

Biocultural Community Protocol

of the OvaHerero of the Kaokoland in Angola and Namibia



Acknowledgements

This Biocultural Community Protocol is a community document of the OvaHerero Indigenous People of Namibia and Angola. The Protocol was developed by the OvaHerero with support from various partners. We thank our partners who have supported us in developing this protocol.

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Abbreviations

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
BCP	Biocultural Community Protocol
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILO	International Labour Organization
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Definitions of terms

OvaHimba: Sub-group of the OvaHerero Indigenous Peoples

The OvaHimba is a sub-group of the OvaHerero. The Ngambwe referred to the Herero as “OvaHimba”, meaning “beggar” in their language, a term that is still used today. However, the OvaHimba are not beggars and want to be referred to as the OvaHerero of the Kaokoland, living in Namibia and Angola.

OvaHerero: Indigenous Peoples of Namibia

The OvaHerero are a Bantu ethnic Indigenous group inhabiting parts of Southern Africa.

OvaTjimba: Sub-group of the OvaHerero Indigenous Peoples

OvaTjimba is a sub-group of the OvaHerero in Namibia. The community is found primarily in the Kunene Region of northwestern Namibia. Like other OvaHerero communities, the OvaTjimba have similar cultural practices, traditions, and social structures as other sub-groups. They typically follow a pastoralist way of life, relying on cattle herding for sustenance and livelihoods.

OvandaMuranda: Sub-group of the OvaHerero Indigenous Peoples

OvandaMuranda likely refers to a subgroup or clan within the OvaHerero ethnic group of Namibia. They live in part of the Kunene and mostly central and eastern parts of Namibia.

OvaMbanderu: Sub-group of the OvaHerero Indigenous Peoples

OvaMbanderu is a sub-group of the OvaHerero ethnic group of Namibia. They live in the central parts of Namibia, particularly in the regions of Otjozondjupa and Khomas. The OvaMbanderu have

the same cultural practices, traditions and social structures as other sub-groups. They traditionally practice cattle herding and have historically played significant roles in the political and social landscape of Namibia.

Ondangere and Omupyee: A Priest who conducts worship for the OvaHerero

Onganda: The homestead

Okuruuo: Sacred shrine or Holy fire

Ohore: Birds used as messengers

Mukuru: Name of God

Omupyee: Synonym of Ondangere

Oruzo: Patrilineal lineage

Eyanda: Matrilineal lineage

Okuhimba: To beg

Otjiherero: The language of the OvaHerero

Outa wotjihumba and Orupondoriro: Musical instrument

Erose: Cattle guns

Tuvindike: Protection

Ozombindi: A monument to commemorate a specific event

Ombindi: Heaps of stones as form of remembrance (grave site)

Otjize: Red ochre derived from stones traditionally mined by the community for their customary needs.



Photo | International Rivers




Introduction

We, the OvaHerero of Kaokoland, referred to as the OvaHimba of Namibia and Angola, have maintained a distinctive livelihood throughout the centuries and have gained from our rich and diverse environment. Our land has many animals, natural resources, and vast terrains with fertile soils and water from the perennial Kunene River. The semi-arid, elevated land serves as the backdrop for our agricultural activities, providing sustenance, and remains a crucial support for the native forests we rely on.

We move across the land, grazing our cattle, goats, and sheep, which is important for the community's economy. The Indigenous OvaHerero have adapted to make wise use of the natural resources within our habitat. It is very important to the community to ensure that there is a balance between preserving our natural resources and using them for our livelihoods and economic purposes.

We have participated in the stewardship of these resources over the centuries and have preserved them to this day. However, today, our livelihoods, which depend on the fragile environment, are threatened by



We have participated in the stewardship of these resources over the centuries and have preserved them to this day...

drought, unsustainable development and modernity.

We, the OvaHerero people, have thrived on our ancestral lands for generations, honouring the traditions passed down by our forebears. We have always existed in harmony with our surroundings, drawing sustenance from the land, and in return, serving as its protectors. Our connection to our land is not merely physical; it is spiritual, cultural, and deeply entwined with our identity as OvaHerero. The land is a part of our story, our heritage, and our future. We wish to continue this sacred legacy, safeguarding our territories for the generations of OvaHerero to come.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

Given the intricate relationship we maintain with our land and its resources, we urge both the Namibian and Angolan governments, along with all other pertinent parties, to acknowledge and value our pivotal role as natural conservators and guardians. Furthermore, we emphasise the urgency of recognising our customary and legal rights over our territories, land and resources. These rights are not just born out of legal statutes, but are a reflection of our historical, spiritual, and cultural ties to the land.

The Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP) of the OvaHerero of Kaokoland is a community document created to provide a roadmap for understanding our history, the traditional protocols and cultural practices that have guided our sustainable use of natural resources, our Indigenous knowledge system, as well as setting out our current challenges and community vision. Our BCP provides clear terms for regulating access to our traditional knowledge and natural resources, whilst giving insight into important social and cultural values of our people.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

Biocultural Community Protocols

Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) articulate community-determined values, procedures and priorities, and set out a community's rights and responsibilities under customary, national and international law.¹ BCPs stand as a testament to the relationship between nature, culture and traditional practices. These protocols capture the essence of how communities have, for generations, built and maintained a sustainable relationship with their environment, relying on shared knowledge, beliefs, and practices.²

Originating from the heart of communities, BCPs are not static or one-dimensional. They evolve, reflecting the adaptive and dynamic nature of human societies and their environment.³ These protocols acknowledge that the relationship between communities and their environment is not solely utilitarian. It is spiritual, emotional and rooted in millennia of shared history. Furthermore, BCPs ensure that communities remain at the centre of any discourse or decision that involves their land, resources or cultural practices.⁴

By formalising and articulating the community's values, these protocols emphasise the importance of shared stewardship, promoting sustainability, equity and respect. Under national and international law, BCPs assert the rights of communities, ensuring that external entities recognise and respect these rights.⁵ They serve as a bridge, translating customary practices into language and frameworks that modern legal systems can recognise and adhere to.⁶

In essence, Biocultural Community Protocols are more than just documents. They are a declaration of identity, resilience, and a commitment to a future where communities continue to thrive in harmony with their environment. Through BCPs, communities not only safeguard their culture, traditional knowledge, and environmental rights, but also offer insights and wisdom that can guide global conservation and sustainability efforts.⁷

1 Corrigan & Hay-Edie, 2013; Girard, Hall, & Frison, 2022.

2 Girard et al., 2022, p. 1.

3 Corrigan & Hay-Edie, 2013.

4 Jensen, 2022.

5 Buck, M., & Hamilton, C. (2011). The Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law*, 20(1), 47-61.

6 Girard et al., 2022.

7 Corrigan & Hay-Edie, 2013.



Timeline, process and methodology

The development of the Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP) for the OvaHerero of Kaokoland embraced a participatory and culturally sensitive approach that is community-centered, started in 2020 with engagement led by International Rivers. The process was on hold due to Covid travel restrictions and in 2022, Natural Justice came on board to support the development of the BCP.

