

COMMUNITY LEADERS NETWORK

2023 - 2030

STRATEGIC PLAN



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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY LEADERS NETWORK

The Community Leaders Network (CLN) is a collaborative grouping of rural representatives from across the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It derives its membership from national CBNRM associations from within Southern Africa as well as strategic partners that promote sustainable resource utilisation.

CLN was created after the inaugural African Wildlife Summit, which was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in 2019. At this summit, community leaders noted the need to have one voice when dealing with community rights on natural resources in Southern Africa.

It is a voluntary association constituted under the Namibian common laws, formally instituted in October 2021 in Windhoek, Namibia. CLN is governed by an executive board, and has a Secretariat based in Windhoek, Namibia, run by a small core team.

This strategy describes the pathway to impact that CLN will take over the next six years, in alignment with its vision and mission. This document also lays out a plan for achieving these goals through programme management and strategic fundraising.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our vision is indigenous people and local communities in Southern Africa with resilient livelihoods, exercising their protected rights to sustainably manage land and natural resources.

Our mission is to strengthen national structures in Southern Africa so that they can effectively govern and enable community based sustainable natural resource management.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



DR RODGERS LUBILO

As we embark on this transformative journey with the CLN, I am pleased to present the strategic plan for 2023-2030. Our commitment to empowering communities, conserving natural resources, and fostering sustainable livelihoods is central to our vision. Throughout this ambitious roadmap, we recognize that good governance is not only necessary, but also critical to achieving our mission.

We recognize that effective governance entails not only making sound decisions, but also responsibly managing the resources entrusted to us. We commit to prudent resource allocation, tracking performance metrics, and learning and adapting to evolving challenges and opportunities in this plan.

As we strive to uphold the principles of good governance within CLN, we are acutely aware of our responsibilities to the communities we serve. Our commitment extends beyond organisational boundaries, encompassing a dedication to ethical practices, integrity, and meaningful engagement with those who depend on our support.

CLN has evolved into a beacon of hope and inspiration for countless communities in Southern Africa over the past few years. As we move forward, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to engaging with all stakeholders. We recognize that everyone's voice contains invaluable insights and perspectives. We will work together to create a shared vision in which all members of the CLN community actively participate in decision-making processes and contribute to the achievement of our objectives.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the entire CLN community, including our dedicated staff, partners, and beneficiaries, for your unwavering commitment to this noble cause, particularly Jamma International and Resource Africa. Your drive and determination fuel our common goal and inspire us to strive for nothing less than excellence.

Let us march forward with determination, guided by good governance principles, and unwavering in our pursuit of a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

Sincerely,

Rodgers Lubilo, PhD
Chairperson
Community Leaders Network



COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUSTAINABLY MANAGING OUR WILD RESOURCES

Throughout Africa, more than seventy percent of rural people rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. Our knowledge, skills and experience of sustainably managing our wild resources, in existence before colonialism and post-independence, have come to be known as Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM).

Community conservation in Southern Africa, particularly through Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programs, has gained significant traction as a conservation approach that involves local communities in managing and benefiting from natural resources. These programs have established a strong relationship between governments and communities in the region, fostering collaborative efforts towards sustainable resource management.

Across Southern Africa, CBNRM programs have demonstrated the importance of collaboration between governments, local communities, and external stakeholders. They have enabled communities to benefit from natural resources, encouraged conservation efforts, and fostered sustainable livelihoods. Challenges remain, including the need for effective governance, equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and capacity building, but overall, community conservation has emerged as a promising model for conservation and sustainable development in the region.

At the country level, there are many differences in how CBNRM is being implemented, influenced by laws and policies, as well as by the history and structure of community representation across each country.

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At the country level, there are many differences in how CBNRM is currently being implemented, influenced by laws and policies, as well as by the history and structure of community representation across each country. Overall, CBRM In Southern Africa is organised around ensuring that local communities derive equal and tangible benefits from sustainable resource management.

The benefits of CBNRM encompass revenue-sharing from ecotourism, trophy hunting, and sustainable utilisation activities. It also provides incentives like market access, technical aid, and capacity-building to endorse sustainable practices.

