

Interview with Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute, Jonathan Kamwi and Clemens von Doderer, by Barbara Kahatjipara

Ahead of the COP26: Namibias fight for climate change mitigation and adaptation

Namibia is severely affected by climate change. Since the country has huge potential for renewable energies such as solar energy, there are opportunities for a sustainable, “green” growth, also in the context of post-COVID recovery, that the government is aiming to exploit. In its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), delivered at the COP26, the country declares to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 91 percent by 2030.

The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), with its office in Windhoek, is engaged in the field of environmental sustainability. HSF is working at the governmental, as well as at community level, to increase awareness about environmental issues, and promotes efforts to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change.

Keywords:

Climate change - Namibia - mitigation - adaptation - COP26 - National Determined Contributions - GHG Reduction - green growth

Ahead of the COP26: Namibia's fight for climate change mitigation and adaptation

|| Interview with Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute,
Jonathan Kamwi and Clemens von Doderer

Barbara Kahatjipara/ HSF: *Environmental sustainability is one field of activity of the Hanns-Seidel-Foundation in Namibia. Since the Namibian economy is so highly dependent on natural resources like diverse rangelands and ecosystems, the economic and social development is negatively affected by climate change. As a start, could you give us some insights on how Namibia is threatened by climate change?*

Dr Clemens von Doderer: To begin with, Namibia is actually one of the driest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, if not the entire continent or even globally. And because of that, any long term temperature increase is obviously also negatively affecting Namibia. Two years ago, we had the worst drought in 90 years, and the effects were tremendous, especially if you look at the agricultural sector. Many commercial and subsistence farmers had to sell off their livestock, particularly cattle, to reduce the number of heads they had on their farms so that they could sustain the numbers they had left. And that obviously had an impact economically. Obviously, not only livestock production was affected, but also other production types in the agricultural sector suffered. Especially the communities in the Northern part of the country, who mainly live off subsistence farming, were severely affected. Particularly the vulnerable poor had to resort to alternative ways of producing food or were

forced to access food programs of the Namibian government or other ways to sustain their livelihoods. Looking at the long term trend, we already see the impact of climate change very much being a reality. Not only because of the changing climate itself, but also because of an increased pressure on natural resources. Namibia has lost, for instance, approx. 25 per cent of its forest cover since 1990. That used to be 8.8 million hectares or close to 11 percent of Namibia's land mass. In 2020 forests make up only 6.6 million hectares or about 8 percent of Namibia's land mass. This is due to an increased demand for timber, land for agricultural production or veld fires, among other reasons. However, forests are key for the survival of the people: where there are forests, there is rain. And in Namibia, which is highly depending on rain as a source for any kind of activity – agricultural, forestry, whatever the case might be – a lack of water is really threatening the livelihoods of people.

HSF: *Thank you very much for that. It does paint a dire picture of what climate change does to Namibia: how it threatens the very livelihood, not only of people but of livestock, and how people have to resort to the most desperate measures.*

For that reason, I'd like to direct this question to Bernadette of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism: Ahead of COP26, what

are being Namibia's most important achievements? And, also as a follow up question: What is it that the Namibian delegation will be expecting at COP26 from industrialized nations?

Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute: So in terms of our achievements, the most important one is that we have updated our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). This is the blueprint of how Namibia intends to cut its greenhouse gas emissions all the way to 2030. This was a prerequisite that before the next COP, this document should be in. We have also produced short forms on this NDC. We have in place an NDC investment strategy and all the required documents. Since Namibia is signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), there are quite a few documents that we needed to have submitted to enable the global stock-take to take place, such as our biannual reports and our national communications. These are in. We are currently busy finalizing the adaptation communications, which is also due before the COP starts, and then we also have in place a resource mobilization strategy for the Green Climate Fund.