A committee of members of the OvaHerero community was formed to facilitate community consultation and act as custodians for the BCP process. Researchers from the OvaHerero community were selected to lead the process. Extensive fieldwork spanning Namibia and Angola involved visits to numerous villages, including twenty-six villages in Namibia, four OvaHerero Living Museums in Namibia, and four

villages in Angola. This culminated in several community workshops in Opuwo, where data was validated with community representatives from both Angola and Namibia. From these consultations a draft BCP was co-created. Feedback from these sessions informed further drafts. A comprehensive final verification session was conducted in Windhoek, attended by OvaHerero cultural experts, committee members, and the designated researcher to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the Biocultural Community Protocol.

This inclusive process emphasised the importance of respecting cultural practices and protecting sacred natural sites, highlighting the interdependence between the OvaHerero culture and the natural world.

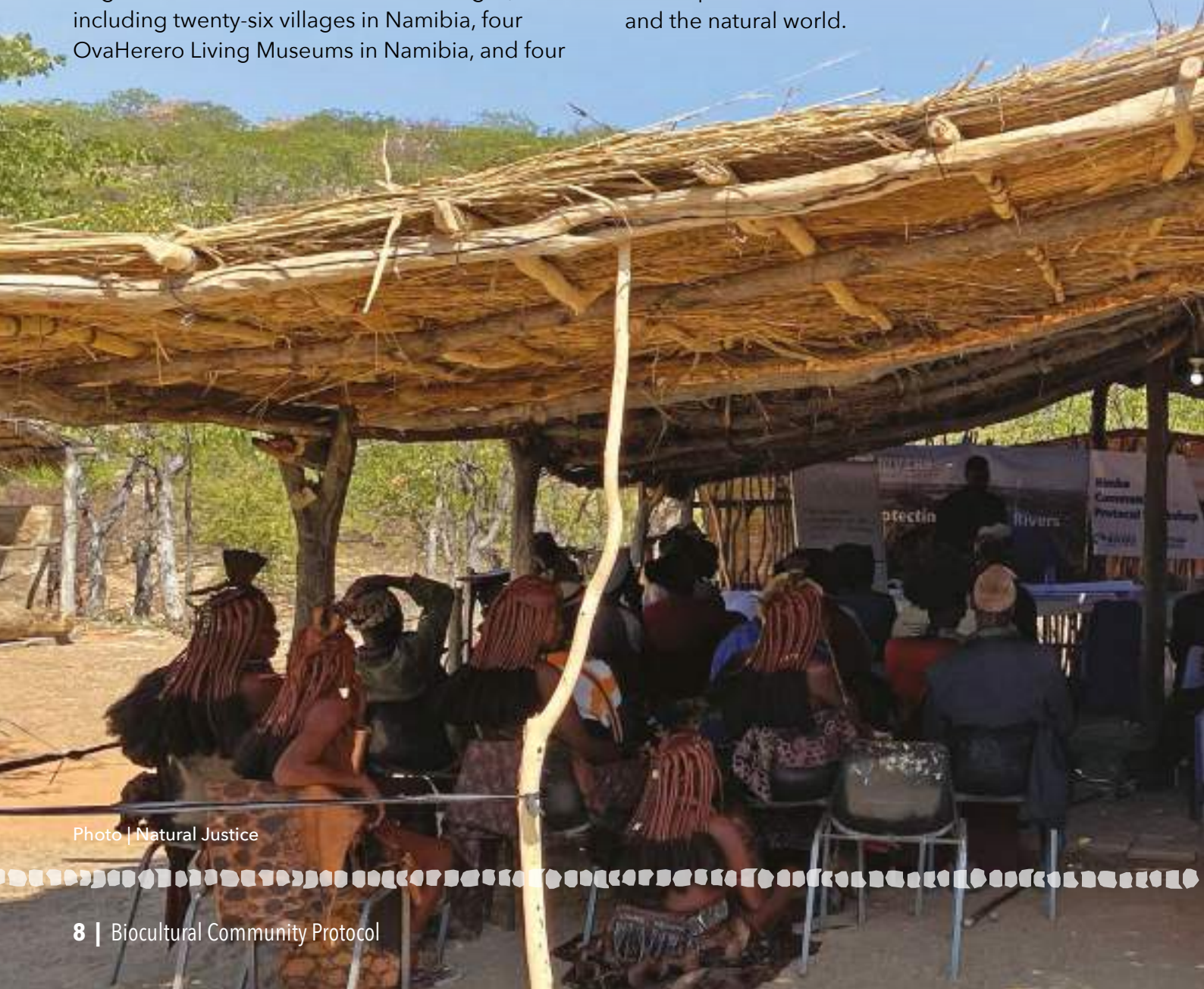


Photo | Natural Justice



Our Biocultural Community Protocol

Objective

The primary objective of the Biocultural Community Protocol of the OvaHerero of the Kaokoland, in Namibia and Angola, is to protect, promote and maintain our rights to our territory, culture and traditional practices. We want to protect our knowledge, innovations, and practices, affirming how traditional knowledge supports the sustainable local use of natural resources and ensuring intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

Our Values

Our core values form the essence of our community, embodying a commitment to preserving our Indigenous language and traditions. Rooted in beliefs in Mukuru (God) and ancestor worship, our spirituality is symbolised by the ancestral fire within our homesteads, representing continuity and connection across generations. Unity, environmental stewardship, cultural celebrations, and a dedication to Indigenous education further characterises our community, creating a vibrant tapestry woven with threads of heritage, spirituality, and shared commitment to future generations.

Our Mission

Our mission is to live on our territory in Namibia and Angola with recognised rights to the land, protection of our Indigenous knowledge, and uphold our Indigenous way of life, in harmony with nature.



Who we are - Our History and Identity



Photo | International Rivers

Okarundu KaMbeti



The OvaHerero people have a dual kinship system, consisting of both patrilineal and matrilineal structures. The patrilineal lineage, known as Oruzo, traces descent and inheritance through the male line, with individuals belonging to specific clans or lineages based on their paternal ancestry.⁸ Conversely, the matrilineal system, referred to as Eyanda, emphasises descent and inheritance through the female line. In this system, individuals are affiliated with particular maternal lineages or clans based on their mother's heritage. This dual kinship system reflects the rich cultural and social complexities within the OvaHerero community, encompassing both paternal and maternal lines of descent and influence.⁹

The lineage of the OvaHerero community can be traced back to the vast terrains of East and Central Africa.¹⁰ Oral historical accounts suggest that the OvaHerero embarked on a southward migration towards Namibia. Before entering Namibia and eventually settling in the Northeast, the OvaHerero settled at Okarundu KaMbeti, which today forms part of the territory of Angola.¹¹ Research concurs with the historical account of the migration of the OvaHerero community, and marks the year they settled as the 1500s.¹² Okarundu KaMbeti is regarded as a sacred site and is commonly known among the OvaHerero as 'the hill of Mbeti'.

8 Kuruhamu, K. A. "A Genealogy Tool to Account for the Dual Descent Kinship among OvaHerero Descents." Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Computing and Informatics, Namibia University of Science and Technology, 2022.

9 Kuruhamu, K. A. "A Genealogy Tool to Account for the Dual Descent Kinship among OvaHerero Descents." Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Computing and Informatics, Namibia University of Science and Technology, 2022.

