



Name of Press Contact: Disney Andreas
Capacity: Communications Officer (NNF)
Date: 01 October 2020
Phone: +264 (0) 61 248345/ +264 (0) 81 6390153
Email: dandreas@nnf.org.na
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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY FISHERIES PROJECT LAUNCH

*Strengthening fisheries management in the KAZA region through ecosystem-based adaptation
enhancing socio-ecological resilience of communities*

Under the auspices of the KAZA Secretariat, the Namibia Nature foundation (NNF) launched the project ***Strengthening Community Fisheries in KAZA*** project on 27, April 2021, at Hakusembe Lodge in Rundu (Kavango East), Namibia. The project is a grant under the E€OFISH Programme, promoted and funded by the European Union and implemented through the EU Delegation to Mauritius & the Seychelles with the support of 8 implementing partners, including SADC. Key attendees of the launch were the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Sylvia Makgone; KAZA Executive Director, Dr Nyambe Nyambe; Governor of Kavango East Region, Bonifasius Wakudumo, EU E€OFISH Programme Chair, Motseki Hlatshwayo; and the Traditional Authority and chairpersons of the fish reserves in the Kavango and Zambezi regions.

The overall objective of the E€OFISH Programme is to enhance the contribution of sustainable fisheries to the Blue Economy of Eastern Africa, Southern African and the Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO). The inland and marine coastal fisheries resources of the EA-SA-IO region represent a natural wealth of about € 50 billion. E€OFISH strives to ensure the sustainable management of these assets by putting in place policies to handle them effectively, by protecting them and by promoting good fishing practices. In the KAZA Trans-frontier Conservation Area, fishing makes an important contribution to almost 20% of the estimated 2 million people. The shared nature of the Cubango/Kavango, Cuando/Kwando and Zambezi Rivers, all within the KAZA region, makes regional collaboration a priority.

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During the launch Senior Technical Advisor, Britta Hackenberg noted that “Inland fisheries is probably the most underestimated resource. In Africa, highest richness of freshwater biodiversity areas are usually also associated with the greatest concentrations of rural poor. Healthy fish diversity is a source of livelihood for rural poor but can be a vehicle of transformation”.

The ***Strengthening Community Fisheries in KAZA*** project aims to strengthen sustainable fisheries management through ecosystem-based adaptation enhancing the socio-ecological resilience of communities by continuing to work with local communities in establishing fisheries reserves. Currently there are 10 fisheries reserves gazetted in Namibia’s Zambezi region, co-managed and legally recognised by the government and which all show very encouraging recovery trends. To enable state agencies, NGOs and CBOs to establish such fish protection areas, standardised tools and guidelines will be developed to be applied in the wider landscape. KAZA Executive Director, Dr Nyambe Nyambe, mentioned that the goals that were identified from this project, including the transboundary governance, are at the heart of KAZA association benefitting everyone within that region.

Local communities are increasingly and rightly being recognised as critical for conservation and this community centric, ecosystem-based adaptation approach has the potential to generate wider values in a number of key areas. For example, Fish Reserves as important wetlands can contribute to climate mitigation, flood attenuation, and help create critical wildlife corridors. In respect of climate mitigation, the Nationally Determined Contributions of all the KAZA countries are heavily skewed towards Agriculture, Forestry and other Land-use (AFOLU) elements.

“This project fits perfectly in the harambee prosperity plan, as part of its goals and objectives involves working with other nations that are located within the KAZA Trans frontier area and requires Namibia to work cooperatively and with these countries” – Hon. Sylvia Makgobe. Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

Ultimately this project and the wider programme aims to restore the fisheries to an extent that local people who live near and are custodians of these important rivers and their biodiversity, can reasonably expect to go to the river and catch some fish, to eat, to trade, to enjoy.

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For more information regarding the Strengthening Community Fisheries in KAZA Project, contact NNF's Senior Technical Advisor and Project team leader, Britta Hackenberg at bh@nnf.org.na.

About Namibia Nature Foundation

The **Namibia Nature Foundation** is a registered non-governmental organization founded in 1987. The foundation initiates, supports and promotes activities that conserve the environment, protect biodiversity, and that foster the sustainable and ethical use of natural resources. Since 2001, the Namibia Nature Foundation has steadily and systematically built up a knowledge base and expertise in managing inland fisheries. This began along the Namibian portion of the Kavango and upper Zambezi Rivers and in the last 8 years has steadily been scaled up to the KAZA level.

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