HSF: *Well, quite a lot of plans that are there. You speak of NDC, which is basically Namibia's attempt and/ or strategy to reduce its emissions by 91 percent by 2030. Every other person would say "Well, that's idealistic, that's ambitious, is that realistic?" And what would you say to somebody who says, "Oh, that's too ambitious"?*

Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute: For Namibia it's definitely a very ambitious target. It was deliberately set. And it's by far one of the highest targets. Our first target was 89 per cent. You have to set a higher target every five years, you can't regress. So we went for 91 per cent and we are saying we can achieve 91 per cent greenhouse gas emissions reduction only if we get the money that is due to us. So that is how we are going to achieve some of the targets. But if you compare with our neighbouring countries, for example, South Africa is only aiming to reduce emissions by 28 percent. Botswana is going to reduce emissions by only 15 per cent. And Zambia only

aims to reduce emissions by 25 percent. So you can see Namibia is totally on a different league here, but of course we are called Land of the Brave, so that's why we have also set this very high target. On the question of what Namibia is going to negotiate: There's quite a few things that we are negotiating, but I think two most important ones: The first one is on financing. Of course, we can only achieve those NDC targets if we have money. So we definitely are going to urge the industrialized nations to scale up climate financing.

And also on the issue of mitigation, whereby Namibia is urging all parties to submit more ambitious NDCs because Namibia can't be the only country with a 91 per cent target for emissions reductions and everybody else is aiming for about 15 percent. When will we ever reach the goals of the Paris Agreement?

HSF: *Thank you very much. And yes, indeed. Namibia is the Land of the Brave, so very commendable from the Namibian government to want to reduce carbon emissions by 91 percent.*

My next question is directed to Dr Jonathan Kamwi of the Namibia University of Science and Technology: We live in a world of COVID, whether we like it or not. It has shown cracks, whether societal, political, economic, all over the world in various strata and various economic situations. Jonathan, please tell us, what is the potential of the much touted "green growth" in a post-COVID reconstruction? Is it hype? Is it feasible? Is it something that Namibia can exploit?

Dr Jonathan Kamwi: Thank you very much. It's actually very feasible. We find that the green post-COVID recovery has the potential of enhancing resilience of economies as well as society. So the economic stimulus packages which the government is actually looking at, has the potential to create jobs, income and at the same time create opportunities for solving environmental challenges such as climate change. So when you integrate environmental as well as inclusive aspects of recovery, you have the mutual benefit in terms of looking at environmental challenges, and at the same time, increasing resilience of our communities

to the impacts of climate change. So if all these ones are taken into account, you find that the problems associated with inequalities will be actually brought to a minimum. So it's very important that we really look at having these challenges addressed by these stimulus packages that we are trying to implement, both at private as well as government levels.

HSF: *Clemens, would you say that, despite the debilitating effects of COVID, this is sort of an opportunity for a reset where we can start new with this much talked about green growth?*

Clemens von Doderer: COVID certainly provides its challenges for Namibia. Being one of the driest countries in the world, Namibia is used to hardship. However, 300 days of sunshine per year can also be an opportunity. It is for this and for other reasons, that Namibia is considered one of the high potentials for hydrogen production. Consequently, this could be also an opportunity for industrial and economic development of Namibia. So, by turning a perceived disadvantage into an advantage, Namibia could become the new 'Texas' or the new 'Middle East' not in terms of oil production, but in terms of hydrogen production. It offers a huge opportunity for the economy to thrive and for jobs to be created. Also, the Namibian government will certainly benefit from that. Increased revenues will allow more funding for the educational sector and infrastructure development. Overall, it will be a sizable contribution to uplift the socio-economic development of Namibia. Hydrogen is only one example to provide Namibia with new opportunities. Very much linked to hydrogen is electricity production in general: Solar power as the obvious renewable energy opportunity, but also wind and tidal power. Namibia has more than 1,570 kilometres of coastline, where tidal energy could play a role. Namibia could become a massive energy exporter in the long run if the cards are being played right. Another advantage we have is that we have space, allowing us to set up sizable solar and wind parks. So we can put up systems like that. Namibia has one of the lowest population densities on the planet, so there are big areas available for production

systems like that. And Namibia is very responsive to change: with about 2.6 million people, any kind of change has a direct impact on society. Consequently, I'm very confident if we play the cards right, Namibia will be on the right track for a very promising and prosperous future.