10 Davis, A.J. (2019). *The OvaHerero Migration Patterns*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. p. 158.

11 2021-2022, Interviews with OvaHerero Oral Historians during field visits.

12 Davis *ibid*.

Over the course of the passing decades, we established our presence across various regions of Namibia, particularly in the eastern, central, and north-western territories. The legacy of the OvaHerero has extended beyond Namibia's borders, with significant populations found in neighbouring southern Angola, Botswana, and even as far as South Africa. This expansive community encompasses several sub-groups, including the OvaHimba, OvaTjimba, OvaMbanderu, and OvaNdamuranda communities.

The early history of the OvaHerero was marked by harsh droughts and calamities, prompting significant numbers of them to leave the Kaokoveld in search of better grazing lands for their livestock in the south-eastern regions. Those who remained in the Kaokoveld faced threats from the Swartbooi and Topnaar Nama communities during the 19th century. The Nama, seeking improved pastures, began raiding the land and livestock of the OvaHerero in the Kaokoveld, establishing a stronghold in Sesfontein in 1850 to coordinate their attacks. With the OvaHerero scattered and outmatched in weaponry, they suffered substantial losses of cattle over the following two decades.

Facing worsening conditions and the depletion of their resources and social structure, many OvaHerero from the Kaokoveld sought refuge across the Kunene River in Angola, where they received assistance from the Ngambwe people. The Ngambwe referred to the OvaHerero as "Ovahimba," meaning "beggar" in their language. Over time, the OvaHerero adopted this name, which is still used today. The OvaHimba people retained their OvaHerero identity, Otjiherero language, beliefs, and cultural practices.¹³

This historical context highlights the complexity of how these interactions shaped us as a distinct ethnic group within a broader cultural and historical context. However, the beginning of the 20th century was a dark period for us. Our confrontation with German colonial forces in the Herero War of 1904-1905 was catastrophic. This brutal campaign of extermination by German forces led to the tragic loss of an estimated 50-80% of the OvaHerero population.¹⁴

Despite these historical upheavals, the OvaHerero peoples' indomitable spirit and rich cultural heritage continues to thrive, echoing our resilience and unique journey across time and territories.

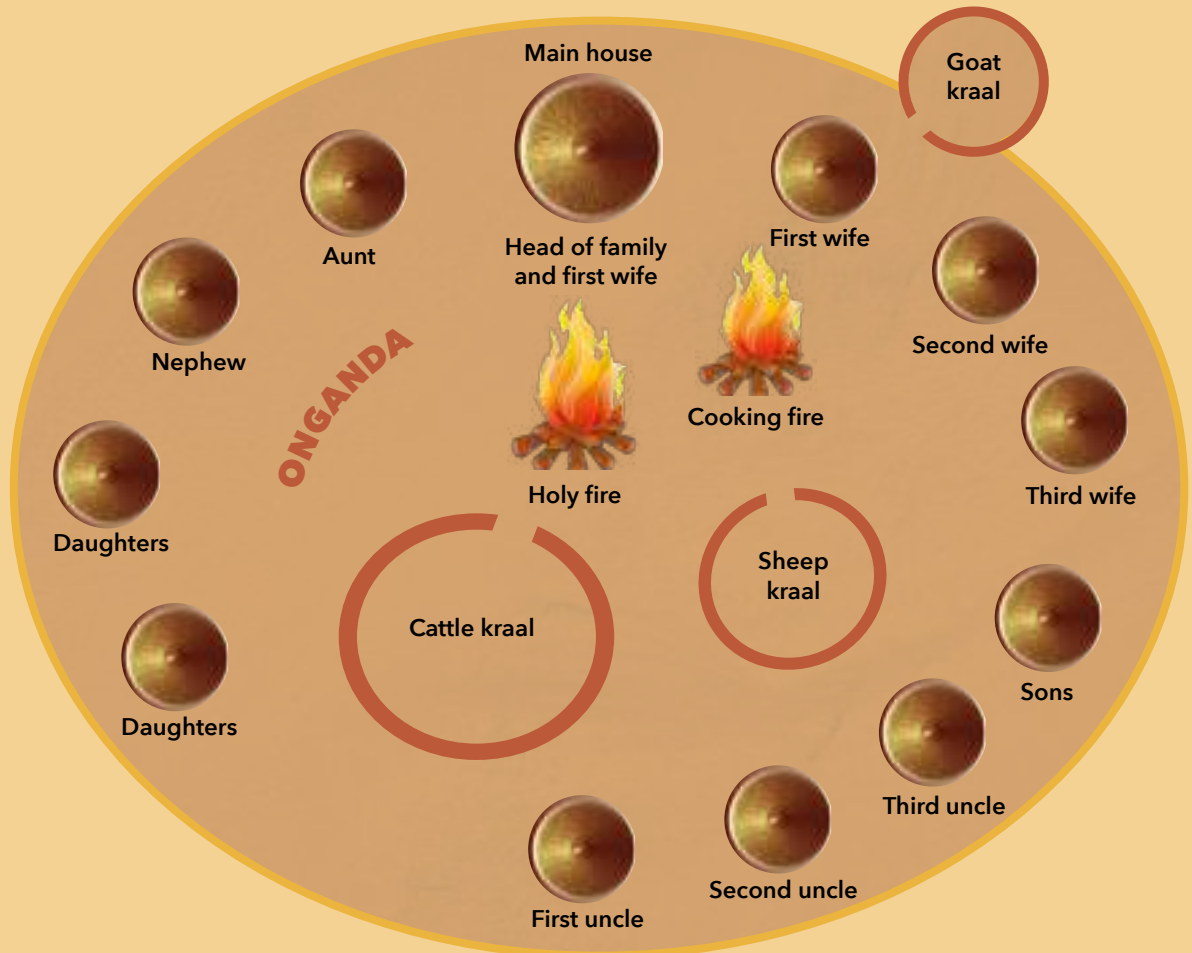
Today, the OvaHerero live in the vicinity of the Kunene River in Namibia and Angola as semi-nomadic pastoralists following the agricultural practice of animal husbandry. Our way of life is characterised by unique cultural traditions, where the primary source of wealth and income revolves around livestock. Each household typically owns a substantial number of goats and cows. We speak Otjiherero, a Bantu language.

The OvaHerero are called OvaHimba by outsiders, but we are not beggars and affirm through our BCP that we are the OvaHerero of the Kaokoland of Namibia and Angola.

13 2021-2022, Interviews with OvaHerero Oral Historians during field visits.

14 Zimmerman, L. (2020). "The Herero War: A Century-Old Scourge". *Studies in Colonial Warfare*, 14(2), p. 78.

The OvaHerero Homestead



The OvaHerero Homestead.¹⁵

Central to the OvaHerero way of life is our homestead, or Onganda. The OvaHerero people traditionally constructed our homes using natural materials sourced from our environment, particularly in the Kunene region where suitable trees are abundant.

We typically build round houses using branches from trees, and employ a mixture of cattle dung, water, and sand to create a cement-like substance, that is applied by hand and compacted to form the walls. Some houses feature thatched roofs made from grass gathered from the surroundings.

