



Creating income while wildlife is protected

The Kavango-Zambesi Transfrontier Conservation Area is a joint project of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The key objective is to join fragmented wildlife habitats into an interconnected mosaic of protected areas and transboundary wildlife corridors and at the same time to improve livelihoods of the rural communities through creating alternative income in the tourism sector.

The Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) is situated in the Okavango and Zambezi river basins, where the borders of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe converge. It spans an area of approximately 287,132 square kilometres, almost the size of Italy, and includes 36 national parks,

Alan Sparrow
Coordinator
Peace Parks Foundation
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
sparrow.alan@gmail.com

game reserves, community conservancies and game management areas. Most notably, the area will include the Caprivi Strip, Chobe National Park, the Okavango Delta and the Victoria Falls (World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World). The Okavango Delta belongs to the Ramsar Sites – wetlands of international importance. In fact, it is the largest Ramsar Site world-wide. The KAZA TFCA promises to be Southern Africa's premier tourist destination with the largest contiguous population of the African elephant (approximately 250,000) in the continent. Conserva-

tion and tourism are therefore seen as the vehicle for socio-economic development of the region.

In December 2006, the ministers of environment and tourism from Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia met at the Victoria Falls to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area. This ceremonial event was the culmination of two years of preparation during which key stakeholders were consulted to secure support for linking the protected areas in the five countries.



Photo: K. van der Lende

The key objective of the Kaza TFCA is to join fragmented wildlife habitats into an interconnected mosaic of protected areas and transboundary wildlife corridors, which will facilitate and enhance the free movement of animals across international boundaries. This in turn will promote improved livelihoods of rural communities that struggle to make a living through conventional farming.

The main focus is on the creation of employment opportunities, skills development, the attraction of foreign investment, poverty reduction, and an increase in wildlife numbers.

The following broad management objectives are key to attaining the vision, mission and objectives of the Kaza TFCA :

- the conservation of key biodiversity features, landscapes and cultural resources;
- the development of new business opportunities in the natural and cultural environment;
- the provision of socio-economic benefits to communities surrounding the National Parks and protected forests

through community/private sector joint ventures;

- the formation of business partnerships between private business and local communities based on the sustainable management of natural resources.

To ensure a viable wildlife population in protected areas, it is critical that agricultural projects be planned for communities that neighbour these areas. Current agricultural practices have a negative environmental impact and produce low yields, since much of the area falls within the lowest agricultural potential soils region in the Kaza TFCA.

■ Community-based tourism in and around protected areas

Conservation planning is often done by conservationists, ecologists and scientists with little or no involvement of affected stakeholders such as local communities, traditional authorities, tourism investors and operators. This approach leads to resentment, distrust, and resistance. The overall aim is to reduce dependency on natural resources by broadening livelihood options for local communities through aspects such as tourism, hunting and low volume/high value timber utilisation. Specific goals are to develop joint ventures in the tourism and timber industry between the private sector and the community sector.

The Caprivi Strip in Namibia. One example of community-based tourism can be found in the Caprivi Strip in Namibia. Over ten years ago, conservation-based NGOs began to work with government support to establish Community Wildlife Conservancies in the Caprivi Strip. The communities partnered with the private sector to establish tourism business ventures in hunting and photographic tourism. Communities that once relied on conventional agriculture now benefit from a viable wildlife population and the resulting

increase in tourism revenues. Communities living within and near to the Bwabwata National Park now jealously guard their wildlife resource.

The Simalaha Community Wildlife Conservancy. The three countries of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe have an elephant population of nearly 250,000. The Kaza TFCA project in Zambia has negotiated with traditional leaders (chiefs) and their communities to create new Community Wildlife Conservancies, which will, in turn, create space for elephants from south of the Zambezi River to move north into new areas with very few elephants. Two chiefs have combined forces to make available a joint area of what was formerly community farming land to establish the Simalaha Community Wildlife Conservancy. This is a groundbreaking project which will allow communities to offer tourism concessions on their own community land to private sector tour operators and to enter into joint venture business partnerships.