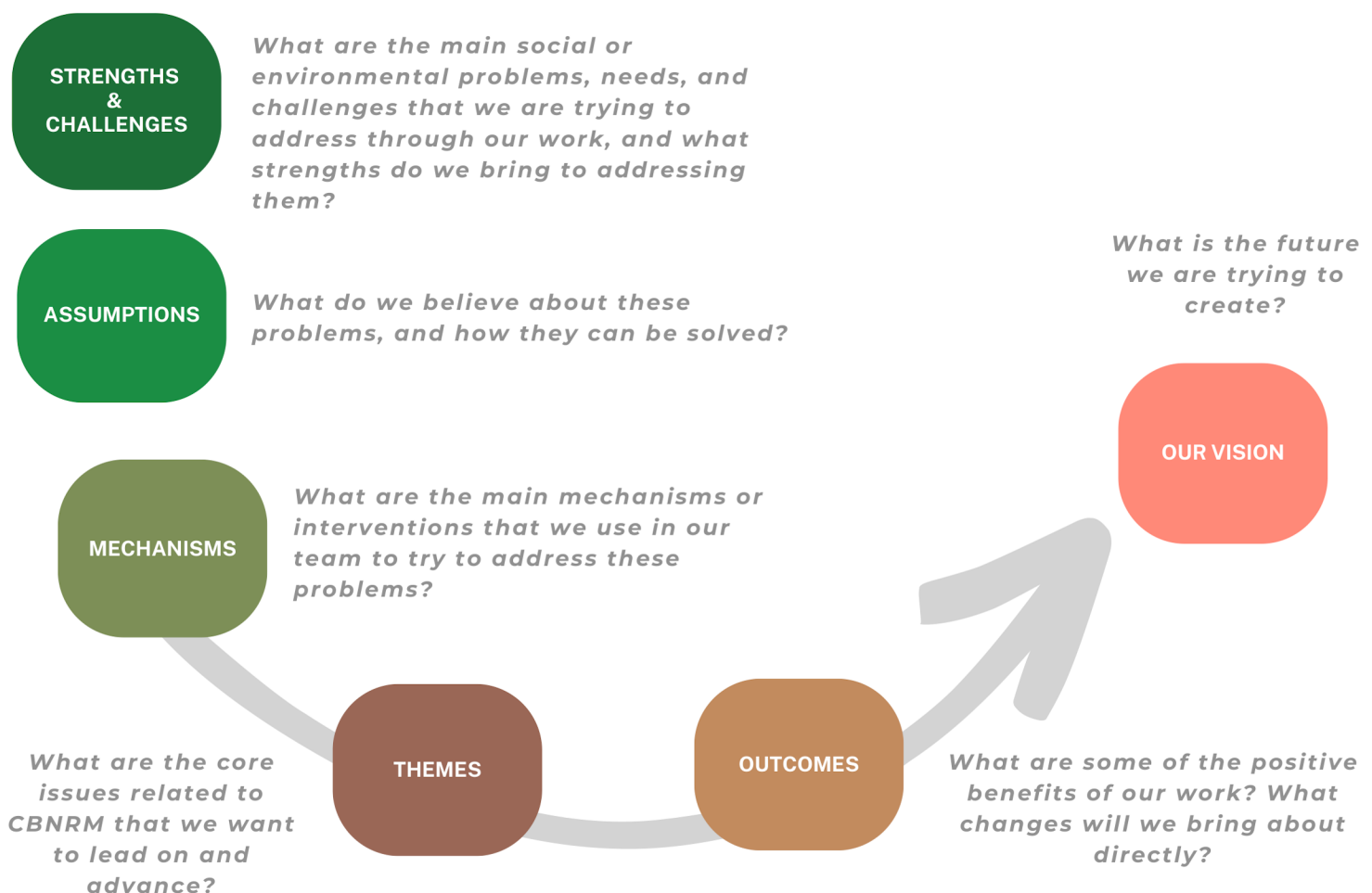
CBNRM PROGRAMS EMPHASISE DEVOLVING RIGHTS OVER NATURAL RESOURCES TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF LANDS, FORESTS, WILDLIFE, AND FISHERIES. MOREOVER, THESE INITIATIVES FOSTER COMMUNITY-BASED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES CRUCIAL IN DECISION-MAKING FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CLN THEORY OF CHANGE

THE CLN THEORY OF CHANGE FORMS THE FOUNDATION OF ITS SIX-YEAR STRATEGY

A Theory of Change is a methodology for planning, participation, adaptive management, and evaluation that is used to promote successful social change. It describes the pathway that CLN will follow to achieve a desired impact. During a strategy workshop held in Johannesburg in May 2023, the CLN Board and some community representatives worked together on a Theory of Change for the organisation, beginning with the refining of CLN's vision and mission.