¹⁵ From *OvaHimba community in Namibia ventures into crowdsourcing design*. By Stanley, C., Winschiers-Theophilus, H., Blake, E., Rodil, K., & Kapuire, G. K. (2015).

Additionally, the kraal, or enclosure for livestock, is often constructed using thorn branches, while the overall layout of the homestead is designed to honour the spiritual connections with our ancestors. In the centre of the homestead, there is typically a main hut facing the kraal, with a holy fire situated between them, symbolising the significance of ancestral reverence and the interconnectedness of our daily lives with spiritual beliefs and practices.

The very layout of the Onganda is emblematic of our beliefs, traditions, and way of life. Built in a circular pattern, the Onganda typically houses individual family huts that encircle two pivotal elements: the ancestral fire (Okuruuo) and the cattle pen.

Communal homestead structures promote cooperation and mutual support during times of scarcity or crisis. Community members unite to share resources,

demonstrating the vital role of social cohesion in surviving the inhospitable environment.

The ancestral fire is more than merely a physical entity for warmth or cooking. It is a spiritual touchstone, a link between the living and our ancestors. As part of our ancestor worship practices, this fire is diligently kept burning, symbolising the ever-present connection to our forebears. It's believed that through this fire, ancestors offer guidance, protection, and blessings to the living.

Adjacent to the ancestral fire is the cattle pen. Cattle are a symbol of wealth, status, and sustenance. The proximity of the pen to the fire and the heart of the Onganda underscores the deep-rooted relationship between the OvaHerero, our ancestors, and our cattle. It's a harmonious trifecta that defines our way of life.



Photo | International Rivers



Our territory

Our territory spans across the Kaokoland in Namibia and Angola, including forests, rivers and Sacred sites.

Kaokoland, formerly an administrative unit and “Bantustan” in northern South West Africa (now Namibia), was established in 1980 during the apartheid era with the intention of being a self-governing homeland for the OvaHerero people. However, no actual government was established, and Hereroland leaders administered the territory. Like other homelands in South West Africa, Kaokoland was abolished in May 1989 as Namibia transitioned towards independence.¹⁶

Despite its formal dissolution, “Kaokoland” remains informally used to refer to the geographic area, while administrative control since 1990 has been under the Kunene Region. Situated within the Kaokoveld eco-region, the area is characterised by its rugged terrain and low population density, with only one person per 2 km², a quarter of the national average. The OvaHerero are the predominant ethnic group, constituting approximately 5,000 of the overall 16,000 inhabitants of Kaokoland. The principal settlement in the region was the city of Opuwo.¹⁷

Geographically, Kaokoland stretches from the Hoanib River in the south, to the Kunene River in the north, which forms the border between Namibia and Angola. The landscape is predominantly mountainous, with notable ranges including the Baynes Mountains, Otjihipa Mountains, and Hartmann Mountains¹⁸.

While the southern part of Kaokoland is characterised by dry, rocky terrain bordering the



Kaokoland leadership during the apartheid era

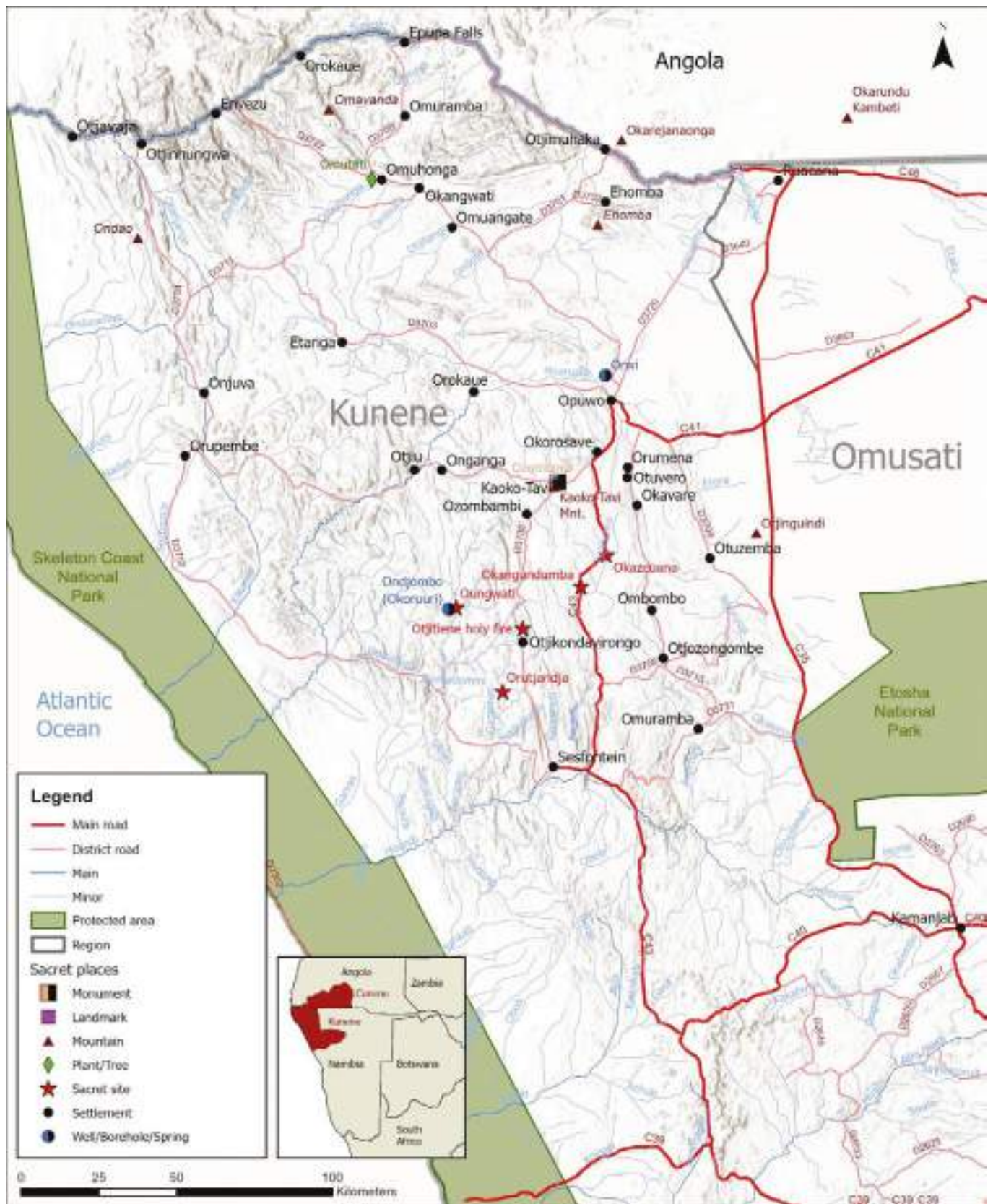
Namib Desert, the northern region is greener, featuring thriving vegetation in valleys such as the Marienfluss and Hartmann Valley. Additionally, Kaokoland is home to significant natural landmarks such as the Ruacana Falls and Epupa Falls, both formed by the Kunene River.

