

Field School, DAAD Network – Potentials, challenges and conflicts of resource use on communal land in the Zambezi Region, Namibia

Eight Master students of the Geographical Institute attended a field school, funded by the DAAD, in the Zambezi region of Namibia for two weeks in July. Attached to an ongoing research project by Javier Revilla Diez and Carolin Hulke, overall objective of the field school is to identify potentials, challenges and conflicts of communal resource and land use. Together with students of the University of Cologne, students of the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo and Windhoek Campus, as well as doctoral students and professors of both universities participated in the project.

The students from Cologne, Katima Mulilo and Windhoek pursued previously developed questions in four small groups. As part of a household survey, they visited around 200 residents from 15 different villages and asked about strategies for livelihood security, organisations and institutions that influence these strategies and how small farmers can benefit more from the global added value of their products. In addition, focus group discussions were held on all thematic blocks with the villagers, which had previously been organised by colleagues from UNAM Katima Mulilo. The lively participation in these discussions was due both to the competent translation of the Namibian students, who made it possible to overcome the language barrier, and to the sometimes controversial topics, which were discussed very openly. In addition, qualitative narrative and semi-structured interviews were conducted on the aspirations and wishes of the people of the region with regard to securing their livelihood and on the role of organisations and institutions.

The students were accompanied in their research project by professors and doctoral students from the University of Cologne and the University of Namibia, who provided support with their professional and methodological expertise in many regards. In particular, the knowledge of Namibian students and professors about the Zambezi region was highly appreciated by the people of Cologne.

The joint research project ended with a presentation of the preliminary results of the interviews, which were attended not only by the participants of the focus group discussions, but also by important stakeholders from regional institutions.

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