

Namibian Coast Conservation and Management Project

N A C O M A



Namibian Coast

The Namibian coast line stretches for 8,9=1 -m between the Orange River in the south on the northwestern border of South Africa and in the north to the Kunene River on the southern border of Angola. The whole length of the coastline falls within the Namib desert and is flanked by the rich Benguela current of the Atlantic ocean. Much of the coast falls within restricted mining and conservation areas.

The coastline is characterised by sandy dune beaches with isolated outcrops, including a few significant lagoons, estuaries and riverbeds. Wetlands of note along the coast include the Ealvis Bay lagoon and Sandwich harbour.



Although the area receives very low rainfall the inhabited areas of Etosha, Swakopmund, Ealvis Bay and Hereritz are often blanketed by a fog belt, which is an important source of moisture for coastal plant life such as the welwitschia and the lichen fields.

Biodiversity

Due to its isolated location, between the sea climate of the ocean and arid escarpment, it has remained a relatively stable centre for the evolution of numerous desert species. Migratory birds include intra-African greater and lesser flamingos, and Palaearctic migrant species like sea and shorebirds.

Species of conservational concern include the African Masked Booby, the African Penguin and the African Tern.



African Penguins

The African Tern, endemic to southwestern Africa, is endangered with approximately 10% of the world population found along the Namibian coast. African Penguins have significant breeding sites along the Namibian southern coast.

The Namibian marine environment is remarkable in many ways. It is exceptionally productive, supporting abundant marine life, and its habitats are relatively pristine, without threat of significant habitat degradation.

Overfishing is a major threat and there is urgent need for protection of marine and coastal habitats. Marine species that are harvested for commercial purposes include a variety of fish namely hake, sardine, anchovy, orange roughy, horse mackerel, snapper, tuna, rock lobster, red crab and other molluscs.

As with the birdlife centred near the wetlands, seals, dolphins and to a lesser extent whales have become a tourist attraction.



The Namibian Southern Right whale population is showing signs of recovery.

Approximately two-thirds of the Cape fur seal global population breeds on the Namibian coast.

Human Influence

The Namibian coastal ecosystems have been relatively inaccessible to date, and there have been few opportunities for use of coastal land and resources. As a result, Namibia has an exceptionally low, and geographically very concentrated, coastal population compared to other countries.



A large diamond recovery vessel.

However, increasing pressures on these fragile ecosystems over the past several years have highlighted the urgent need for sound coastal planning and management to ensure sustainable and optimal use of coastal areas and their resources in the future.



Coastal salt mining

The main sources for economic development within the four coastal regions (Karabap, Karas, Erongo and Kunene), are resource-based. This includes a rapidly growing nature-based tourism industry, an overall expanding extractive industry (oil and gas exploration and offshore mining of minerals, although diamond mining and processing is mostly downscaling, and a strong commercial fishing industry with growing aquaculture.

;rowing economic development and human activities along the coast are leading to unprecedented migration, bringing with it uncontrolled urban development that results in overuse and land based pollution, an increase in industrial coastal and marine pollution, degradation of water regimes for coastal wetlands, and other land and water degradation.

If remaining unchecked and unplanned, this development will result in long-term loss of biodiversity, ecological functioning and, contrary to the national poverty eradication objectives, a reduction of the economic potential of the coast itself. This possibility presents a great potential challenge to the expanding nature-based tourism industry, which depends upon a healthy environment for its sustainable success.



Recreational fishermen

Tourism has proven so popular along the Namibian coast, that in high season the region's population nearly doubles as tourists from South Africa, Germany and other countries arrive to enjoy the unique and relatively pristine coastal habitats. Recreational fishing, aquatic sports, dune excursions and other off-road driving form part of the human activities that impact on the coastal environment.

Activities taking place along the coast that may impact on the coastal and marine environment as well as on the coastal population, include growing settlements, mining, fish processing, salt refining and other industries, port authorities in Ealvis Bay and Hereritz, oil exploration activities in offshore waters, uncontrolled fishing and aquaculture, uncontrolled tourism, and unplanned agriculture activities upstream from important river mouths.

Quad bikes and four wheel drive vehicles endanger the natural breeding grounds of the Damara Tern, despite efforts to educate the public.



Environmental degradation and habitat conversion can destroy the very features that draw tourists, resulting in both loss of global biodiversity and longer term local economic opportunities.

Threats to Biodiversity

While the coastal areas of Namibia are still relatively pristine, the downscaling of mining and development of alternative livelihoods, rapid urbanisation and industrial development will in the future influence the environmental and socio-economic features of the coast.

The pursuit of unsuitable economic activities in important biodiversity sites either due to a lack of legal frameworks for biodiversity conservation, weak law enforcement or inappropriate planning and zoning may also have negative impacts on the coastal zone.

