right to organize themselves into a ‘conservancy’ that is a legal body. The Amendment Act together with the constitution of the Nyae Nyae and /Gamsa conservancies have not identified any specific gender requirements, such as a quota of women in decision-making. However, it is required that every member of the conservancy participates equally irrespective of whether they are male or female. The language used in the constitutions is also very gender sensitive, for example using expressions such as “he/she” or “his/hers”.

2.2 An experience from the Community Resource Monitor (CRM) Programme

The Community Resource Monitor (CRM) programme was initiated in 1994 by (Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation) IRDNC in the East Caprivi even before the National Gender Policy and CBNRM Programme of MET. The programme was established as an attempt to organize communities and women’s groups to better exploit natural resources management opportunities. The involvement of women in the conservation of natural resources, especially those they are already involved in, was identified as an important practice by IRDNC. At the beginning of the programme IRDNC employed two women as CRMs in order to address the problem animals concerns and management issues faced by women. The CRMs also facilitated the flow of information between local leaders, decision-makers (regional and national) and external audiences (Flintan, 2001).

The CRMs also played a major role in monitoring the natural resources, organizing community meetings to assess the use of natural resources and problems faced by the community people as well as offering training in harvesting methods. This programme was developed to raise the capacity of women in CBNRM activities rather than promoting gender balance or women quotas within the community organisations. It promoted active participation of rural women in natural resources management.

Besides being an initiative to promote women’s participation, the CRM programme also plays a role in encouraging women’s involvement in other aspects of CBNRM. Women are invited to meetings to be informed on benefits of CBNRM. Their capacity is built in the areas of pricing and grading of crafts, harvesting techniques, quality control, book-keeping and monitoring of natural resources. To date, the CRM and CAs (as they are known in the Kunene region) have significantly succeeded in:

- Establishing contacts with the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare
- Maintaining links with national craft groups
• Strengthening influence in national CBNRM organisations; and
• Organizing regular radio talks on women's involvement in CBNRM

The CRM programme has evolved over the past years and positive developments have been achieved. This programme has certainly changed the positions of many women in rural communities. Through this programme more women are drawn into CBNRM and are receiving benefits from it. The CRM programme has found ways for women to improve their income and support their households through improved craft production. Their roles and responsibilities have been recognized and continue to be built upon. This programme has also benefited the conservancies, especially those areas were the CRM programme was implemented and are currently part of the conservancies.

The CRM initiative does not exist in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies. However, it could be looked at as the best practice that could be introduced to other conservancies to empower and build the capacity of women.
3.0 Understanding Women’s Participation in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies

3.1 Involvement of women in the conservancy activities

As stated in the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 and the constitutions of the two conservancies, all conservancy members should participate equally, including women. Participation of women in the activities of both Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies are reflected in the figure 1. There is a mutual understanding among respondents that women are involved in the activities in both areas.

*Figure 1: Participation of women in conservancy activities in (a) Nyae Nyae and (b) //Gamaseb Conservancy*

Women from the two conservancies are involved in various activities. Table 1 below shows the involvement of women in the various activities in the two conservancies. In the Nyae Nyae conservancy, respondents indicated that most women are involved in craft making projects (34%), teaching (31%) and as part of the conservancy committee (29%). Only 4% of the respondents reported that women also attend conservancy meetings.

In the //Gamaseb conservancy, women are also said to be strongly participating in the conservancy activities in terms of attending meetings (58% of respondents), conservancy committee members (15% of respondents), involvement in the fundraising activities (7% of respondents) as well as doing administrative work (5% of respondents). It is evident from the results that women in the two conservancies are involved in different activities with the exception of participation in decision-making structures.

Women in the Nyae Nyae conservancy are actively involved in crafts productions while in the //Gamaseb conservancy the idea of crafts is not yet developed. The magnitude of crafts production is mainly necessitated by the response of communities to the tourism industry.
**Table 1:** The four most important activities women mainly participate in the two conservancies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Nyae Nyae (%)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>//Gamaseb (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend meetings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of committee</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft making</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in fundraising</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do administration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During group discussions, it emerged that a large number of women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy are actively involved in craft production projects, while some are trained as pre-school cultural performance conductors. This means that women are actively involved in the transfer of knowledge and experience, including environmental awareness and love of nature to the young.

