

The Event Book System: a community-based natural resource monitoring system from Namibia

GREG STUART-HILL^{1,2,*}, RICHARD DIGGLE^{1,3},
BEVAN MUNALI^{1,3}, JO TAGG^{1,4} and DAVID WARD^{1,5}

1Natural Resource Working Group, Namibian Association of Conservancy Support organizations

2World Wildlife Fund, LIFE Project, P.O. Box 9681, Windhoek, Namibia

3Integrated Rural Development & Nature Conservation, P.O. Box 24050, Windhoek, Namibia

4Ministry of Environment & Tourism, P. Bag Box 13306, Windhoek, Namibia

5Namibian Nature Foundation, P.O. Box 245, Windhoek, Namibia

**Author for correspondence (e-mail: gregshill@bigpond.com.au)*

Abstract. Namibia's Community Based Natural Resource Management program is a joint venture between government, national non-governmental organisations and rural communities. A component of the program involves communities in monitoring various aspects of their conservancy, ranging from wildlife numbers, through economic returns, to patrolling records and infringements of the rules. A main feature of community monitoring is the Event Book System, which differs from conventional monitoring in that the community dictates what needs to be monitored, and scientists only facilitate the design process and conservancy members undertake all data analysis. The system has been adopted with good results by more than 30 communal conservancies in Namibia, covering almost seven million ha, and is now also being piloted in six national parks. Continued emphasis is needed on enhancing community interpretation and use of data for active adaptive management, particularly where conservancy leaders are transient due to the democratic nature of local organizations. Moreover, because the system is driven by local priorities, it does not cover all aspects of a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring programme. Where society deems other biodiversity values worth monitoring, conservancies must either be willingly persuaded to act on this, or external systems must be established to cater for these needs. If a community already has a monitoring system of its own, a win-win solution might be for the community to be sub-contracted to undertake these 'external modules' on behalf of national agencies.

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