



**THE VOICES OF KAVANGO**

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“We see hope and opportunities, not destruction of our environment or dangers to areas where we live”

“You want the San to remain in poverty so that you can continue taking pictures.” This is one of the strong statements by Taye Reino, born and raised in the Kavango Region, in the area where ReconAfrica is drilling for conventional oil.

Taye Reino who called environmentalists against the project, “fear mongers” and “prophets of doom”. He also said ReconAfrica, must in no way back down, as the activity is seen by many from the area as hope for development.

“Stop with the fear mongering. This kind of stuff has failed to deliver development to this part of the country. I live amongst these people and I know their poverty and suffering despite all the natural resources,” one of Reino’s tweets read.



***The size of the site is about three football fields and the actual drilling area even smaller. Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism Chief Public Relation Officer, Romeo Muyunda confirmed to local media that a temporary minor disturbance will only be felt of approximately 250m x 250m from the drilling point.***



***ReconAfrica has throughout the project remained transparent about the geographical positioning of the drilling and other project related activities. The drilling site is situated on a non-agricultural land area 55km south of Rundu, a further 80 km south of the Kavango River, and about 300km from the Okavango Delta, in Botswana, and 40 km from the boundary of the Khaudum. This clarification is important as there is certain commentary by some external interest groups that the project is in environmentally sensitive areas, i.e. in or very near the Okavango Delta. These types of statements, made by external interest or pressure groups, are untrue.***

ReconAfrica works alongside traditional, local, regional and national Namibian stakeholders in their conventional oil project. The company continues to hire local labourers, semi-skilled and skilled Namibians, which speaks directly to the developmental agenda of the project.

The issue of poverty and limited or no access to clean water is nothing new or unknown to the people of Rundu and villages close to Rundu.

The upcoming conventional oil testing well activities were preceded by consultations led by the Namibian government authorities with the community, farmers and traditional leaders to provide a factual picture of the project. ReconAfrica continues their community and individual engagements, on a habitual basis, to keep their stakeholders updated.

Two of the most basic essential requirements to end poverty is accessibility to affordable and sustainable energy along with the development of local infrastructures.

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ReconAfrica's project is already helping to further develop the local infrastructure in and around Rundu by improving local access roads and accessibility to potable water, assisting with the development of the area infrastructure. Namibia also has the potential opportunity for true economic growth with the development of the energy and power infrastructure systems. There is the possibility for Energy and Power Independence; Namibia consumed 26 thousand barrels of oil per day and no natural gas in 2017; the country could easily become a net exporter. ReconAfrica's project has the potential to create these key opportunities for economic growth and development.

According to NamPower, national power utility company of Namibia, currently, the country imports most of its electricity from South Africa and other countries in the region. NamPower representatives further state that a special arrangement exists between NamPower and Eskom the South African Power utility which enables Namibia to buy and utilize the surplus energy from SA at affordable rates. NamPower says Namibia is left with no option but to look at alternative power generation sources.

Although a small group of environmentalists and some individuals have gone out of their way, with no scientific evidence, to paint the project as a danger to the environment, the voices of Kavango sing another song.

A song of hope for development, a song of hope for better living conditions and a song of hope for access to clean drinking water, education, and a brighter future. A song of thanks for the community outreach projects that the Company is implementing as part of their approach of ethical and fair business practices.

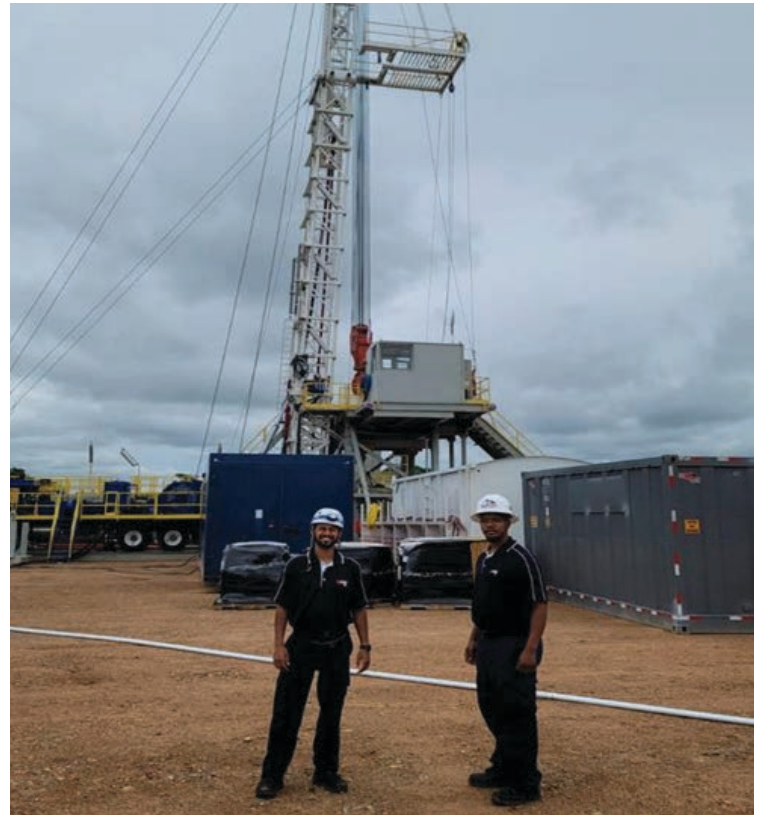
**Water Well Celebrations (Video):** Women from a village not too far from where ReconAfrica is drilling for oil, sing praise for the potable water a few metres away from their homestead. This is after decades of having to walk long distances to fetch water.