Geographical landmarks such as trees, mountains, rivers, and valleys provide essential points of reference for navigation and orientation in the vast and diverse landscapes of our land, holding immense significance to us, guiding our decisions when selecting settlement locations. The process involves a meticulous consideration of the surrounding landscape, with specific attention to geographical features that resonate with the community. We have a deep connection with our ancestral lands and the ecosystem that surrounds us. Our cultural, ancestral, spiritual, and physical identity is derived from our coexistence and close connections with the landscape. This underscores the vital nature of each component within our ecosystem for our continued existence.

16 Muparure, Francis. “Kaokoland: A Brief Overview of its History and Geography.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 189-204.

17 Muparure, Francis. “Kaokoland: A Brief Overview of its History and Geography.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 189-204.

18 Craven, P. (2009). *Phytogeographic study of the Kaokoveld Centre of Endemism* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch).



A map co-created by the OvaHerero community during community workshops of the territory of the OvaHerero, important sacred natural sites and natural resources.

Significant resources

We rely on the natural resources found on our territory to survive, to obtain food, shelter, healthcare, to worship in our sacred sites, and to carry out our traditions.

Our reliance on water extends beyond basic needs to encompass spiritual purification and cultural practices. Water is not only used for cooking, bathing, and hydration but also holds immense spiritual significance, serving as a medium for purification rituals and spiritual cleansing. The community gathers around water sources to renew their spiritual connection with nature.

Furthermore, the local flora and fauna play integral roles in the community's daily lives and cultural practices. The rich biodiversity of the region provides essential resources for medicine, food, and construction materials. Plants are meticulously utilised for their medicinal properties, with knowledge of herbal remedies passed down through generations. Additionally,

certain plants serve as dietary staples, contributing to the community's nutritional well-being.

The fauna of the area also holds immense importance, serving as a vital food source and integral component of cultural practices. Wildlife is hunted for sustenance, and their hides and bones are utilised for crafting tools and artefacts. Beyond their practical utility, animals hold symbolic significance in the community's spiritual beliefs and rituals. The community reveres certain animals as totems, embodying spiritual connections and ancestral ties.

Overall, the intertwined relationship between the community and its natural surroundings underscores the depth of their reliance on water, flora, and fauna. These resources not only sustain the community's physical existence, but also nourish their spiritual and cultural heritage, fostering a profound connection to the land and its biodiversity.



Photo | International Rivers

Wild fruit



Photo | Pixabay

Kudu bull



Our Way of Life

A desire to protect and preserve our land and environment is a desire to protect our dignity, heritage, and identity. Therefore, we strive to coexist and develop together with the environment and demand respect for the mutual relationship between the environment and the community.

The OvaHerero's deep-rooted connection with our environment is evident in our practices that prioritise the health of the ecosystem. We look to the environment to understand its health. Birds, or "Ohore," are venerated as guardians of the environment. Their presence and well-being are considered indicators of ecological health. We know that the well-being of the environment directly influences our health and prosperity. With our livelihoods intrinsically tied to the land, we have developed sustainable methods to interact with our surroundings in a manner that preserves it.

The OvaHerero's semi-nomadic lifestyle is not just a cultural or traditional choice, it is a strategic and sustainable approach to living, forged over centuries, allowing us to harness resources without depleting or harming the ecosystem. Our way of life exemplifies a model of sustainable coexistence, where the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Our community employs a comprehensive set of practices to preserve and sustain the ecosystem.

These methods include:

- Considerate harvesting of fruits and vegetables
- Rotational grazing to prevent overgrazing and promote land recovery
- Innovative water management strategies using alternate sources and adapting our personal hygiene routines to use water sparingly
- Shared water sources for both people and livestock
- Selective logging
- Responsible honey harvesting
- Elders-led gathering of wild fruits and plants according to traditional knowledge
- Sustainable housing practices
- Customary consequences when community members violate our customs

The OvaHerero possess extensive knowledge of local animals and plants, crucial for survival during droughts. Passed down through generations, our resource management practices ensure resilience in the face of environmental challenges. The community's holistic approach emphasises the interconnected needs of both people and animals, ensuring a balanced and enduring relationship with the environment.

In principle, the OvaHerero's practices exemplify a model for harmonious coexistence with nature. Rooted in tradition and ecological understanding, these practices provide a lens through which modern societies can perceive sustainable development. Imparting knowledge to our younger generation about these practices are essential. Actively involving the community in land preservation initiatives not only reinforces our cultural bonds but also fortifies our commitment to ecological balance.