Behind this strategy is a set of internal strategy documents to guide operations, including a detailed Theory of Change, a programme framework, a three year programmatic costing, an analysis of the funding landscape, and a one year action plan.



CHALLENGES

CLN IS WELL POSITIONED TO ADDRESS SOME CORE CHALLENGES RELATED TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.



Increased centralization of natural resource

governance can undermine local communities, who should directly benefit from locally available resources. Differing land rights and their enforcement vary widely across different regions and countries. In some places land ownership is clearly defined and protected by law, while in others, customary or communal land tenure systems are the norm. This can lead to conflicts over land use and ownership, particularly when these different systems interact. Additionally, the enforcement of land rights can be weak or non-existent in some areas, leaving vulnerable communities at risk of displacement or exploitation by more powerful interests.



Limited representation of local communities in

important decision-making platforms leads to increased marginalisation of African voices in national, regional and international fora. Even though Africa is home to a significant proportion of the world's population and faces a range of complex and pressing challenges, African perspectives are often overlooked or marginalised in global decision-making processes around conservation, climate change and natural resource management. This reinforces existing power imbalances. Addressing this issue requires increased and concerted efforts to amplify African voices and perspectives, promote greater participation and inclusion in international decision making bodies, and support the development of African-led initiatives and solutions to global challenges.



CHALLENGES



The limited resourcing and capacity of CBNRM programmes

is a significant concern for CLN. CBNRM programs are designed to ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources by involving local communities in decision-making processes. However, these programs frequently grapple with insufficient resources and a lack of capacity, hindering their ability to fulfil their mandates effectively. Consequently, community engagement suffers, conservation efforts are hampered in their efficacy, and power imbalances persist between local communities and external entities. To address this pressing issue, a pivotal step involves amplifying investment in CBNRM programmes. This entails providing robust support for community-led initiatives and capacity-building endeavours that empower efficient decision-making, meticulous planning, and the successful implementation of conservation activities.



Increased food, energy, and livelihood insecurity

poses significant challenges in SADC countries. High levels of food and livelihood insecurity, exacerbated by energy insecurity, are widespread issues. The region's young and growing population faces vulnerability to unemployment, limited access to education, and healthcare. Moreover, women often experience social and economic inequality, including gender-based violence. Consequently, our CLN project prioritizes gender and youth concerns, integrating them throughout our activities.



CHALLENGES



Elite capture exacerbates the challenge of poor management and benefit sharing of natural resources. For communities living in or near rural and wilderness areas, these resources are essential for survival, providing sustenance and income through ecotourism, foraging, and hunting. However, governments and businesses often fail to equitably distribute the benefits from the sale or utilization of these resources. To address this issue, the region must explore and promote innovative benefit sharing models that ensure fair and inclusive distribution of benefits to the local communities.



Increased loss of lives, livestock and crops due to human wildlife conflict is a pressing issue for CLN. This conflict is fuelled by factors like habitat loss, encroachment into wildlife areas, resource competition, and predatory attacks on livestock or crops. The impact is far-reaching, leading to economic losses for farmers and posing threats to human safety and wildlife populations. Effective mitigation approaches, including habitat restoration, community education, and the use of deterrents, can foster coexistence between humans and wildlife and reduce conflict incidents. However, these strategies are often limited to specific areas, necessitating broader regional sharing of best practices and experiences to address the issue comprehensively.



STRENGTHS

CLN draws on many existing strengths, including the CLN Secretariat already established in Namibia, with a growing core team of diverse expertise. Additionally, CLN has strong national membership, and a dedicated Board, who are actively engaged and invested in network activities. It is this level of passion and interest which this strategy will leverage over the next six years.

Critically, CLN's membership represents a wide and deep range of perspectives, technical skill sets and indigenous knowledge related to CBNRM. There is no other regional network of its kind which gathers knowledge and expertise in the same way. This makes CLN ideally positioned to raise funds for, design and test innovative approaches to CBNRM, providing thought leadership for Africa, as well as more broadly for indigenous people and local communities in the Global South.

