

# **Land Tenure Security and Water Access in Informal Settlements in Rundu, Namibia: A case for Responsible Land Administration and Integrated Water Resources Management**

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**Key words:** Land Administration, IWRM, Land Tenure, Water Security, Informal Settlements, Human right to water

## **SUMMARY**

Namibia has adopted Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) as part of its national policies to improve water access. IWRM involves coordinating stakeholders to plan and implement sustainable water resource management practices that lead to improved socio-economic outcomes for communities while protecting the environment. While IWRM has been adopted and 95% of urban areas have improved water access, informal settlements still face high levels of poor water access. This highlights the need to understand how land administration is implemented within urban areas and how it connects to IWRM. Conventional land administration often prioritises views of land management and securing land in support of real estate, leading to tenure insecurity for communities outside this ecosystem. Responsible land administration is crucial for improving land management, data-driven planning, land-based revenue generation, and securing land tenure. While research on responsible land management has advanced, which is linked to land administration, the concept of responsible land administration itself remains underdeveloped. Although FAO supports the responsible governance of tenure, there is limited research on how these frameworks have been adopted or how principles support improved access to basic services and securing of tenure. This study explores using qualitative and quantitative data, how limited application of responsible land administration has hindered access to basic services and impacted general planning in local authorities. Key informant interviews with water and land administration professionals reveal the challenges faced by a single local authority in managing land and delivering basic services. Rundu, located in the northeastern part of Namibia and capital of Kavango East Region, has the second-largest population after Windhoek. However, the administration of land is plagued by a dichotomy in practice between traditional and local authorities. The role of customary and statutory land tenure, particularly in urban centres like Rundu, remains under-explored. Rundu's rapid growth of 5.2% poses significant challenges in managing land and ensuring access to basic services. Key informant interviews with stakeholders revealed the limited access to water and sanitation

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experienced by informal settlement residents, despite their high tenure security, as analysed based on the tenure security index used in the research. Household surveys conducted (N=300) revealed a clear need for improved land administration and a widespread lack of access to basic services. The high poverty levels in the area indicate limited investment in housing infrastructure. Good land governance arrangements are crucial for fostering collaborations between communities and local authorities for development planning. This study emphasises the importance of effectively managing land tenure arrangements through stakeholder collaborations. Implementing responsible land administration provides opportunities to adopt integrated water resources management approaches for informal settlements, addressing pressing issues like access to basic services and poverty reduction.

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