With funding from the:

Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space

NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

POLICY BRIEF

Issue 14/ October 2026

ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT IN BAMUNU CONSERVANCY

Rachel. N. Mbokomaa[1*], Jonathan Kamwi[1], Maria Sigopi[2], Klaudia Amutenya[2]

[1]Namibia University of Science and Technology
[2]Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adoptive Land Management (SASSCAL)

KEY MESSAGES

- Strengthen conflict mitigation- To lessen crop damage and livestock losses, invest in efficient low-cost alternatives like better fencing, community crop-guarding programs, and early-warning systems.
- Support community-led initiatives – To mitigate losses and maintain favorable attitudes towards conservation, strengthen the conservancy capacity building by assisting with local monitoring, rapid reaction teams, offset and compensation schemes.
- Promote sustainable land use – Promote land use planning that reduces high-risk activities in wildlife corridors and conflict-prone areas while balancing the needs of farming, grazing, and conservation.
- Enhance community conservation partnerships – Foster closer cooperation between local people, NGOs, and the government to guarantee shared benefits and match conservation objectives with livelihoods.

SUMMARY

Human–wildlife conflict (HWC) is a major challenge in Bamunu Conservancy, Zambezi Region, where communities live alongside wildlife. The study surveyed 80 households to assess the nature and causes of HWC, community members perceptions towards wildlife conservation, and the influence of community land use practices on wildlife conservation. The findings indicate that the most frequent conflicts involve crop damage, property destruction, and livestock predation, with elephants and large carnivores (such lions and hyenas) being the main drivers. Households use protection measures such as fencing, guarding and scaring methods (e.g., fire, noise etc.) to protect crop fields and livestock, but these are often ineffective. Despite the losses experienced, most community members support wildlife conservation although their support is dependent on reducing conflict. To improve conservation outcomes in conservancy, the study highlights the urgent need for sustainable land use planning and focused conflict reduction.

INTRODUCTION

Namibia's forward-thinking wildlife conservation policies, which prioritize community engagement through conservancies, have earned it international recognition. The Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 gave rural communities control over wildlife and tourism on their property (Jones & Weaver, 2009). Community conservancies, which today occupy more than 20% of Namibia's land and are essential to the preservation of biodiversity while sustaining local livelihoods, were established as a result of this policy change (Naidoo et al., 2011). By encouraging ecotourism and sustainable resource management, these conservancies aid in reducing human-wildlife conflict (HWC) (Hoole & Berkes, 2010). Globally, this has been acknowledged for striking a balance between socioeconomic development and conservation, especially in arid and semi-arid areas where traditional farming is difficult (Roe et al., 2009). Understanding people's perceptions and giving local communities more authority to manage protected areas and conserve species are key components of many new conservation programs. Since people's perceptions and experiences of a reserve shape their attitudes toward wildlife conservation, it is crucial to comprehend local communities' attitudes about wildlife use to accomplish sustainable wildlife management (Oskarsson, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and ethics

Participants were randomly selected to ensure diversity across gender, age, education level, and occupation. Consent and confidentiality procedures aligned with the protocols set by the Namibia University of Science and Technology and local traditional authorities in Zambezi.

- **Quantitative & qualitative Surveys:** Structured household surveys gathered demographic, human-wildlife conflict (HWC), perceptions of wildlife conservation, and land use and conservation data. In-depth conversations on conservation and land use management, policies, support received by communities in relation to HWC-related losses, challenges of effective participation and roles of the government, NGO's and local communities.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square tests) assessed associations among variables such as HWC frequency, land use activities, presence of wildlife, negative perceptions, support for conservation initiatives, and land use changes using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft excel.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nature of Conflict: Crop damage, livestock predation and property destruction are the most common types of human-wildlife conflict with elephants, buffalos, lions and hyenas being the primary species responsible for the conflict.
- Causes and Drivers: Land-based livelihood activities such as farming (crop farming) and livestock grazing are strongly linked to HWC. Protection measures such as fencing, guarding and scaring methods are limited which contributes to the persistence of conflicts.
- Community Perceptions: Most households expressed positive perceptions of wildlife conservation despite frequent losses from wildlife. However, community member's support for conservation is conditional on reducing HWC impacts.
- Land Use and Conservation: Farming and grazing were found to have an influence on conservation outcomes.

CALL-TO-ACTION

- Policymakers, conservation organisations, and local stakeholders should invest in effective conflict reduction techniques and strengthen community-led management programs.
- They should also encourage sustainable land use planning in order to ensure that humans and wildlife can coexist.
- To protect community well-being and long-term conservation success in Bamunu Conservancy, coordinated, focused action will be necessary.

CONCLUSION

Human–wildlife conflict is a challenge that undermines both community livelihoods and conservation in Bamunu Conservancy. Conflict is primarily caused by elephants, buffalo, lions, and hyenas destroying property, damaging crops, and preying on livestock. Although most people still support conservation, this support is fragile and depends on reducing the negative impacts of wildlife.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was carried out with financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Science, Technology, and Space through the Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL-ELNAC 2.0).

Gratitude goes to my supervisor Prof. Jonathan Kamwi for his support and guidance throughout the study. I would also like to thank Janet Matota from IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation) for her support. I extend my gratitude to my translators who helped make the interviews run efficiently.

REFERENCES

Hoole, A., & Berkes, F. (2010). Breaking down fences: Recoupling social-ecological systems for biodiversity conservation in Namibia. Geoforum, 41(2), 304–317. https://doi.org/10.1016/-j.geoforum.2009.10.009

Jones, B. T. B., & Weaver, C. L. (2009). CBNRM in Namibia: Growth, trends, lessons, and constraints. In Suich, H., Child, B., & Spenceley, A. (Eds.), Evolution and Innovation in Wildlife Conservation (pp. 223-242). Earthscan.

Naidoo, R., Weaver, L. C., De Longcamp, M., & Du Plessis, P. (2011). Namibia's community-based natural resource management programme: An unrecognized payments for ecosystem services scheme. Environmental Conservation, 38(4), 445–453. https://-doi.org/10.1017/S0376892911000476

Roe, D., Nelson, F., & Sandbrook, C. (2009). Community management of natural resources in Africa: Impacts, experiences, and future directions. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).