Session Report:
OECM side-event
at the SADC 25th Anniversary Conference and Summit

TITLE: Integrating inclusive conservation areas into TFCA naturescapes (OECMs)

DATE: 20 May 2025   **Time:** 15h00-17h00

THEME: Improving the understanding of 'other effective area-based conservation areas' (OECMs) by providing a technical overview, supported by African case studies, and applying these to TFCAs by interrogating national and TFCA specific needs, barriers, and opportunities to promote the recognition and strengthening of OECMs.

CO-ORGANISERS: IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)

PRESENTERS:

- Daniel Marnewick (IUCN ESARO)
- Harriet Davies-Mostert (IUCN WCPA)
- Candice Stevens (Sustainable Finance Coalition)
- Malidadi Langa (Alliance for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Conservation in Africa (AICA)
- Rob Harris (WWF-Tanzania)
- John Hilton (Wild Bird Trust)
- Vladimir Russo (Fundação Lisima)

The full slide deck PDF accompanies this report.

AUDIENCE: 100+ attendees from Member state representatives, NGOs, IP&LCs, ICPs

OUTCOME:

The OECM event at this week's SADC TFCA Summit was a notable success. The session aimed to deepen understanding of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) by providing a technical overview of the CBD definition and global guidance on OECMs, followed by presentations of compelling African case studies from South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and Tanzania. Additionally, two key enablers were explored to firstly ensure the equitable recognition and inclusion of

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs) when assessing their territories as OECMs, and secondly to highlight opportunities to unlock sustainable finance solutions for OECMs. (See Annexure A: Programme)

Panellists and the audience examined how OECMs can contribute to achieving the biodiversity and connectivity goals of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs), while addressing specific needs, barriers, and opportunities. A critical takeaway was the significance of recognizing and supporting community-led conservation and traditional governance within these dynamic landscapes.

Due to time constraints, the second half of the session, which would have focused on breakaway thematic discussions, needed to be compressed and reprogrammed. Nonetheless, through an online rapid-assessment survey, the audience identified 10 potential OECMs in TFCA landscapes. These include sites in five countries and within multiple SADC TFCAs. Using Mentimeter, the audience also identified the needs, key opportunities and barriers, and specific guidance needed to facilitate the assessments of OECMs in TFCAs. The word clouds are listed below.

1. What is **needed** to identify OECMs in TFCAs?

- Baseline
- Benefits
- Case studies
- Create awareness
- Criteria
- Data
- Dialogue
- Funding
- Funding national dialogue
- Good maps of current pas
- Justice
- Livelihoods
- Map biodiversity
- Map potential sites
- Participatory discussions
- Political commitment
- Protection
- Purpose
- Research
- Stakeholders
- Steps
- Technical support
- Transparency

2. What are **opportunities** for identifying OECMs in TFCAs?

- Funding
- Conservation
- 30x30 targets
- Clear framework
- Coexistence tools
- Collaboration
- Community owned areas
- Connectivity landscapes
- Corridors
- Diverse recognition
- Enhanced protection
- Feedback from CBOs
- Funding and innovative finance
- Great indeed
- Identifying buffer areas
- Improved management
- Livelihoods
- Networking
- New finance solutions
- Partnership
- Partnerships
- Shared learning
- Sustainability

3. What are **barriers** to identifying OECMs in TFCAs?

- Funding
- Technical skills
- Accessibility
- Awareness
- Clear path
- Coordination
- De-risking
- Financing
- First steps
- Lack of data
- Lack of inclusion
- No sustainable finance
- Policies and legislation
- Policy
- Research
- Technical processes

4. Identifying specific **guidance** needed?

- Dialogues
- Simplify
- Criteria for OECMs
- Defining OECMs clearly
- Explaining OECM benefits

- Government guarantee
- IP&LCs inclusion
- Leadership structure
- Mentoring
- Monitoring

- Natural capital accounting
- OECM country coordinators
- Recognition
- Template
- Understanding criteria

CONCLUSION:

This exchange of experiences has set in motion as important TFCA network dialogue to explore opportunities for scaling inclusive conservation efforts across the region using OECMs. There is a clear need for continued dialogue—at both national levels and within the TFCA network—to build shared understanding, develop a common vision, and create regional guidance on OECM implementation, particularly to strengthen conservation efforts beyond protected areas. IUCN, WCPA, and our partners and members remain dedicated to supporting and convening these vital conversations.

As a key follow up from this session, IUCN will host a webinar series to further explore the four thematic questions touched on above. From these results, IUCN ESARO and WCPA will develop a OECM TFCA roadmap to outline how OECM dialogues and assessments will continue to be supported across the SADC TFCA Network.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: We extend our sincere gratitude to all presenters and participants for sharing their insights and enthusiasm.

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Annexure A: **PROGRAMME**

A. Sharing and Learning (14h00-15h20)	
Scene setting:	Welcome and setting the scene (IUCN ESARO) (5min)
	Overview of OECMs and global guidance (IUCN WCPA) (10min)
Sharing lessons and case studies:	OECM national dialogue: lessons from Kenya, South Africa, Angola (IUCN ESARO) (5min)
	Candidate OECM site examples (30min)
	-GLTFCA (IUCN ESARO) (10min)
	-Niassa-Selous TFCA (WWF Tanzania) (10min)
	-Angola Highlands Water Tower (Wild Bird Trust/ Fundação Lisima) (10min)
Enablers:	Q&A for panellists (5min)
	Ensuring the appropriate recognition of IP&LCs (AICA) (10min)
	Sustainable finance for OECMs (Sustainable Finance Coalition) (10min)
	Q&A for panellists (5min)
	----- Tea Break (15min) -----
B. Group Work (15h35-16h35)	
TFCA OECM Roadmap: "What can OECMs do for TFCAs and what can TFCAs do for OECMs?"	
Finding OECMs:	In plenary, using online forms, participants will list and briefly describe potential OECMs within their TFCAs
Thematic Stations: *Groups rotate between Thematic Stations*	What is **needed** to identify OECMs in TFCAs,
	What are **opportunities** for identifying OECMs in TFCAs,
	What are **barriers** to identifying OECMs in TFCAs
	Identifying specific **guidance** needed for TFCAs to assessment and strengthen OECMs – to be included in regional guidance
C. Closing (16h35-17h15)	
	Group report back (group rapporteurs)
	Conclusion of session (IUCN ESARO)