

Brief report on community participation at the 17th African Wildlife Consultative Forum

Victoria Falls

11-15 November 2019

Southern African Trust and Resource Africa

Introduction

The Resilient Waters Program financed¹ the participation of eight representatives from community-based natural resource management programmes and organizations from Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe at the African Wildlife Consultative Forum (hereafter AWCF) meeting from 11-15 November 2019 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. A community representative from Ethiopia would also have been supported to attend but could not get a visa on time. The funding was arranged through the Southern African Trust and Resource Africa consortium.

The AWCF is an initiative of and organized by Safari Club International Foundation (hereafter SCIF), a subsidiary of Safari Club International². AWCF was the 17th annual meeting of the forum, always held in Africa. The AWCF meeting is the only forum in Africa where governments, NGOs and - from the 17th meeting - communities share a platform equally and discussions focus on current trends and future strategies on wildlife management, sustainable utilization, and it all that it takes to enhance management and sustainability, as well as issues around making non-detriment and enhancement findings for off takes. It receives country reports from the participating governments which beyond SADC Member States of Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania include Cameroon and Uganda as well as Central African Republic, Ethiopia and the Republic of Congo (the latter three were not present at AWCF17). The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the European Commission (via internet link at AWCF17) also attend, usually the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as well, and there is thus an important opportunity to interact with them during and outside the meeting.

The decision to include community participation in the AWCF process was based on the important and explicit recognition that the future of wildlife in Africa depends on rural communities. AWCF, despite its hunting origins has over the years morphed into a forum for discussing broader wildlife conservation, management and research issues. Currently this is the only face-to-face opportunity that community members and NGOs have to interact as a group with national, regional and international hunting organizations as well as the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the European Commission, and this is crucially important. Community-based natural; resource management programmes in most of the participating

¹ This was partial financing of the costs of participation; the Resilient Waters program covered international travel costs while Safari Club International Foundation covered accommodation and meals. RW also covered the cost of an extra meeting room on the first day because inadequate meeting space was provided by the organizers.

² Safari Club International (SCI) is a membership organization based in Washington DC, United States of America representing the interests of hunters in the USA. The USA is the largest source market for hunters in Africa and SCI is the largest organization representing hunters in the USA.

African States rely heavily on hunting as a source of revenue and their interests are potentially affected by both their national governments as well as the governments of the hunting trophy importing countries.

Participation by rural communities in international processes and decisions that affect their interests is a major theme of both the Southern African Trust and Resource Africa, as well as empowering and capacitating such communities to effectively participate in such processes by enabling them to know the actors, procedures, powers and the interests of other parties. In the past months, the Southern Africa Trust, Resource Africa and NACSO have continuously collaborated with the Resilient Waters Program in mobilising and supporting representatives from community-based organisations in order for them to ensure their constant presence. Community representatives and NGOs became actively involved in national and international key events and thus in policy and decision-making processes.

Participation

The following community members were supported by the Resilient Waters Program to participate:

Namibia: Rosie Iileka, Hilma Angula

Tanzania: Sophia Masuka

Zambia: Felix Shanungu

Zimbabwe: Charles Jonga, Ishmail Chaukura, Jabulani Ndubiwa

There were three additional community representatives from Botswana and South Africa who were funded by other means.

The Resilient Waters Program also funded the attendance by Malan Lindeque of Resource Africa as technical support person for the community group.

Agenda and proceedings

The agenda for the meeting is annexed but was considerably amended in the course of the meeting but not formally re-issued. This brief report will focus on three main items only (a full report on the meeting is being prepared by SCIF and will become publicly available). The three items are 1) the main community meeting on day one (not in the draft agenda attached), 2) an interactive panel session for community representatives and 3) a final session on the way forward.

1. Community meeting

On the first day of the meeting, there were three parallel sessions, including one on community perspectives on hunting. This meeting also served as an introduction, followed by discussion, for the community representatives by Malan Lindeque to a wide range of issues centering on community interests concerning hunting and the international and national regulation thereof i.e.:

- Importance of community participation in international processes that may affect their interests in wildlife conservation and wildlife-based development, which started at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP17), continued at Cop18,

the Wildlife Economy Summit in 2019, the IUCN East and Southern African Regional Meeting in 2019, including some of the obstacles faced. The impact of this participation was discussed and the processes followed to capacitate community representatives including coaching, mentoring and media training. A core group of community representatives who had taken part in all or most of such previous events were also present at AWCF17 (S. Masuka, C. Jonga, I. Chaukura, H. Angula and R. Lileka).