HSF: *If we play our cards right, Bernadette, we know that climate change affects disproportionately marginalized communities in poor situations. If we play our cards right, why is it that marginalized communities are affected so adversely and disproportionately by climate change? And what can we do? I mean, speaking of what Clemens just spoke about in terms of all the potential of green growth? Let's first talk about marginalized societies, why they are adversely affected and whether them getting out of it can be tapped into what Clemens was speaking about.*

Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute: Yes, Barbara, as you rightfully stated, our marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by climate change, because their coping capabilities are very low. And that is because in rural areas, people haven't completed education to a certain level, they don't have access to jobs, employment is very low and they don't have alternative livelihoods. This makes their coping capabilities very low, for example, if you compare them to us. What government does is they conduct various vulnerability risk assessment studies in key sectors, to identify these populations and also some of the ways that we could best assist them. Currently at the ministry, we are busy with doing the vulnerability communication. It goes to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) to communicate the existing gaps and also how to best assist these vulnerable communities. We also use the same strategies to identify projects and programs, and you will observe that some of the projects the EIF (Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia) is currently doing in the Zambezi and in Kavango are informed by these vulnerability studies.

The second question about how do we unlock green growth: For those who are following the

news, you might probably be familiar with the green economic pillars under the president's Harambee Prosperity II (Action Plan of the Namibian Government Towards Economic Recovery and Inclusive Growth, period 2021-2025), and the two most crucial pillars for this are water security and energy security. We are saying if the country can increase its share of renewable energy and become a net exporter of clean energy, this has the potential to unlock enormous opportunities. We are looking for example at employment opportunities. If people are employed, this obviously takes them out of that vulnerable category. In terms of water security, our Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform has completed feasibility studies for seawater desalination; another initiative that we are moving into is to increase water banking opportunities, groundwater desalination, rainwater harvesting and also reclamation of water in other towns outside of Windhoek. So obviously, if we combine all of that, I think the spin-offs are unimaginable.

HSF: *Let me bring my next question to Jonathan. All over the world, we see young people advocating for climate action. Perhaps most prominently, the Fridays for Future demonstrations that we get to see all over the world, with Greta Thunberg, Vanessa Nakate. How can Namibia include our Namibian youth in the climate change debate and even policy-making? To not only being invited to the party, but also to take part in the dance?*

Jonathan Kamwi: Thank you very much. It is very important for the youth to be interested in climate change issues. It is in their best interest because they are the ones who will be impacted by climate change in the future. It is very important that they really participate in issues of climate change. So one of the important things that the country can do is to develop robust forums for these young people to participate in terms of a climate change dialogue. And at the same time, we have to consider childhood development and impart knowledge about climate change, especially the consequences and how to solve the challenges, how to adapt to the impacts, at a very young age. So it is very, very important that

even the messages that we pass across are designed in such a way that they are 'sexy' to be adapted or absorbed by our youth.

HSF: *Clemens, what would you say? Would you advocate for youth to have a voice? After all, it is their future.*

Clemens von Doderer: Absolutely. I think the youth needs to be vocal. It needs to be politically active and engaged. I think it's an interesting trend we see nowadays with climate change, more active engagement like last we've seen in the late 60s in Europe. So it is actually good to see that, but it's a two-way street. You know, the one thing is to be vocal and to raise concerns, but also to come up with ideas and answers. The youth is very engaged with social media and new technology, so certainly they have new ideas. But at the same time, it's important also for the leaders of the world and, to bring it down also to the Namibian level, for our Namibian leaders to listen to what the youth has to say. After all, Namibia has also a relatively young population: just to put it in perspective, the average age in Namibia is 23; and the average age in, for instance, Germany is 43. So there is a significant difference. Namibia's leaders need to have an interest in what the youth has to say, and not only to listen, but also to translate it into their policymaking. I think that is the key to provide the policy framework for the future. There is an urgent need to tackle the questions the youth has today. One might simply agree that this is actually the mandate of Namibia's leadership. But there is more. Namibia's constitution requires the State to do so. Article 95.I refers to the sustainable use of the resources so that today's and future generations can benefit from them. The State has to ensure that resources are being managed in such a way that future generations can also sustain their livelihoods, using these resources. So coming back to the issue on forestry, losing 25 percent of forest cover is definitely not the answer.

There is an urgent need not only to maintain the existing forests, but also increase the forest cover again. This would secure the livelihoods of the communities on the ground, not only today, but also for the future genera-

tions. At the same time, we all will benefit from it, as forests are key to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

HSF: My last question, and in conclusion of our podcast, I will address it to Clemens: Here at the Hanns Seidel Foundation, we have quite a lot of projects to support the policy and goals of the government with regards to climate. Please tell our audience what various projects we have.

