



OUR RESOURCES OUR RIGHTS

Our Vision is

socially and economically resilient rural southern African people whose livelihoods are grounded in their rights to sustainably use their natural resources supported by international respect for their existing governance systems.

Our Mission is to ensure that the voices of rural African people are heard and influence international, regional and national public and policy making process's that affect our rights and abilities to sustainably manage those natural resources on which our livelihoods depend.

Guiding principles

- Inter-generational equity, engagement and commitment
- Compassion for people and nature
- Sustainable utilisation and development
- Open dialogue and cooperation
- Transparency and accountability to the people we represent and to each other
- Unity of purpose

Community Leaders Network is a collaborative grouping of rural representatives from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Our Goal is equitable and sustainable use rights of our wildlife and other natural resources for social and environmental justice and the economic benefit of present and future generations of rural peoples.

Towards the achievement of our goal, *our overall objective* is to take our rightful space in policy negotiation, development and implementation processes and amplify our voices to ensure informed decision-making at national, regional and international levels that reflects the demands and rights of rural people to manage their wildlife.

Our expected outcomes are

- Poverty reduction and prosperity through community based natural resources management
- Shared benefits
- Open dialogue

Our membership includes men and women, youth, and the elderly from rural communities. Many are already leaders in their own countries with their own local programmes and others who have demonstrated ability, interest and commitment to become leaders and represent their communities on the national, regional and international stages.

The network is convened by the Southern African Trust (SAT), Resource Africa (RA) and the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO), who provide strategic and technical advice.

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Our Background

Throughout Africa, more than 70% 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). CBNRM is now recognised as a highly effective intervention in increasing wildlife populations and enhanced rural livelihoods, improved governance and strengthening of participatory democratic practices.

Despite this, we have limited rights over these resources, increasing our vulnerability to poverty, depletion of the natural resource base, including soils, water, forests, grasslands and wildlife, on which we depend. At the same time, the growing impacts of the climate crisis are hitting our communities hardest while the rush for large infrastructure projects and other developments is disenfranchising our communities.

As rural people, we are rarely involved in policy making at international, regional and national levels that affect our rights and ultimately our livelihoods. The loudest voices against our rights are those of distant and powerful groups, far removed from our lived realities and with power and resources to influence policies that ultimately do not reflect our concerns and needs.

Without ownership of wildlife and the natural environment we have little incentive to manage natural resources sustainably. The world must realise that we play an important role in managing ecosystems and thus, our primary objective is to ensure we are heard.

How we work

Our work is grounded in our experience of natural resource management based on our lived realities, traditions and recognised rights as enshrined in local, regional and international, laws, policies and protocols emphasising:

- the need to recognize and reinforce human rights, including land and resource rights
- economic and social incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife as well as safeguarding of intellectual property rights and benefit sharing
- that successful natural resource management outcomes depend on people, power and economics
- that conserving nature should be redefined as an inclusive and equitable pillar for the growth of regional, national and local economies.

Our key activities

- Knowledge sharing, lesson-learning, collaboration and cooperation among members through dialogue and exchange
- Capacity building of community representatives to engage with policy making processes at national, regional and international levels
- Information and knowledge generation and dissemination on CBNRM and community rights for awareness raising among varied external audiences
- Consistent engagement with traditional and non-traditional partners and platforms for dialogue, amplification of our views and generating buy-in; and
- Profile raising through media engagement, amplification of our voices and visibility in national, regional and international platforms, emphasising CBNRM successes and potential as dependent on community rights to sustainable use

Free, Prior Informed Consent

Community Leadership Network partners and collaborators must obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) through community representatives before making decisions, speaking on our behalf and implementing projects/activities that concern our lives and resources. The conditions for consent must be as follows:

Free - undertaken in a climate of mutual trust
Informed and Prior - where relevant information is provided in advance for the purposes of consultation ,and

Consent, provided in writing in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by community representative leaders and partners.

FPIC ensures our collective ownership, beyond consultation to include consent, towards protecting our rights, guaranteeing our participation and collective voice in key decision making processes, and safeguarding our way of life.