**Community Well (Video):** Community members welcome the potable water access tap drilled in their community; an initiative set up by ReconAfrica. This is one of several potable water taps, community water well access, that ReconAfrica is going to hand over to the communities.

While the drilling of their conventional oil well is only just commencing, ReconAfrica is already impacting change with local stakeholders receiving earnings for the first time in years, as a result of working on aspects of ReconAfrica's project activities.

Some residents have even been given an opportunity to be in management positions for the first time.

Rundu resident, Ildefonso Chimbaya is helping manage project activities, including organizing the labourers for bush clearing.



*With safety being a priority, ReconAfrica is also making use of local medic services from E-Med Rescue24. This is Dillion Frederick's and Jerome Skywell who work for E-Med Rescue24.*

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*At the end of December 2020, 44 personnel are currently on-site, of which 39 are Namibians. Of the 39 Namibians, seven are from the Kawe Village nearby where ReconAfrica is completing test well drilling for conventional oil.*



*ReconAfrica hires local personnel for cleaning and cooking services on their site. The new camp facility seen here was built in Namibia by Namibians.*

Apart from income generation from various work activities and ongoing supplier opportunities tied to the company's project related activities, ReconAfrica has responded to one of the greatest social issues in the area. This being access to water.

ReconAfrica has begun a program to drill potable water wells and fully equip them so that communities lacking this resource, now have access that is close-by, accessible and used by many.

"I am singing praises to God and to your company, this is the first time I have clean tap-water a stone's throw away, since settling here in 1979."



*This is one of several planned community wells and potable water taps, ReconAfrica has drilled, bringing safe drinking water closer to the communities.*

These are the words of 69-year-old Martha Mudhi, whose closest access to clean water, was 6km away from her homestead. For 41 years, Mudhi had to carry water barrels as heavy as 20 kg (44 lbs) for distances as far as 6km.

"Look at me. Look at my arms. I have no more strength in them, but before this (potable water) tap came here, I had to take the journey of getting water every other day. Sometimes, when I was too sick, the children would fetch the water, no matter how young, you pray that the same God who kept you safe will also keep them safe," Martha said.

Another member of the community, Elisabeth Haingura (53) said that she is sometimes still in disbelief that she now has access to clean, safe drinking water just a stone's throw away.



*Women and children in the communities and villages around Rundu have to walk for many kilometres for potable water. They often carry up to 20 litres of water for distances sometimes up to 10 km.*

“I just take one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten steps then I have clean water from the tap.”

She further said that children and young people are suffering because some of them are forced to quit school to look after cattle.

“They end up rotting here in the villages because they drop out of school, we then just continue to be poor. I am happy for that project because it is coming with work, I saw some of the men from our villages already doing some jobs because of that project,” she said.



*Elisabeth Haingura (53), Martha Mudhi (69), Agnes Muteka (51) carrying out the daily routine of collecting water. A journey of 6km has now been reduced to less than 100 metres.*



*Leopaldine Mundombe, 18-year-old mother of a six-month-old baby boy, stands close by as her grandmother and aunt talk about how the youth is affected by poverty in the area.*

Leopaldine dropped out of school in the eighth grade as her grandmother, mother and aunt were becoming physically incapable of fetching water and tending to the household.

The father of her child is not in their lives, he abandoned her as soon as he found out she was pregnant.

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She is not too keen to speak about her school career as it still makes her cry sometimes that others are getting an education, while she is at home.

“I am suffering, and I know it, but what can I do? The project must come, I know that even with my grade eight, I can get some sort of work, even if it is just cleaning and cooking for the people at the site,” she said.

As for the community tap, Leopaldine said it is evident the project is here to make a change.