Clemens von Doderer: Since 2015, we are running a campaign across the country called TH!NK NAMIBIA. That campaign is being implemented in various phases. The initial phase in 2015 to 2017 was on raising awareness on environmental issues and climate change. Looking at these aspects more generally, we trained teachers, learners and young adults, engaged with journalists and the general public, and developed a series of publications, including fact sheets, posters, etc. The second phase was on promoting renewable energies in Namibia, where pilot schools have been equipped with solar power systems. Learners and teachers alike have been trained on the use of renewable energies, but there was also an advocacy campaign at national level on promoting the use of renewable energies.

And right now we are running two more phases under the TH!NK NAMIBIA umbrella. One is funded by the Finnish Embassy here in Namibia and deals with the use of aquaponics systems at pilot schools, following a similar approach like to our renewable energy project. Aim is to improve food security and diversity at selected educational institutions, as well as to make food production more sustainable. Aquaponics systems can be compared to a compact greenhouse with fish tanks attached. The fish are being fed and then the drain water from the fish tanks is then being used as fertilizers and plant feed to grow vegetables and fruits.

And lastly, our latest project in this family of TH!NK NAMIBIA is our Promoting sustainable forest management in the Kavango and Zambezi region of Namibia project, which is geared towards improving the awareness, the knowledge about why it is important to follow

a sustainable approach on managing forests. We are engaging with local stakeholders, including government representatives from the ministries, representatives from traditional authorities (the chiefs, the headmen), but also the management committee members of community forest and conservancies. All of them receive training and are engaged through roundtable discussions and other dialogue formats, to be part of a joint movement, eventually to contribute to a more sustainable approach to managing the forests in Namibia. We are not only engaging the people on the ground, but also the decision makers at government level. In November 2021, we hosted a public-parliamentary engagement together with the Office of the Speaker of the Namibian Parliament. Attended by the members of the Standing Committee on the Management of Natural Resources, the engagement gave experts from various fields an opportunity to share their insights and views on the State of forests against the backdrop of COP26. Aim was to enable the Parliamentarians to take better decisions on the issue of managing forests and in a wider sense, to tackle climate change from that perspective.

HSF: Thank you very much, Clemens, for the very detailed explanation on the activities the Hanns Seidel Foundation is implementing in Namibia in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Thank you very much for all your contributions.

|| This interview was published as a podcast of the Hanns Seidel Foundation in the series "Global Perspectives". Listen to it in the HSF podcast player: Global Perspectives, URL <https://www.hss.de/media/thek/#c44249>

|| Barbara Kahatjipara

This interview was conducted by Barbara Kahatjipara. She is a Project officer at Hanns Seidel Foundation in Namibia since April 2021. As communications expert, she is in charge of the communications and events portfolio. Barbara Kahatjipara holds a Master's Degree in International Marketing from the Reutlingen University, Germany.

|| Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute

Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute is a Senior Conservation Scientist at the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism of Namibia since 2019. She is primarily concerned with mobilizing resources for climate change intervention, stakeholder coordination and project management. Bernadette Shalumbu-Shivute participated in the COP26 as a delegate.

|| Jonathan Kamwi

Dr Jonathan Kamwi is Lecturer and Head of Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. As a forest scientist he specializes in socio-ecological systems in forests, Geographical Information Systems, Remote Sensing and Forest Inventory. His research group works on a range of projects in remote regions of Southern Africa and other forest ecosystem in Africa

|| Clemens von Doderer

Dr Clemens von Doderer is the Resident Representative of the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Namibia since 2016. Prior to joining HSF, Dr von Doderer served as a Policy Advisor to the Central Association of European Forest Owners (CEPF) in Brussels, Belgium. Dr von Doderer holds a Bachelor's degree in Forest Sciences from the Georg-August-University in Göttingen, Germany, as well as a Master's and PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

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HSF: *Clemens, what would you say? Would you advocate for youth to have a voice? After all, it is their future.*