According to the data collected for the Conservancy Management Profile (CMP), there are no female representatives in the Nyae Nyae conservancy management committee, while there are three female board members. The //Gamaseb conservancy management committee is comprised of 5 women whereby the chairperson position is also occupied by a woman. In addition, some key positions such as secretary and treasurer are held by women and deputized by men. Contrary to lipinge et al (2000), most decisions of the conservancy are likely to be made by women in the //Gamaseb area.

According to the findings, women in the two conservancies are involved in various activities of their areas. However, the form of participation between the two conservancies is different. In the case of Nyae Nyae conservancy, the involvement of women in professions such as teaching is seen as an activity of the conservancy. The //Gamaseb conservancy which was emerging at the time of the study, limited the activities to the specific conservancy related activities, such attending meetings, committee members and administration. As a result, it could be concluded that the development stage of the conservancy has an influence on how women participation is perceived by the community.

### 3.2 Rating women’s participation

In the Nyae Nyae conservancy, the majority of respondents (89%) rated the participation of women in the conservancy activities as low. While about half of the respondents in the //Gamaseb conservancy revealed that participation was high. However, there were those that rated women’s participation as low (28%) and moderate (18%) in the //Gamaseb conservancy.

The low rating of women’s participation in the Nyae Nyae conservancy is attached to a number of reasons. The most important reasons include lack of skills and knowledge among women (30%), intimidation from the male counterparts in the area (22%) and no interest shown by women (14%). Women not being given a chance to participate, a lack of transport and not being well informed were among the other reasons given by some respondents (15%) to account for low levels of female participation.
However, beside the reasons for low participation, very few of the respondents (4%) thought participation among women in the Nyae Nyae area was high. Reasons attached to this included the important role played by women in mobilizing for meetings, women being part of various committees in the area as well as their willingness to learn.

The high rating of participation in //Gamaseb conservancy resulted from the ability of women to mobilize and organize meetings (19%), positive cooperation with other community members (11%) and being members of the conservancy committee (8%). It was also reported that women in the //Gamaseb area are participating fully in conservancy activities because they have access to sufficient information. However, reasons for low and moderate ratings are low interest from women (17%), lack of skills and knowledge (9%), and leaving the conservancy for jobs outside the conservancy.

Therefore, there is a difference in the level of participation between the women from the two conservancies. Education emerged as the most important hindering factor for participation among women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy. Women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy are still guided by strong traditional principles and have a lower literacy rating, and hence participating equally with their husbands might be difficult or impossible. Literacy is a powerful weapon for empowerment. The high literacy rate among women from the //Gamaseb conservancy has facilitated free and easy participation. Hence, empowerment and cultural differences could be the contributing factors for the differences in participation among women in the two conservancies rather than the development stage of the conservancy.

### 3.3 Existing Women’s organisation in the two conservancies

The awareness of specific women’s organizations in the two conservancies were also addressed in this study. According to the results, a large percentage of respondents in the //Gamaseb conservancy (82%) and Nyae Nyae (60%) conservancies are not aware of the existence of women’s organizations in their areas. About 34% of the respondents indicated that there are no women’s organizations existing in the Nyae Nyae area.

Few of the respondents (6%) in the Nyae Nyae conservancy are aware of the existence of the women’s organization in their area. About 4 women’s organizations were reported; (1) craft making and (2) tailoring projects, (3) various income generating project and the (4) TEBNAG (Tsumkwe East Bednet Action Group) projects.

In the //Gamaseb conservancy, only 7% of the respondents reported the presence of women’s organizations. The Women support group, Women Action for Development (WAD), Catholic Church Women group and Aids Action group and the “Velskoene” income generating project were mentioned in the interviews in the //Gamaseb conservancy.

Group discussions in the //Gamaseb conservancy revealed that more women are involved in community activities. It emerged that women are not only involved in these organizations as ordinary members but also as part of the management structures. Women normally dominate the membership of organizations mentioned above. Women in the //Gamaseb area are highly active where some are involved in more than five committees. They also tend to be over occupied especially when their domestic activities have to be added to their institutional responsibilities. Religious activities, particularly those of the Roman Catholic Church, dominate weekly activities of women in the //Gamaseb conservancy.
For the purpose of comparison, community members of Uibasen, Uukolonkadhi, Wuparo and Spitzkoppe conservancies were also asked about the awareness of women’s organizations in their areas. In Wuparo conservancy most people indicated that women’s organizations did not exist in the area. A few organizations emerged from a few respondents (13%) such as Women’s federation, craft maker, basket making, tailoring, home-based care, and mat making and decoration projects. In the case of Uukolonkadhi, there is a high awareness of the South West People’s Organisation (SWAPO) women’s council and income generating projects such as Marula oil and Kalahari seeds initiatives. Women Action in Development (WAD) is one of the well-known women’s organizations in the Spitzkoppe/Tubuses conservancy. Respondents from Uibasen did not have knowledge of any women’s organization in the area.