The Simalaha Community Wildlife Conservancy will establish a land link between the protected areas in the Caprivi Strip in Namibia and the Chobe area in Botswana which will allow elephants and other wildlife species to re-establish the old elephant migration routes between the Zambezi River and the Kafue National Park, one of the largest National Parks in Southern Africa. Communities have driven the process of planning and development of the new Community Conservancy.

The Ngonye Falls Community Park. Another innovative community tourism initiative in Zambia has been the recent establishment of the Ngonye Falls Community Park. Communities have set aside land to create the new park around the Ngonye Falls, which are the second highest waterfalls on the Zambezi River. There, the communities have identified tourism lodge sites and have offered them out to the private sector tourism industry.



Photo: K. van der Lende

One of the main objectives of Kaza TFCA is to create enough "elephant friendly" space and allow elephants to move between countries.

Donors have committed funds to rehabilitating the management of protected areas such as the Sioma Ngwezi National Park in western Zambia as well as the community-driven tourism project that has established the Simalaha Community Wildlife Conservancy.

■ The role of the elephant in improving community livelihoods

Elephants are a keystone species in the Kaza TFCA and a major economic resource. Tourism is Botswana's second largest industry and has created 60,000 jobs. It is an industry worth 1 billion US dollars (USD) annually. Elephants contribute 20,000 000 USD towards those earnings.

The creation of space for elephants in the countries of Angola and Zam-

bia will provide the foundation for the tourism ventures being set up by rural communities. Research has shown that elephants are indeed moving out of the Caprivi Strip, Namibia and Chobe, and Botswana into south-eastern Angola and south-western Zambia.

Almost 50 percent of all African elephants occur in the three countries of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Nearly all of those occur south and west of the Zambezi River. The aim of the Kaza TFCA is to create enough "elephant friendly" space north and east of the Zambezi so that the overpopulated elephant populations in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe can move into Angola and Zambia, where elephant numbers are low.

For the past few years, the NGO *Elephant without Borders* has collared elephants in Botswana and tracked their movements. An elephant called *Rainbow Spirit* was collared in the Okavango Delta. Satellite tracking has shown that *Rainbow Spirit* moved north through the Caprivi Strip and up the Kwando River before veering north-west into the Luiana National Park in south-eastern Angola.

The potential for the rural communities to benefit from wildlife, tourism and indigenous woodlands in the Kavango Zambezi TFCA is very good.

Zusammenfassung

Im Dezember 2006 weihten die Minister für Umwelt und Fremdenverkehr von Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Sambia und Simbabwe die Kavango-Zambesi Transfrontier Conservation Area (Kaza TFCA) ein. Das Gebiet ist fast so groß wie Italien und umfasst 36 Nationalparks und Wildreservate. Hauptziel ist es, zersiedelte Habitats miteinander zu verbinden, Korridore für die grenzüberschreitende Tierwanderung zu erschließen und die Lebensbedingungen der ländlichen Gemeinden durch die Förderung des Tourismus, z. B. mit Übernachtungen, Jagd, Safaris usw. zu verbessern. Das Konzept beinhaltet auch Partnerschaften zwischen

ländlichen Gemeinden und dem privaten Sektor für den Schutz der Naturressourcen, die Tourismusförderung und Holznutzung. Naturschutz und Tourismus werden als Grundlagen für die sozioökonomische Entwicklung der Region gesehen.

Resumen

En diciembre de 2006, los ministros del medio ambiente y de turismo de Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia y Zimbabwe instituyeron el Área de Conservación Transfronteriza Kavango-Zambesi (Kavango-Zambesi Transfrontier Conservation Area – Kaza TFCA). Abarca una superficie casi equivalente a la de Italia e incluye 36 parques nacionales y reservas

de animales silvestres. Los principales objetivos consisten en unificar hábitats fragmentados de vida silvestre, abrir corredores para la migración transfronteriza de animales silvestres y promover mejores condiciones de vida en las comunidades rurales mediante el fomento de las actividades turísticas como el hospedaje, la caza, las excursiones, etc. El concepto del TFCA también contempla la cooperación entre las comunidades rurales y el sector privado para la conservación de los recursos naturales, el desarrollo del turismo y la explotación maderera. Por lo tanto, la conservación y el turismo se consideran un medio para el desarrollo socioeconómico de la región.