

The role of Traditional Authorities in promoting Sustainable Climate Strategies in Namibia

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SUMMARY

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Traditional Authority is a form of leadership in which the selected elders of a community receive their decision-making powers through a regime tied to indigenous laws and customs. The available literature on indigenous and local knowledge has provided ample arguments and evidence on how local communities have adapted for generations to climate-induced hazards. Traditional Authorities are the custodians of indigenous knowledge systems and the governance of people in various rural communities (incl. their land rights). In most communal areas, Traditional Authorities are fully involved in the land-use planning and development of the area. They have been mandated with the primary powers and functions to allocate rights to communal land and ensure that the members within their traditional community use the natural resources on a sustainable basis and in a manner that conserves the environment and maintains the ecosystems for the benefit of all persons in Namibia.

While the devastating vagaries of climate change are ravaging communities all over the world, especially in Africa, the pivotal role of Traditional Authorities is often overlooked. Traditional authorities have the power to manage grassroots communities and promote the implementation of both modern and traditional climate change adaptation strategies within their communities. Local perceptions and knowledge provide a crucial foundation for community-based climate change adaptation measures and natural resource conservation. The paper is specifically focused on assessing the role of traditional authorities in promoting sustainable climate change adaptation in Namibia. The paper underscores the dire need for traditional authorities and their governing institutions to be capacitated and strengthened so that their knowledge base is improved to integrate both indigenous and modern knowledge within climate change strategies.

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