- The role of hunting in the wildlife economies of southern Africa – especially rural economies - which contributes greatly (around half and in some cases nearly all) revenue that communities earn from wildlife in support of their community conservation programmes and socio-economic development (ranging from 40% to 80%) and is particularly important for community areas of little interest to tourism investors or areas with low agricultural productivity.
- International dynamics concerning the sustainable use of wildlife and hunting in particular, which are dominated by a strong international campaign to ban the import of hunting trophies into the USA and Europe and discredit the conservation benefits of hunting and community conservation programs.
- The rights of indigenous and rural people over natural resources and the obligation of international organizations to consult with affected parties which are enshrined in two important United Nations General Assembly Resolutions (which were nevertheless not supported by a number of countries such as the USA and most EU Member States), and which have also not been fully recognized and reflected in national policies and processes in African States, most of which supported these resolutions and are thus morally bound to implement them.
- Equitable benefit sharing from the use of natural resources and hunting specifically, especially a) the rights of communities that own wildlife and allow hunting to benefit equitably from the income from such hunting, and b) the need for better statistics on benefit sharing after the false yet damaging report by Born Free that e.g. in Zambia only 3% of the revenue from hunting is shared with communities.
- Empowerment of communities, i.e. encouraging community game guards to become hunting guides and professional hunters and buy stakes in hunting outfitting companies to optimize the developmental benefits from hunting, just as communities are encouraged to participate in the tourism value chain.
- Transparency in business transactions involving hunting and hunting concessions, to combat the negative perceptions that hunting involves corruption.
- The importance of ensuring sustainability of hunting offtakes and wildlife utilization in general, and the role of non-detriment or enhancement findings and the importance attached to that in CITES and the European Union Member States in particular. This includes the role of quotas and monitoring systems, also at community level.

- Modalities of engagement at AWCF17, the importance of ensuring independence and avoiding being used by any special interest group. The interactive panel session was discussed and representatives chosen to serve on that panel.
- The need for an expanded network of community organizations in Africa. The impact of community voices will be enhanced through greater collaboration and cooperation by communities at international fora. It was mentioned that SAT and RA are working to secure funding for a regional network of community organizations.

2. Interactive panel on community perspectives on hunting

With Hilma Angula of Namibia as moderator, Ishmail Chaukura, Sophia Masuka and Felix Shanungu together with a community member from Botswana (Slim Sioka) participated in a panel discussion in plenary on community perspectives on hunting, international campaigns against hunting and animals rights vs conservation, the impact of hunting bans on communities, the impact of the cessation of hunting in certain community areas in Tanzania, how communities are preparing to engage in and benefit from the re-opening of hunting in Botswana and if hunting is really sustainable and if wildlife populations affected by hunting are adequately monitored.

The panel discussion was followed by an open discussion on how to better engage communities, particularly in the CITES process but also other wildlife management decisions or governing bodies, based on the experience at CoP18 and with the government Parties present to listen to their concerns as well as their experiences with and perceptions of the hunting industry and the role of hunting in their community conservation programmes. Both moderator and panelists did very well. No complete audio or video recording could be made of the entire panel discussion but video clips of much of it are available on request.

It can be noted that separate agenda items covered current community related issues with receiving hunting revenue in Zambia (by Felix Shanungu) and current struggles with the Makuya community in South Africa regarding wildlife utilization (by Esther Netshivongweni).

3. Way forward

For the first time, the AWCF came up with a strategic action plan, as reproduced below:

“African Wildlife Consultative Forum Development of a Strategic Action Plan on Hunting, Livelihoods and Biodiversity

The following representatives from governments and wildlife agencies of Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe together with representatives from the rural communities and traditional leaders from the following countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and including representatives from the private sector, KAZA Secretariat, academia, and conservation NGOs have met in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe 11-15 November 2019 and have agreed on the following:

1) Develop a strategic action plan to advance the role of hunting in biodiversity conservation, rural development and sustainable utilization of wildlife based inter alia on the following:

- *Support the development of a network of existing CBNRM organizations*
- *Facilitate engagement between communities from Africa*
- *Facilitate engagement with priority markets*
- *Convene early preparations for engagement in international biodiversity conventions and other relevant forums*
- *Develop a communication strategy for both internal and external audiences*
- Implement a standardized monitoring system for large carnivores across the region
- *Create a supplementary voluntary payment system for habitat protection*
- Implement a standardized age-based measuring system for harvested species
- Commit to robust governance and transparency of hunting administration
- Devise a new code of best practice or ethics for hunting operations and clients
- Implement a standard long-term data collection system on hunting economics
- Draft a new agreement on hunting and biodiversity amongst like-minded African States

2) Mandate a Task Team consisting of volunteers (TBA) to produce a first draft of the action plan referred in point (1) above by the end of March 2020 coordinated by SCIF's Conservation Manager.

The contributions of representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, European Commission and international experts is appreciated”.

In this decision of AWCF17, the items that have a direct bearing on community interests have been italicized, i.e. six out of the twelve action items. This is very encouraging and can be expected to hold significant positive impacts for community interests in wildlife conservation and development.

Conclusion

Finally, the CBNRM representatives also participated throughout the week's agenda on other issues. In conclusion, the community participation at AWCF17 was a resounding success and will be a permanent part of the agenda of future AWCFs in future.

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Annex: AWCF17 agenda