The results above suggest that there is limited awareness on the existence of women’s organizations among community members of both conservancies. These organizations are either few in the area or their activities are not visible to the entire community.

3.4 The need for improving participation of women in CBNRM

The two conservancies are of the same opinion that there is a need for improving the participation of women in conservancy initiatives (figure 2). About 73% and 75% of the respondents in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies, respectively, said that women’s participation in conservation activities must be improved.

![Pie charts showing participation of women in conservancy initiatives](image)

**Figure 2:** The need to improve the participation of women in the a) Nyae Nyae and b) //Gamaseb conservancies.

Various mechanisms and ways of encouraging the participation of women have been identified. In the Nyae Nyae conservancy, most respondents (49%) revealed that improving the skills and knowledge level of women through training is among the most important interventions. Secondly, women should be encouraged to attend meetings in order to give their views and suggestions (20%) and this can be highly stimulated by the male conservancy committee members to encourage their wives to attend meetings, hence other women will follow suit. It is also indicated that the input of women could be enhanced through employment provision (10%). Other ways of encouraging participation in the Nyae Nyae area from few respondents included electing more women on decision-making structures (5%), making income generating projects accessible to women (2%), for men to encourage their wives to participate (2%) and providing regular transport to attend meetings or community gatherings (2%).

Notwithstanding the high participation rate among women of the //Gamaseb conservancy, the need to improve the participation of women is still of importance. It is felt among the //Gamaseb community
that there is a need to encourage more participation through engaging women more in income generating projects (25%) and providing training and educational opportunities (26%). It is also indicated that activities within the conservancy must be made known to the women (10%) while simultaneously making them aware of the conservancy benefits (8%). Women in the //Gamaseb conservancy could also be encouraged through self-help organizations (7%) and employment provision (5%).

The importance for attending meetings was clearly identified as a means to improve women’s participation in both conservancies. However, while it is important to understand the high domestic and productive workloads, the opportunity cost of time to attend meetings and do other work for institutions is different for women and men. Attention needs to be paid to such details as the timing, location and structure of meetings, which should reflect the importance of women’s participation and allow for their opinions to be taken seriously.

The abilities and capacities needed for participation in committees may not be easily identified with women. The low attendance of conservancy meetings in the Nyae Nyae conservancy might be due to the low literacy rate. Women are afraid that they would not be able to understand what is being said or they would have little to contribute. Studies done in South Asia showed that women’s lack of negotiating skills and mobility are two factors inhibiting meaningful participation of women. The studies further elaborated that prestige of participation in public forums, especially of leadership positions in the committees, may be valued more highly by men than by women (Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 1997).

According to the findings, the views of the two conservancies on the need for improvement of women participation in conservancy activities did not vary. Capacity building through various training and educational initiatives was reported to be a most important aspect that could enhance women’s participation. Hence, the involvement of women in community activities or employment opportunities within the community could benefit the women in different ways, whilst improving their positions in the society.
4.0 Conclusions

The study clearly shows that women in the two conservancies are involved in the conservancy activities but at different levels. There is higher participation among women from the //Gamaseb conservancy as compared to women from the Nyae Nyae conservancy. Moreover, a need to improve women’s participation in the two conservancies was identified. Both conservancies identified educating women and building their capacity as means to improve their participation.

Both conservancies did not benefit from the CRM programme of IRDNC. Applying the CRM approach in these areas especially in the Nyae Nyae conservancy could be essential to build the capacity and improving the position of women in the society. The CRM approach is important in the light that it does not introduce activities but rather addresses issues that women in a specific community are already involved in.