There are plans underway for a harbour along the Kunene region coast. Mining has left major scars on the environment and continues to threaten key biodiversity values in protected areas in the absence of adequate zoning and strict regulations.

Most importantly, failure to develop alternative livelihoods during the mining era leads to poverty now that the industry is downscaling, which in turn will lead to people leaning more strongly on natural resources but not necessarily in sustainable ways. Because so much land has been closed to access, development and settlement pressure is exceptionally concentrated in and around the coastal townships.

All four coastal regions see the tourism sector as a priority area for regional development.



A shell collector.

While tourism activities can provide employment and an avenue for involving local communities in the region's economy through mainstreaming as well as "Community Based Tourism", they are also likely to cause migration and increased movement of people through the regions to levels that can pose obstacles to effective management of natural and cultural resources.



Mining areas that have previously been closed to public, such as the Sperrgebiet, are now perceived as potential tourism attractions that will be increasingly exploited under the new management plan.

At the same time sites of biodiversity importance such as the coastal wetlands and offshore islands that have currently no conservation status may suffer from uncontrolled developments in the absence of adequate and enforced zoning and environmental restrictions.



Cape fur seal and pup.

The current efforts towards coastal biodiversity conservation and management, including other projects such as the !"#M\$, !\$%\$&'T, S(A% and S)\$ (projects, each address some of the specific issues.

NACOMA's role

The Namibian "Coast" Conservation and Management "MA", project was conceived from the lack of an overall coastal zone management framework in Namibia and the current gaps for mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and management into policy, legal, institutional and planning structures affecting the development of the coastal zone.



Fog-basking beetle.

"MA is an integral part of government's strategy. It addresses key government sustainable development policy objectives in line with Vision 0121, 3(s and 43(s. This includes enhancing environmental planning and coordination procedures within government, protecting essential ecosystems, creating conservation areas with high levels of biodiversity, supporting the decentralization process and improving rural livelihoods and poverty reduction.

Importantly, the project provides a unique and important opportunity to make the Namibian coast and its resources more accessible for people in the coastal regions and elsewhere in the country. "MA's intervention area runs the full length of the coast, from the Kunene River to the north to the Orange River Mouth *4amsar Site, to the south.



The Bogenfels sea-arch near Lüderitz.

The western and eastern boundaries which is yet to be determined will include all identified sites of biodiversity importance, critical species habitats, coastal ecosystems and distinctive coastal landscapes, and include the main areas where current and predicted activities and development cumulatively impact on coastal ecological function and biodiversity.

It will encompass the areas most likely to be affected by the mainly nearshore activities and processes identified during "MA project preparation, e.g.7 shore and shallow water diamond mining out to a depth of 891m.

%A" + MA aims to7

- Mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and management into policy, legal, institutional and planning structures affecting the development of the coastal zone through the development of a highly participatory policy framework, the %amibian "oastal E hite (aper, which is seen as the critical element for sustainable ecosystem management of the %amibian coast.
- Support the implementation of coastal elements of the ;overnment.s environmental strategy stipulated in its %ational !iodiversity Strategy and Action (lan *% !SA(,
- Deliver long-term socioeconomic benefits by supporting investment in sustainable management and the use of coastal areas and resources and improving the flow of benefits from such resources, especially to coastal communities.
- Streamline planning and decision-making affecting the coast, ensure policy consistency and establish a strong framework- for intersectoral and intergovernmental coordination.
- "omplement other programmes such as the !"#M\$ programme under which several Ministries already collaborate.
- Assist national implementation of !"#M\$ recommendations and actions plans and make effective use of scientific data compiled under that programme.
- Identify overlaps, conflicts and necessary adjustments of current coastal related policies and laws. Clarifies and harmonise mandates of -ey players. Strengthens interministerial and interagency coordination at all levels. and ensures more cost-effective use of national, regional and local budget.
- Through capacity-building and training, to mainstream biodiversity considerations into different sectors. policies and decision-making and play a stronger role in sustainable coastal planning



Mercury Island, Spencer Bay.

- Increase knowledge and understanding of coastal biodiversity and development issues amongst policy-makers, local authorities and coastal communities through communication and public awareness campaigns.

The project is highly country-driven. It is based on a number of previous projects and initiatives, e.g. " : M (project in the \$rongo 4egion and was developed by the four coastal 4egional "ouncils with full support from M4# ; <43 and M\$T. The preparation process provided for extensive intersectoral stakeholder consultations across the four regions, including national and local government.

%A" + MA has been designed to integrate the main elements of sustainability -institutional, financial, environmental and -knowledge, at the national, regional and local levels. In addition, because the most effective way to achieve sustainability is to provide defined incentives to involved stakeholders, the project design aims to balance incentives and interests of the different stakeholders through its four components and implementation arrangements.

Contacts

For more information, queries and collaborations please contact7

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