Photo | International Rivers

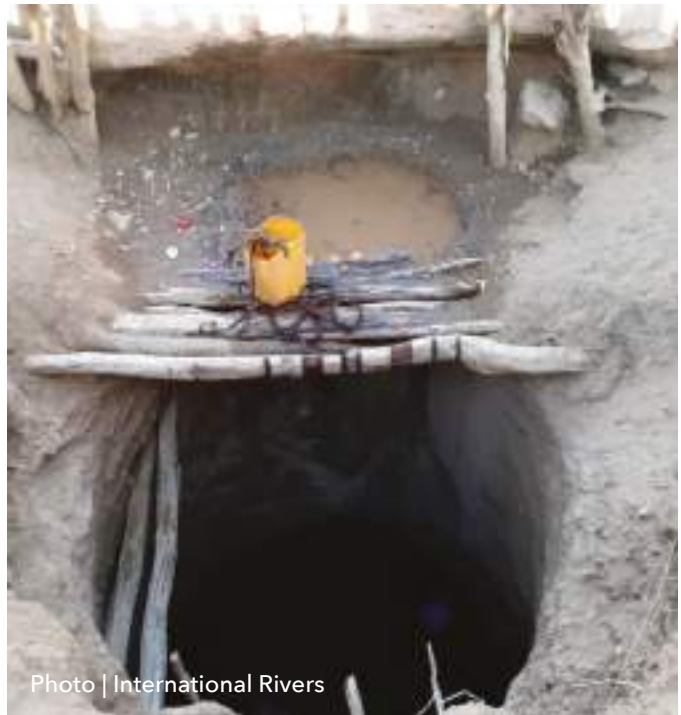


Photo | International Rivers

A well in Otjitaazu, Angola district

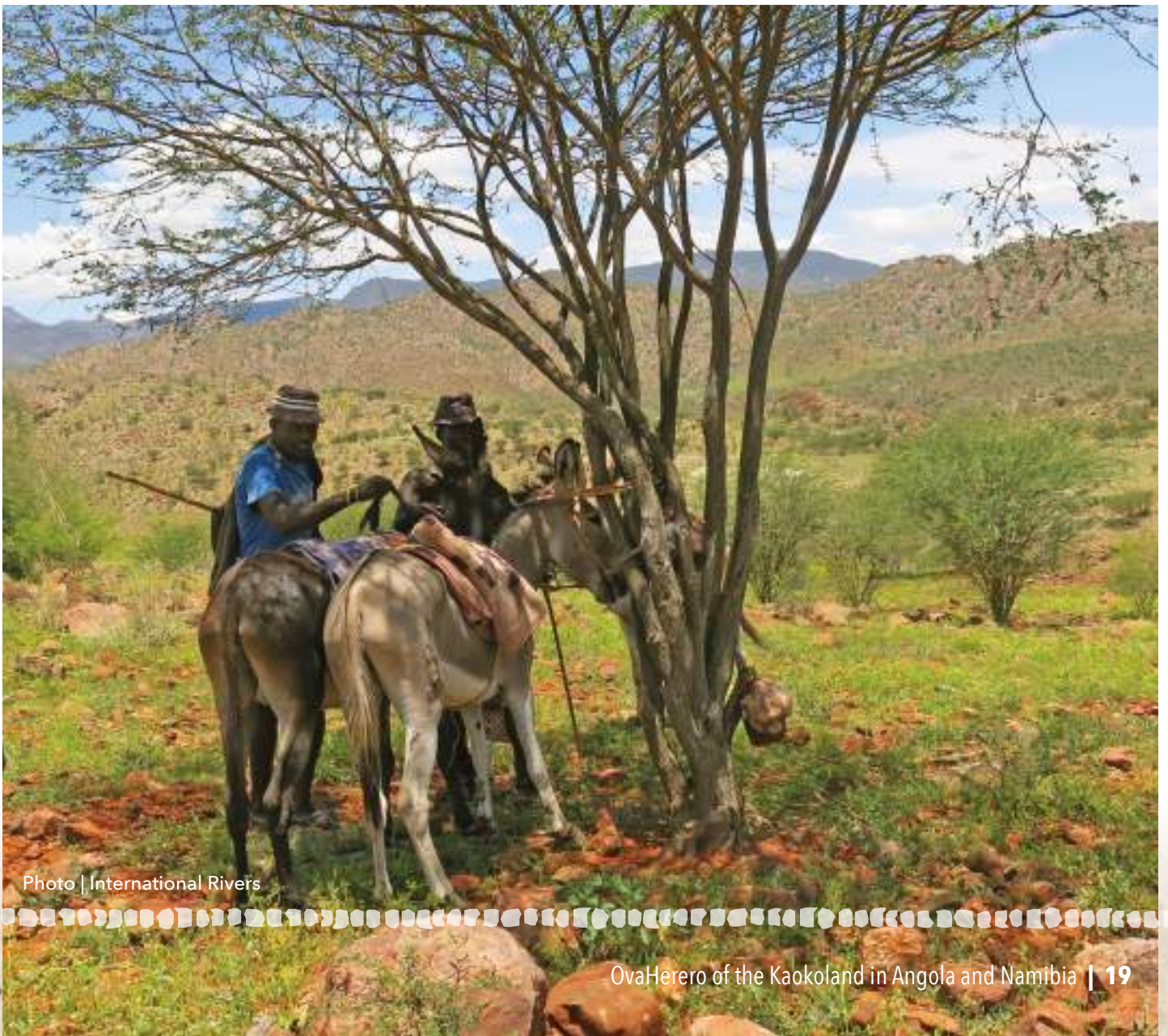


Photo | International Rivers



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia



Photo | Pixabay

Our tangible and intangible culture and heritage

Our sacred sites

Our relationship with the land goes beyond mere occupation or using it for practical purposes. Our territory, which is rich in cultural and spiritual heritage, is marked by numerous sites of profound importance. These encompass sacred geographical features such as mountains, rivers, valleys, and specific trees, as well as entire districts. Once a suitable location for a settlement is identified, it is always deeply intertwined with the cultural practice of naming. These names are intricately tied to significant events that transpired in the area, such as the passing of a prominent individual. Thus, the naming of a place among the OvaHerero becomes a poignant reflection of the historical and emotional tapestry woven into the geographical landscape, preserving the memory of noteworthy important occurrences for generations to come.

Integral to the OvaHerero identity, these sites serve as ceremonial grounds and locations for specific rituals, burials, and commemorations, representing a harmonious unification of beliefs, history, and nature. To interact with or approach sacred sites, a series of purification rituals have to be conducted and overseen by the designated priest or spiritual leader, the Ondangere or Omupye.

The sanctity of the OvaHerero territory is not confined solely to these consecrated spaces. The entire territory is regarded as sacrosanct and holds a sacred status. This influences how we interact with the land. Therefore, when there are external intrusions and encroachments onto our land by government and other actors without adhering to or observing the traditional rituals, it is perceived as unjust as it threatens the cultural and spiritual equilibrium of the OvaHerero.

Traditionally, sacredness is attributed to places through various ways. Often, it emerges from the last wishes or pronouncements of a dying individual, which the community then respects and observes. Historical events, such as wartime practices, have also endowed certain sites with a spiritual dimension. One such example is the wartime practice where protection (tuvindike) was sought by the OvaHerero from the Ovatuweya/Ovakoroka tribe. This ritual, aiming to dispel evil, resulted in the manifestation of ozombindi amongst the OvaHerero. A place's sanctity can also emerge from curses, especially if the curse remains unresolved at the time of the individual's passing. Furthermore, areas where individuals have met untimely deaths, either through conflict or other tragedies, acquire sacred status, often marked by 'Ombindi' (heaps of stones) as a form of remembrance and reverence.

The importance of our sacred sites

1. Ancestral Connection: Every sacred site, whether a mountain or a solitary tree, echoes with the whispers of OvaHerero ancestors. It is the community's belief that these sites are sanctified by the presence of our forebears, making them conduits for ancestral communication. When rituals are performed or offerings presented, it's more than just a symbolic act; it's an intimate communion with those who walked the land before, seeking their wisdom, blessings, and protection. Many natural elements hold importance for us, such as the fire in the homestead, known as the "Okuruwo", which is a link between the living and the dead. Through the fire we connect with our ancestors. It is maintained by the head of the household and has a central place in our homestead.



2. Spiritual Significance: Beyond ancestry, these sites are perceived as reservoirs of spiritual energy. They act as portals to the spiritual realm, places of heightened connectivity between the living OvaHerero and the myriad spirits believed to influence our fate. Approaching or entering these sites often demands reverence and ritualistic preparation, underscoring their profound spiritual significance.

3. Cultural Identity: An inseparable strand in the OvaHerero's cultural tapestry, these sacred sites are rich repositories of traditional stories, historical events, and myths. As stories of heroism, love, tragedy,

and triumph are narrated generation after generation, the sites become living testaments to our community's rich history. This ensures that the cultural identity remains robust and unbroken.

4. Ceremonies and Rituals: The sanctity and energy of these sites make them ideal places for various ceremonies. Be it a young OvaHerero transitioning into adulthood or a healer invoking spirits to cure ailments, these rituals gain potency when performed at these sacred grounds. The sites, thus, facilitate community cohesion, ensuring traditions are not just remembered but re-lived.

5. Environmental Stewardship: Nature and spirituality are deeply intertwined in the OvaHerero worldview. By sanctifying specific sites, the community inherently dedicates itself to their preservation. This reverence ensures that the areas are not over-exploited, preserving biodiversity and ecological balance. The sacred sites, in essence, become microcosms of environmental conservation, showcasing how spirituality can coexist with and even bolster environmental stewardship.