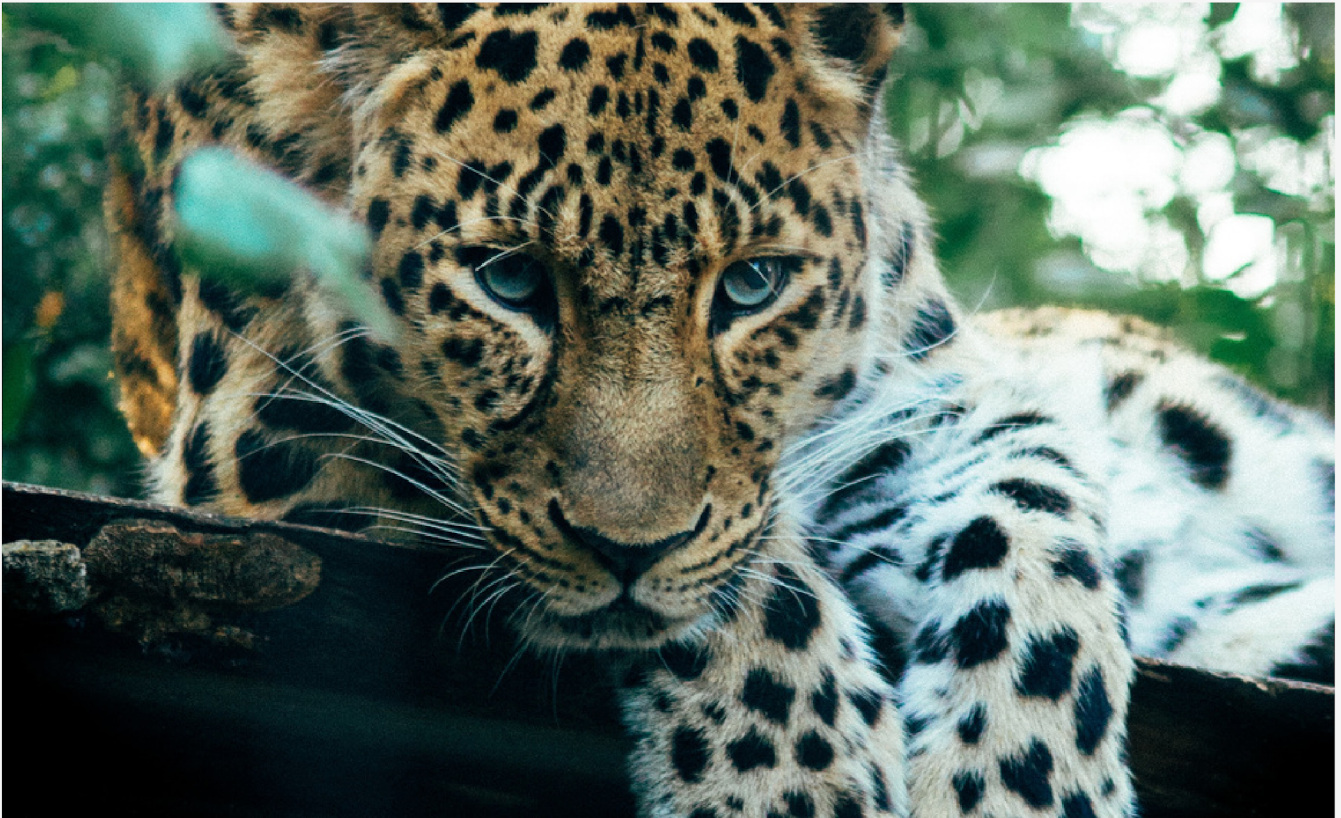
ASSUMPTIONS

There are a few key principles underlying this strategy, drawn from the collective experience of the CLN leadership team and members:

- Our activities must be informed by the needs of indigenous people and local communities.
- Establishing strong regional foundations will open the door to broader African networks and enable knowledge sharing.
- We need to understand the different national challenges, strengths, and opportunities properly to provide appropriate support.
- We need to be inclusive of marginalised voices.

MECHANISMS

CLN HAS IDENTIFIED FOUR KEY MECHANISMS FOR ADDRESSING THE KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY THEIR MEMBERS, ACROSS SOUTHERN AFRICA.



CLN has identified four key mechanisms for addressing the challenges faced by their members, across Southern Africa.