“We are drinking clean water from a tap that is just outside our gate. I can even come here with my son on my back, the 20 litre container is still heavy, but it is not far for me to walk anymore. Thank you, thank you.”

Leopaldine Mundombe (18) no longer must walk 6km with her baby on her back to fetch water.



*Leopaldine Mundombe, 18-year-old mother of a six-month-old baby boy would walk for 6km, with her baby on her back at times, to fetch fresh drinking water.*

Veronica has been working on-and-off since she finished her secondary school career in 2008. Although she aspired and had dreams of pursuing a tertiary education, earning a salary – no matter how small – was more urgent and necessary than obtaining a degree.

“It was difficult back then and sometimes even now, to convince parents about the importance of university education. I live with my father, mother, siblings and some of my nephews and cousins. At times, when there was no food in the house, arguments happened. I always wanted the arguments to stop, and that is why I did not even try and convince my parents about going to university,” Veronica said.

The young woman said she welcomes the ReconAfrica project, as their project will create employment for some of her uncles, older brothers and hopefully some of the females in her family.

“I don’t want my younger siblings to also have to choose working over going to university. I was very smart, and my two younger siblings are A-students. It will be another waste if they cannot go to university.”

ReconAfrica continues to create and implement skilled job opportunities for Namibian technical experts including: Business Management, PR & Communication, Logistics, Construction, Geological amongst other specialties. As part of the overall training system set-up by the Namibian government for oil and gas projects, ReconAfrica will have young Namibian geologists and engineers attending internationally recognized training programs. There will be an internal management trainee program where the company will work to implement programs to enable up and coming candidates to create options for their futures. The company has already begun on-site training programs so community members can gain more technical expertise for future opportunities.

Some people have already started doing small labour jobs like clearing areas or de-bushing for ReconAfrica. “I know as the project goes on, more jobs will be created,” Veronica clearly stated.

Responding to claims regarding wild animals in the area, Veronica said she grew up in the area close to the site, and knows for a fact, there are no longer wild animals where they once lived.

“As children we were always warned about snakes, that is all I know, but snakes are even here in Rundu town, it is green so of course there will be snakes. Guests are cautioned about snakes at guesthouses, does this mean the lodges must be closed?” Veronica does not understand why outsiders are making comments about the project concerning wildlife and other environmental concerns as there are not the type of wildlife that they refer to, in the project activity areas.

Unfortunately, after years of poverty, ongoing extreme weather conditions and lack of livelihood foodstuffs, this situation has adversely impacted the wildlife in the area due to over-hunting and poaching. As a result, Kavango area wildlife populations have been severely decimated and reduced to mostly mongoose and snakes.

As well, livestock is a symbol of wealth, and there is a reluctance to slaughter a cow or goat for meat as they are used for milk, and the cows also help plow their agricultural areas. This has also added to the situation whereby community members hunt wild animals for meat. As there has been over-hunting and poaching, the diet of the people of Kavango rural areas is often mahangu (millet flour) or maize porridge with milk and a mutate (a wild spinach).

When asked, ‘What would happen if the project did not take place as a result of giving in to pressure groups or external interest groups?’

Veronica stated in a wondering manner, that if the same arguments advanced by some of these environmentalists and external interest groups were listened to when considering the development of Rundu town, an important rural urban centre in Namibia, the town would not exist.

“We have snakes here too and it is lush with greenery. Instead, our town is here, and we have government requirements that we have to follow for our business and development activities. The same is the case for rural areas in and around Rundu.”

To further appreciate the situation in Rundu and surrounding areas, according to a 2018 ‘Economy Profile for Rundu’ by First Capital Treasury Solutions (a financial services company), Rundu had a population of 85,700 with growth rate of 5.40%. [The Namibian newspaper](#) in August this year reported that 76,068 of Rundu residents live in 18, 219 shacks, the town with the highest number of shacks in the country. According to the 2011 National Census, Rundu had the second highest population (63,431) among all towns in the country following Windhoek with a population of 322,500. While the literacy rate is at 95%, the area suffers from a measured official 40% unemployment rate, while several economists and statisticians state that the actual unemployment rate is well over 50%.

ReconAfrica has been working with local, regional, and national Namibian business suppliers including: Water Drilling, Construction, Logistics and Transport, Trucking, Telecom, Camp Management & Logistics, Training, Medical Experts and Supplies, HR Personnel & Contracting, Engineering & Project Management, Environmental and Risked Based Solutions. ReconAfrica also procures supplies and materials in Rundu and throughout Namibia.

The local economic benefits of conventional oil and gas development to Namibia will make a positive difference for the local economy and the “Voices of Rundu”.