The OvaHerero sacred sites are more than just places; they are pivotal anchors of our belief systems, history, and ecological consciousness. Protecting and understanding the significance of these sites is vital, not just for the OvaHerero, but as exemplary lessons in biocultural conservation for the global community.

Traditional customs and ceremonies

Traditional customs and ceremonies serve as an essential bridge between the OvaHerero community, their ancestral lands, and natural resources. These examples of customs and ceremonies within the community highlight the profound and inherent harmony between the people and their surroundings, enhanced by our respect for ancestors who serve as guardians and mediators between the community and our environment.

Rainmaking Ceremonies: Critical to the survival of our community and livestock in this water-scarce region, these ceremonies involve entreating the ancestors to intercede on behalf of the people, asking for rain. It underscores the community's reliance on and respect for the hydrological cycles of our land.

Visitation to Sacred Sites: Upon entering sacred spaces, rituals are performed to request ancestral guidance and protection. This ensures that the sanctity of these sites are upheld and that they remain undisturbed, fostering an environment where nature and spirituality coexist harmoniously.

Locating the Lost: Whether it's a lost community member or livestock, invoking the ancestors' intervention symbolises the intrinsic value of every individual and animal within the community, emphasising the communal spirit and the essentiality of each entity for the community's holistic well-being.

Water Resource Management: When undertaking activities like drilling boreholes or digging wells, the OvaHerero community seeks ancestral permission. This ritual underscores the sanctity of water sources and the recognition of the finite nature of these resources, thereby promoting sustainable practices.

Harvesting Wild Fruits: Before gathering wild fruits, there is a ritualistic appeal to ancestors, seeking their blessings to find abundant produce. This embodies the community's reliance on and respect for the flora within our domain, ensuring sustainable harvesting that doesn't deplete resources.

First Harvest Offering: When the first harvest is collected, a portion is offered to the ancestors as a gesture of gratitude and acknowledgment of their role in ensuring a bountiful yield. This practice reinforces the cyclical nature of agriculture and the mutual respect between humans, land, and ancestors.

Timing of Festivals: The OvaHerero's timing of festivals and ceremonies is intricately linked to practical, environmental, and seasonal factors. Conducting significant community activities during winter months is both a traditional and practical solution for preserving food in an environment without modern refrigeration.





Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia



Photo | Alan J Hendry Unsplash

Land Encroachment and Displacement

The traditional territories of the OvaHerero are increasingly under threat from land appropriation, expanding conservancies, urbanisation, mining and large-scale agriculture projects. Our ancestral connection to the land is being strained as our access to traditional territories and sacred sites diminishes. Historically, we have led a semi-nomadic pastoralist life, with the freedom to traverse vast stretches of land in harmony with nature's rhythms. This lifestyle, that is so intrinsic to our identity, is now under threat.

Restrictions on hunting and gathering

As restrictions (rules and guidelines) on hunting and gathering indigenous foods intensify, another facet of our traditional knowledge is jeopardised. These practices, more than just a means of sustenance, carry with them a wealth of indigenous knowledge about our environment, flora, and fauna. They are not just activities, but rituals, where knowledge about the land, its offerings, and its preservation are passed down. The fading of these practices implies the fading of this intimate knowledge.

Western schooling

Schooling traditionally focused on transmitting traditional knowledge, language, OvaHerero history, cultural practices, and societal values. It further included instruction on musical instruments used by the OvaHerero, such as Outa wotjihumba, and Orupondoriro, used by the goat

herders, along with skills like using cattle guns (erose) for cattle herding. Western education introduced by the government requires children to wear a school uniform, instead of being allowed to wear traditional clothing. Traditional knowledge is not included in the current curriculum and, as children spend a lot of time at school, there is little opportunity for them to learn from their community, especially from elders.



Photo | Artush, Shutterstock

OvaHerero society

The OvaHerero community has long been characterised by a well-organised structure, assigning specific roles to each gender that are respected and recognised, fostering an environment where gender equality and children's rights are upheld with reverence. The systematic placement of individuals in the societal fabric has traditionally cultivated a balanced and harmonious coexistence. However, the

introduction of new societal roles emphasising gender equality and children’s rights is met with apprehension within the community. Some perceive these modern roles as potentially destabilising to the traditional family structure, raising concerns about the impact of these shifts on the longstanding dynamics within the OvaHerero society.

Conservancies

Community-based conservation efforts are very evident in the Kunene regions. However, the efforts to protect biodiversity do not usually acknowledge indigenous knowledge or make use of local indigenous knowledge incorrectly. Conservancies force indigenous hunters out, employ them as guards and introduce foreigners as trophy hunters. This is a discriminatory practice. The process of reserving certain areas for wildlife restricts the lives of the semi-nomadic OvaHerero herders.

Climate change

Namibia is a country that is vulnerable to climate change due to its hot, dry climate and erratic rainfall. As a result, the country will face more severe droughts, water scarcity, desertification, and land degradation. As a community deeply



Photo | International Rivers

connected to the environment, the OvaHerero are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Changes in rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, or increased desertification impact our pastoralist lifestyle, affecting livestock and access to water. As a community we need to be part of the government’s adaptation strategies that will improve our ability to cope with these impacts.

Loss of Language and Oral Traditions

The OvaHerero language, “Otjiherero,” plays a crucial role in preserving traditional knowledge within the community, as medium of communication, and serving as a conduit for passing down ancestral wisdom and cultural heritage across generations. It encapsulates essential aspects of OvaHerero traditions, including ecological understanding, oral histories, and societal norms, making its preservation vital for maintaining cultural identity and heritage. However, as English and other dominant languages become more prevalent, especially in schools and urban areas, there’s a risk that younger OvaHerero generations might not be fluent in their native tongue. The potential loss of language equates to a loss of cultural narratives, oral histories, and indigenous knowledge.



Photo | Pixabay

Exploitation of our culture

Traditional songs and cultural practices are repositories of collective memory, historical events, values, and beliefs. We see that these are misused or misappropriated, when extracted from their contextual significance and can inadvertently erode cultural value. Such an act risks reducing these songs to mere commodities, stripped of their depth and richness.

Further, we observe the unauthorised or inappropriate documentation of the OvaHerero's attire by tourists. This leads to potential misinterpretations, leading to cultural misrepresentation in broader spheres.

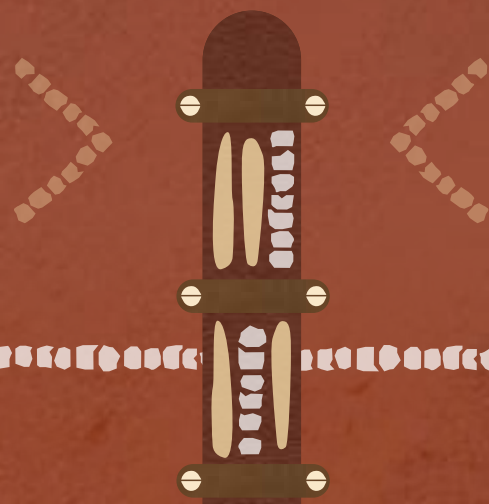
Our traditional songs and cultural practices form an intricate web of spiritual, cultural, and historical significance. Protecting these elements from misappropriation or misinterpretation is important, ensuring the preservation of our rich heritage and identity. Living museums, while aiming to showcase culture, often commercialise traditions, taking them out of their original context. For instance, practices like lighting the holy fire, traditionally reserved for specific times like sunrise and sunset, may be misrepresented

for tourist demonstration purposes, deviating from authentic traditions. This commercialisation can sometimes prioritise entertainment over preserving the genuine essence of cultural practices. Tourists may be lured into wearing attire that is not in line with traditional customs, solely for financial gain. Additionally, these museums may play songs or perform rituals associated with specific events, such as death ceremonies, purely for entertainment purposes and profit, rather than respecting the solemn significance of these practices.