---

*Figure 2: The level of women’s participation in the Nyae Nyae and //Gamaseb conservancies.*

Various mechanisms and ways to achieve the participation of women have been identified. In the Nyae Nyae conservancy, informal groups (49%) revealed that improving the standard knowledge level of women through improving conservation education and training was the most important intervention. Women should be encouraged to participate in order to give their views and experiences (20%) and this can be highly supported by ensuring conservancy committee members respect the opinions of women and follow suit. It is also indicated that the input of women could be enhanced through the empowerment provision (10%). Other ways of encouraging participation in the Nyae Nyae conservancy included electing more women on decision-making structures (17%) making generating projects accessible to women (12%) and promoting women’s participation or community meetings or provision.
5.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations are important to improve the participation of women in conservancies:

- There is a need for services providers, donors or the government to continue support activities and initiatives where women are already actively involved.

- Areas where skills and capacity of women is needed should be identified in order to develop capacity building programmes within conservancies.

- Women should also be encouraged to take part in various training and workshop activities organized by or for the conservancies.

- Involving women through job creation could increase the participation of women in conservancy activities. Therefore women need to be considered for recruitment in employment opportunities in conservancies. Tourism operations in the conservancies could result in community members getting employment in lodges and campsites and training from these activities.

- Literacy training can be instrumental in overcoming women’s own feelings of incompetence and inhibitions to speak up in public meetings, especially in the Nyae Nyae conservancy were there is a large gender gap in participation. Increasing women’s experience with meetings in other types of organizations (religious, community projects) may also increase their confidence and ability to participate. For example, separate women’s organizations could be used as an important strategy to empower women both within households as well as within communities.

- The participation of women in the conservancy affairs will not happen automatically and this cannot be left to local communities either. The role of support organizations as facilitators and educators in empowering women is very essential. The membership of Namibia Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) is currently playing an active role promoting conservancies in the country. However, there are also other NGOs such Women Action for Development (WAD) who are addressing women’s empowerment issues in rural communities. Therefore, it will be very essential for these organizations to work closely together and identify potential areas for women empowerment and explicit policy support is crucial.
6.0 References:


5. lipinge, E.M. Phiri, F.A and Njibili, A.F. 2000. The National Gender study, Volume I & II, University of Namibia


8. Office of the President. 1997. National Gender Policy,


ABOUT THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY CENTRE

The Multi-Disciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre (MRCC) at the University of Namibia (UNAM) was formally established in 1993. The former Namibian Institute of Social and Economic Research, (NISER) was renamed the Social Sciences Division (SSD) in 1993 and became an important division of the MRCC. At that time, a further two research divisions were established under the umbrella of the MRCC, namely the Engineering, Science and Technology Division (STD) and the Life Sciences Division (LSD). The SSD has three main research programmes, and they are Community Based Natural Resource Management, Rural poverty (and Land), Gender Research and Training, and the Urban Research and Development Programme. The Engineering, Science and Technology Division focuses on conservation of Namibian biodiversities and genetic resources, energy research and development, technology transfer, industrial projects and Namibian technical standards.

The MRCC is committed to the training of students and runs an internship programme for UNAM students. This programme aims at providing practical skill to complement their studies, and thereby also contributing to the skills base of the country.

The MRCC Resource Centre houses a collection of development related literature, both published and unpublished. Many of the project documents and reports are not available elsewhere in Namibia, and as such the Resource Centre provides an invaluable service to the academic, research and development communities in Namibia. As part of its active acquisitions policy, the Resource Centre has literature exchanges with local and international organizations, which specialize in African studies, socio-economic and scientific research in Southern Africa and the developing world.

The MRCC publications are an important function of the Resource Centre. The publication list includes all publications by the staff and associates, since the beginning of 1990. The list is organized in four sections:

- **Divisional Research Reports**, which present results of completed research projects
- **Discussion Papers**, which are generally the interim results of research reports, journal articles in preparation, and graduate student's Masters or PhD. theses
- **Commissioned Reports**, which result from external assignments undertaken by SSD staff
- **Books, articles in journals, etc.** This section contains works by the research staff published elsewhere

*Please note that many of the SSD/NISER research reports and discussion papers are out of print but they can be made available on special request.*

Titles in all series may be ordered from:

The Documentalist
Multi-disciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre
Private Bag 13301
Windhoek, Namibia
Phone: +264 61 206 3907/3051
Fax: +264 61 2063050/3684
E-mail: tgases@unam.na