Our mechanisms for creating change over the next six years include:

MECHANISM 1: Govern CLN and mobilise resources

MECHANISM 2: Strengthen national CBNRM associations

MECHANISM 3: Advocate and communicate

MECHANISM 4: Design and test new CBRM financing models

**CLN'S KEY
MECHANISMS FOR
CHANGE ARE
UNPACKED INTO KEY
OBJECTIVES,
ACTIVITIES, AND
INDICATORS OF
SUCCESS**

MECHANISM 1: GOVERN CLN AND MOBILISE RESOURCES

The first mechanism identified by CLN aims to strengthen the governance of the network and enhance its capacity to mobilise resources across Southern Africa. This involves establishing effective governance structures, including clarity on roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms. CLN recognizes the importance of transparency, inclusivity, and active participation of its members in shaping the direction and priorities of the network. By fostering strong governance, CLN can effectively coordinate and collaborate with stakeholders, attract funding and resources, and ensure the efficient allocation and utilisation of resources to address the challenges faced by its members.

OBJECTIVE: TO STRENGTHEN CLN MANAGEMENT AND INCREASE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Key outcome: strengthened (well-funded and governed) regional CBNRM network

CLN aims to mobilize adequate financial resources to sustain its operations and initiatives. This will involve engaging with potential donors, exploring partnerships with funding agencies, and developing sustainable funding models. By securing sufficient funding, CLN can ensure the continuity of its activities, support its members' projects and initiatives, and promote the implementation of CBNRM practices throughout the region. In terms of governance, CLN is currently in the process of establishing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for their Board, as well as refining the management processes of their broader office and staff, so that best practices can be upheld.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Design and recruit inclusive and representative Secretariat team.
- Formalise governance structures.
- Establish SOPs.
- Establish fundraising strategy and system for funding core CLN activities.
- Approach funders and manage funder relationships.
- Comply with governance protocols.
- Coordinate engagement around key CBNRM themes regionally, and produce position papers and funder concept notes.



MECHANISM 2: STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CBNRM ASSOCIATIONS

CLN recognizes the importance of supporting and building the capacity of national CBNRM associations, as they play a crucial role in advocating for CBNRM at the national level and driving sustainable development initiatives in their respective countries. Under this mechanism, CLN aims to provide strategic support and resources to national CBNRM associations, enabling them to effectively deliver on their mandates. This support may include hosting various capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, and sharing of best practices and lessons learned. CLN will work closely with national associations to enhance their organisational structures, governance systems, and operational capabilities.

OBJECTIVE: TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CBNRM ASSOCIATIONS

Key outcome: Increased capacity of national representative organisations to deliver on CBNRM at a national level

By strengthening the capacity of national CBNRM associations, CLN aims to enhance their ability to advocate for policy changes, engage with relevant stakeholders, and implement CBNRM initiatives that benefit local communities and the environment. This will be achieved through a range of supportive activities, including training programs, workshops, and mentoring opportunities tailored to the specific needs of national CBNRM associations. CLN will also facilitate knowledge exchange and networking platforms, enabling associations to learn from each other's experiences and build collaborative partnerships.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Undertake national CBNRM needs analysis to identify key needs, risks and opportunities for each member country.
- Develop a regional governance and management toolkit, responding to national needs analysis that draws on existing materials and best practices regionally and internationally.
- Develop the governance capacity of country focal points/ champions through:
 - technical training (informed by needs analysis);
 - peer-to-peer knowledge exchange (by connecting colleagues with similar challenges); and
 - support for development of national CBNRM action frameworks and fundraising plans.
- Host annual regional meetings to encourage regional knowledge sharing and institutional learning based on collaborative dialogue.
- Support national-level data management and consolidate into regional M&I databases.



MECHANISM 3: ADVOCATE AND COMMUNICATE

CLN recognizes that effective advocacy and communication efforts are essential for shaping national and international CBNRM strategies and policies, as well as amplifying the voices of communities involved in CBNRM initiatives in local, regional, and international forums. By facilitating the participation of local leaders in various platforms and opportunities, CLN will enable community perspectives to be better considered in policy formulation and implementation.

