

Drought in Namibia: Advancing Drought Resilience and Water Sustainability in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Namibia has suffered drought for a long time and as such, drought shapes our country and impacts us daily. We all know that water is scarce but how many of us truly act on that information? In this article, we will discuss drought and how it has affected our country. What are we doing about it and what still needs to change? Topics that will be addressed are our dependency on groundwater and seasonal rain, inefficient water use, lack of policy enforcement, lack of access to water efficient fixtures to name a few. We all know that drought is here to stay and will become the new normal. So why aren't we doing more to adapt? Although drought is the new normal in Namibia, we tend to wait until the season of rainy shoes to think about drought and plan for it. By then it is too late. We can't wait until the clouds stop gracing us with their presence to start thinking about drought. In order to build resilience, we need to start thinking about and implementing solutions today. Some of these solutions include water conservation change, rainwater harvesting and wastewater recycling among others. Mindsets will have to change if we want to make any real change towards becoming more droughts resilient. Technology won't save us if we don't hold our institutions accountable for their actions and for implementing policies that will ensure we don't run out of water. We need to act NOW and change our mindset from reacting to proactively planning for drought if we want to become a drought resilient country that others can learn from.

Keywords: Drought Resilience; Water Conservation; Climate Smart Practices; Water Scarcity; Water Sustainable Management; Rural Communities; Climate Adaption; Namibia

INTRODUCTION

Namibia is one of the driest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, a reality that has shaped its environment, economy, and way of life for decades. Drought is not a new phenomenon, it is a recurring challenge that communities, farmers, and institutions have faced time and again. Yet, an important question remains: has drought taught us enough to fully embrace water conservation and smart climate practices?

Despite the harsh reality of recurring droughts, water conservation in Namibia remains a significant challenge. While awareness about scarcity exists, consistent action and meaningful behavioral change are still lacking across many communities, institutions, and industries.

One of the key challenges is the over-reliance on limited water sources, such as underground aquifers and seasonal rainfall. These sources are under increasing pressure due to climate variability and population growth. In many cases, water is still

used inefficiently, with practices such as over-irrigation, leakages, and poor water management continuing to persist.

Another major issue is the gap between policy and practice. Although Namibia has strong policies promoting sustainable water use, implementation is often inconsistent. Institutions and communities sometimes fail to take full responsibility for conserving water, relying heavily on government support rather than adopting proactive measures.

Additionally, limited infrastructure and investment in water-saving technologies hinder progress. Rural areas, in particular, face challenges in accessing modern systems such as rainwater harvesting, recycling, and efficient irrigation methods.

Cultural habits and attitudes also play a role. In some cases, water conservation is not yet deeply embedded in daily life. Without continuous education and accountability, people may revert to wasteful habits, especially during periods when water is temporarily abundant.

Ultimately, the challenge is not just about scarcity, it is about changing mindsets, strengthening accountability, and turning awareness into consistent action. Addressing these challenges requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, institutions, and government to ensure a sustainable water future for Namibia.

The Reality of Drought in Namibia

Drought in Namibia is no longer an occasional crisis; it is a persistent condition. Rainfall is low and unpredictable, rivers are often seasonal, and groundwater resources are under increasing pressure. Rural communities are forced to travel long distances to access water, while farmers struggle to sustain crops and livestock.

Despite these realities, responses to drought are often reactive rather than proactive. When rain returns, water-saving efforts tend to fade, and the sense of urgency disappears—until the next drought cycle begins.

The Need for Smart Climate Practices

To build resilience, Namibia must shift from short-term responses to long-term solutions. This requires the adoption of smart climate practices that promote sustainability and efficiency.

Water Conservation as a Lifestyle

Water-saving habits must become part of everyday life:

- Fixing leaks immediately
- Using water-efficient appliances
- Reusing greywater for gardening and cleaning

Rainwater Harvesting

Capturing rainwater can significantly reduce pressure on other water sources:

- Rooftop collection systems

- Storage tanks for households and communities

Water Recycling and Reuse

Wastewater should be viewed as a valuable resource rather than waste:

- Expanding recycling systems beyond urban centers
- Encouraging industries to reuse water

Changing Mindsets: The Real Solution

The greatest challenge is not technology, it is mindset. Drought has already provided clear warning signs. What is needed now is a fundamental shift in how water is valued and managed.

Namibians must begin to live with the understanding that drought is not temporary it is a permanent feature of the climate. This means:

- Treating every drop of water as valuable
- Holding institutions accountable for sustainable practices
- Educating communities about long-term water management

CONCLUSION

Drought has taught Namibia many lessons, but learning alone is not enough without action. The country possesses the knowledge, experience, and even global recognition in water innovation. What remains is the consistent application of these lessons across all levels of society.

If Namibia fully embraces water conservation and smart climate practices as a way of life, it can transform one of its greatest challenges into a powerful model of resilience for the world.