Clemens von Doderer: Absolutely. I think the youth needs to be vocal. It needs to be politically active and engaged. I think it's an interesting trend we see nowadays with climate change, more active engagement like last we've seen in the late 60s in Europe. So it is actually good to see that, but it's a two-way street. You know, the one thing is to be vocal and to raise concerns, but also to come up with ideas and answers. The youth is very engaged with social media and new technology, so certainly they have new ideas. But at the same time, it's important also for the leaders of the world and, to bring it down also to the Namibian level, for our Namibian leaders to listen to what the youth has to say. After all, Namibia has also a relatively young population: just to put it in perspective, the average age in Namibia is 23; and the average age in, for instance, Germany is 43. So there is a significant difference. Namibia's leaders need to have an interest in what the youth has to say, and not only to listen, but also to translate it into their policymaking. I think that is the key to provide the policy framework for the future. There is an urgent need to tackle the questions the youth has today. One might simply agree that this is actually the mandate of Namibia's leadership. But there is more. Namibia's constitution requires the State to do so. Article 95.I refers to the sustainable use of the resources so that today's and future generations can benefit from them. The State has to ensure that resources are being managed in such a way that future generations can also sustain their livelihoods, using these resources. So coming back to the issue on forestry, losing 25 percent of forest cover is definitely not the answer.

There is an urgent need not only to maintain the existing forests, but also increase the forest cover again. This would secure the livelihoods of the communities on the ground, not only today, but also for the future genera-

tions. At the same time, we all will benefit from it, as forests are key to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

HSF: My last question, and in conclusion of our podcast, I will address it to Clemens: Here at the Hanns Seidel Foundation, we have quite a lot of projects to support the policy and goals of the government with regards to climate. Please tell our audience what various projects we have.

Clemens von Doderer: Since 2015, we are running a campaign across the country called TH!NK NAMIBIA. That campaign is being implemented in various phases. The initial phase in 2015 to 2017 was on raising awareness on environmental issues and climate change. Looking at these aspects more generally, we trained teachers, learners and young adults, engaged with journalists and the general public, and developed a series of publications, including fact sheets, posters, etc. The second phase was on promoting renewable energies in Namibia, where pilot schools have been equipped with solar power systems. Learners and teachers alike have been trained on the use of renewable energies, but there was also an advocacy campaign at national level on promoting the use of renewable energies. And right now we are running two more phases under the TH!NK NAMIBIA umbrella. One is funded by the Finnish Embassy here in Namibia and deals with the use of aquaponics systems at pilot schools, following a similar approach like to our renewable energy project. Aim is to improve food security and diversity at selected educational institutions, as well as to make food production more sustainable. Aquaponics systems can be compared to a compact greenhouse with fish tanks attached. The fish are being fed and then the drain water from the fish tanks is then being used as fertilizers and plant feed to grow vegetables and fruits. And lastly, our latest project in this family of TH!NK NAMIBIA is our Promoting sustainable forest management in the Kavango and Zambezi region of Namibia project, which is geared towards improving the awareness, the knowledge about why it is important to follow

a sustainable approach on managing forests. We are engaging with local stakeholders, including government representatives from the ministries, representatives from traditional authorities (the chiefs, the headmen), but also the management committee members of community forest and conservancies. All of them receive training and are engaged through roundtable discussions and other dialogue formats, to be part of a joint movement, eventually to contribute to a more sustainable approach to managing the forests in Namibia. We are not only engaging the people on the ground, but also the decision makers at government level. In November 2021, we hosted a public-parliamentary engagement together with the Office of the Speaker of the Namibian Parliament. Attended by the members of the Standing Committee on the Management of Natural Resources, the engagement gave experts from various fields an opportunity to share their insights and views on the State of forests against the backdrop of COP26. Aim was to enable the Parliamentarians to take better decisions on the issue of managing forests and in a wider sense, to tackle climate change from that perspective.

HSF: Thank you very much, Clemens, for the very detailed explanation on the activities the Hanns Seidel Foundation is implementing in Namibia in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Thank you very much for all your contributions.

|| This interview was published as a podcast of the Hanns Seidel Foundation in the series "Global Perspectives". Listen to it in the HSF podcast player: Global Perspectives, URL <https://www.hss.de/media/thek/#c44249>

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|| Clemens von Doderer

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