OBJECTIVE: TO ADVOCATE FOR THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORA

Key outcomes:

- **Strengthened national and international CBNRM strategies and policies**
- **Amplification of community voices and influence in national, regional and international discussions**

A key outcome under this mechanism is the strengthening of national and international CBNRM strategies and policies. CLN aims to actively engage in policy dialogue, influencing decision-makers at various levels to integrate CBNRM principles into relevant frameworks and guidelines. By advocating for the recognition and support of CBNRM, CLN strives to ensure that these strategies and policies align with the needs and aspirations of local communities and contribute to sustainable natural resource management. We also recognise that the perspectives, needs and concerns of indigenous people and local communities deserve to be heard both locally and internationally, and have valuable inputs to make into global debates. CLN's role is to creatively support and enable this process.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Develop a CLN advocacy strategy, aligned to CLN Thought Leadership areas and national CBNRM priorities. This will inform:
 - Hosting of conferences, potentially with partners across the Global South
 - International visits and representation within SADC countries, across the region and globally.
 - Key regional and international policy gaps to be addressed through policy analysis and influencing.
- Train CLN team on advocacy and lobbying and communication techniques.
- Assist national associations to develop advocacy strategies (including identifying key national policy gaps), to be executed in partnership with indigenous people and local communities.
- Build alliances with regional and international media, in alignment with the CLN advocacy strategy, and co-publish stories, podcasts and other influencing materials around key CBNRM issues.
- Allocate resources to community-level advocacy work, generated through CLN fundraising activities under Objective 1.

MECHANISM 4: DESIGN AND TEST NEW CBNRM FINANCING MODELS

Current funding for CBNRM is insufficient to address the significant needs of local communities, both to manage wildlife and to enable secure, dignified livelihoods. Large scale funding is required to achieve sustainable, systemic change, and support the resilience of marginalised communities in the face of climate change and other environmental disasters. CLN recognizes the need for innovative funding mechanisms to support CBNRM initiatives effectively. By exploring and piloting new financing models, CLN aims to improve the availability and accessibility of funding for CBNRM projects across the Southern Africa region.

OBJECTIVE: DESIGN AND TEST INNOVATIVE MODELS AND APPROACHES FOR FINANCING CBNRM IN THE REGION

Key outcome: Improved CBNRM funding mechanisms regionally

CLN intends to work creatively with the international funding community to explore and establish innovative mechanisms for CBNRM financing in the region. This innovative work will require new partnerships across government, regional bodies, the donor community, private sector, and international development agencies.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Analyse existing financing mechanisms for CBNRM and identify international best practice examples.
- Establish discussion fora around innovating financing mechanisms and brainstorm and ideate mechanisms suitable to the region.
- Develop a national framework/ position paper for CBNRM financing.
- Identify and engage major CBNRM funders to partner with CLN around regional investment priorities and mechanisms. Potentially through an investor conference or similar.
- Conceptualise and establish a CBNRM Catalyst Fund, as a mechanism for funding.
- Identify and recruit investors from across the donor, impact investment, and private sector communities to invest in the Catalyst Fund.



THEMATIC AREAS

CLN HAS PINPOINTED SEVERAL KEY AREAS OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, AROUND WHICH COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS WILL BE FOCUSED TO DEVELOP AND PILOT INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS.

01

Governance and rights



Recognising and protecting community rights and tenure over natural resources.

02

Sustainable livelihoods



Promoting sustainable livelihoods, empower local communities, and contributing to the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems.

03

Conservation and CBNRM



Preserving species and ecosystems in ways that bring economic opportunities directly benefit local people and indigenous communities.

04

Financing mechanisms



Promoting innovative financing models across all its member countries to develop sustainable livelihood initiatives.

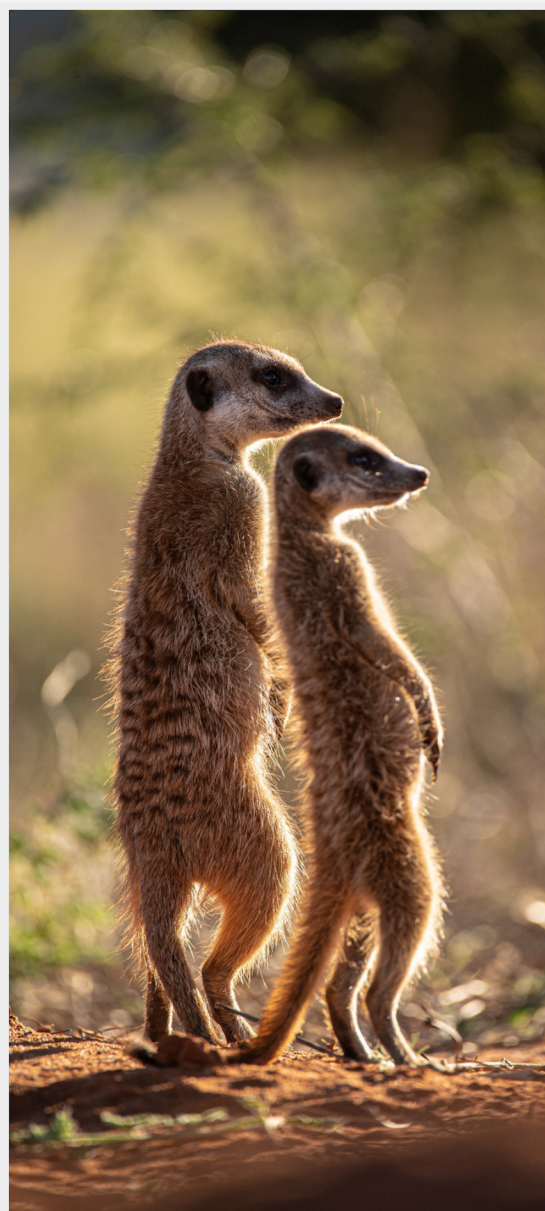


MEASURING SUCCESS AND LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Robust mechanisms for measuring success and learning from experience will be implemented to ensure the effectiveness of this strategic plan. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed to track progress toward strategic goals. The impact of CLN initiatives will be tracked and used to make informed decisions through regular evaluations and data-driven assessments. Furthermore, CLN remains dedicated to fostering a learning culture in which experiences and good practices from within the organization and from external partners, are shared and incorporated into future planning.

DEVELOPING A REGIONAL APPROACH TO MONITORING

CLN's regionally focused Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategy entails harmonizing data collection across participating countries to capture collective progress. CLN ensures consistent measurement of outcomes and impacts across the region by establishing standardized indicators and methodologies. Regional meetings on a regular basis facilitate data sharing, learning, and collaborative analysis. CLN will identify regional trends, share best practices, and adapt its strategies. Furthermore, leveraging technology and digital platforms allows for real-time data aggregation and remote reporting, increasing the efficiency of regional M&E processes. CLN can effectively assess the broader impact of its initiatives across multiple countries through this coordinated effort, contributing to informed decision-making and targeted improvements.



SUSTAINABILITY

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Fundraising for CBNRM can be challenging, given the competitive nature of conservation and development funding.

CLN has the joint challenge of ensuring sustainability of the Secretariat and core activities, while generating resources and benefits for its extensive network of member associations. It is therefore critical that we ensure that all of CLNs time and resources are strategically invested. Fundraising is a core activity, and envisioned as central to the work of the Board and the CLN Secretariat team. This will be reflected in CLN's SOPs, and related systems and processes under development.

CLN has undertaken a comprehensive funding landscape analysis, identifying potential national and international donors and investors across government and intergovernmental agencies, foundations, and corporations. These relationships will be developed and managed by the Secretariat and the Board, as part of a structured programme of fundraising activities.

Innovative financing is a key strategy for generating funding beyond the operational needs of CLN as an organisation. This will require partnership development beyond the traditional conservation and development donor community, building alliances and financing mechanisms across government, private sector, and intergovernmental agencies.

We consider our funders to be partners in our endeavours, and value their input. We are also working to actively influence funder agendas and investments in Southern Africa, towards the interests of the indigenous people and local communities in the region.

Investing in CBNRM provides substantial rewards; it not only shields and advances ecosystems and the human lives intertwined within them, but also serves as a powerful tool for rectifying historical injustices from colonisation, where natural resources were unjustly seized from indigenous populations and communities. This commitment, therefore, carries an extraordinary potential for meaningful change.





WE WELCOME YOUR PARTNERSHIP

IT TAKES A VILLAGE - WE CANNOT ACHIEVE OUR
IMPACT WITHOUT OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

CONTACT US

+26461 230 888
19 Lossen Street,
Ausspannplatz,
Windhoek
info@communityln.org

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www.communityleadersnetwork.org