Due to economic hardships, certain OvaHerero communities have resorted to exploiting their cultural heritage for financial gain. They have opened their homesteads to tourists, offering cultural experiences and selling handmade crafts, even if some of these crafts are not traditional to their culture. This exploitation extends to allowing tourists into their sacred spaces, such as the main huts where important spiritual items like calabashes are kept, exposing these sacred artefacts to commercialisation and disruption. Some OvaHerero have taken up residency on farms and are exploited by farm owners as a tourist attraction.



Protecting our traditional songs and cultural practices from misappropriation or misinterpretation is important, ensuring the preservation of our rich heritage and identity.



Marginalisation and Lack of Representation

The OvaHerero communities of Kaokoland reject being labelled as marginalised, asserting our identity as an indigenous minority community. We question the narrative of marginalisation, prompting reflection on who is truly marginalising whom within broader societal contexts. Despite our rich cultural heritage, like many indigenous groups worldwide, we often find ourselves excluded in broader national discussions.

We lack proper representation of OvaHerero in governmental bodies and find that our concerns are overlooked in favour of broader national or economic interests. This lack of voice and representation can hinder the ability to protect our rights, traditions, and territories.

Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts that respect and integrate the OvaHerero's traditional knowledge system, ensuring that our unique identity and relationship with the land remains intact for future generations.



Photo | International Rivers



Photo | International Rivers

Solutions we propose

Conservancy management

Stakeholder Engagement: It's crucial for conservancy management to engage with local communities, especially indigenous groups, to ensure that their rights and traditions are respected.

Sustainable Hunting Practices: Should trophy hunting continue, it must be done sustainably, ensuring that it does not lead to the decline of species or disrupt the ecological balance.

Alternative Revenue Streams: Conservancies should explore alternative revenue streams, such as eco-tourism, that can be more sustainable and less intrusive than trophy hunting.

Education and Advocacy: There should be awareness raised about the impacts of trophy hunting on wildlife and local communities, whilst highlighting the benefits of traditional hunting methods and practices.

In conclusion, while trophy hunting can provide economic benefits, it's essential to weigh these benefits against the ecological, cultural, and spiritual costs, especially in regions where indigenous communities have lived in harmony with nature for generations.



Photo | Natural Justice

Cultural appreciation and education

School attire: Learners should be allowed to wear traditional attire. In some areas, we have petitioned to the schools to allow learners to go to school with their traditional attire and we have requested the government to allow OvaHerero teachers to teach in their traditional clothes. Some schools in the region, like Omuhonga Primary School, have introduced uniforms designed in the traditional style and the learners are permitted to wear their traditional hairstyle.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

Education centre: To restore and preserve our cultural heritage and way of life, specifically among the youth, we envisage the development of an education centre. Such a centre will allow elders/cultural experts to teach the youth, and can be used in partnership with schools, to ensure that our traditional knowledge is transferred to the next generation.

Cultural exploitation: Laws and policies should be created to prevent the exploitation and theft of our customary knowledge and cultural practices, whilst giving our local communities the authority to manage the commercialisation of our cultural

heritage and to profit from it. We encourage moral tourism that upholds the dignity and cultural integrity of us as Indigenous peoples.

Loss of Language and Oral Traditions:

There should be investments in projects and programs for language preservation that support the use of native languages in daily communication and education. To guarantee that cultural practices and oral traditions are preserved for future generations, it is vital that they are recorded. Therefore, opportunities for storytelling and intergenerational learning to spread cultural values and knowledge should be created.

Climate change

There should be close collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations to create methods for climate adaptation that consider our indigenous knowledge and customs. We encourage initiatives for sustainable livelihoods that assist the community in adjusting to changing environmental conditions, and sharing knowledge with the community about the effects of climate change, whilst providing them with the tools for improved resilience.

Religious influences

To discover common ground and respect for one another's beliefs, traditional spiritual leaders and religious organisations should engage in discussions and guide the community on the value of maintaining traditional spiritual traditions in addition to religious convictions.



Photo | International Rivers

Where appropriate, there should be a promotion of incorporating traditional spiritual traditions into religious rites.

Land Encroachment and Displacement:

Through community action and legal avenues, we want to advocate for the recognition and protection of OvaHerero holy places, sacred sites and traditional areas. Sustainable land management strategies should be developed that honour indigenous rights and knowledge.



Photo | International Rivers



Claiming our rights

As an indigenous community coexisting with our environment and land, we have clear rights under domestic, regional and international laws over all aspects of our ways of life. We have developed our BCP to preserve our biocultural rights.

Our biocultural rights include, but are not limited to, rights related to our traditional knowledge, innovation and practices, natural resources, land and water, culture and heritage, traditional occupations, customary law, and systems of governance.¹⁹

National, Regional and International laws

Both the **Namibian Constitution** and the **Angolan Constitution** consider all people equal before the law and confer rights irrespective of ethnicity, orientation, status or any other distinction.

These rights are further supported by other domestic laws, and regional and international agreements that aim to affirm and protect the human and environmental rights of Indigenous peoples.

As the OvaHerero, we uphold customary laws that govern various aspects of our lives, including land rights, marriage, inheritance, conflict resolution, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Essential to these practices is our deep connection to the environment, including sacred sites, and animals and plants, which have been preserved through generations using traditional knowledge.

Our right to continue these customary practices is recognised in **Article 66** of the **Namibian Constitution** and **Article 7** of the **Angolan Constitution**.

Further, the application of international agreements in Namibia is specifically recognised by Article 144 of the Namibian Constitution. It confirms the position in Roman-Dutch law (common law) that the general rules of public international law have always been part of national law in Namibia. Namibia is a signatory to numerous regional and international agreements, and because of its legal system, once approved, these agreements form part of the laws of Namibia.

Similarly, in Angola, Article 13 of the Constitution recognises that international law which has been approved and published is an integral part of the Angolan legal system for as long as they are internationally binding.



Photo | International Rivers

¹⁹ K Bavikatte 'Stewarding The Earth: Rethinking Property And The Emergence Of Biocultural Rights' (2014) Oxford Scholarship Online.

Laws that uphold our community rights, values & right to self-determination

The OvaHerero, as with any other groups in Namibia and Angola, are equal before the law and have equal access to rights afforded under law.²⁰

These rights include being able to practice our culture and, thereby, have our way of life respected, protected and free from any form of discrimination.²¹

The right to freely practice and observe our way of life, as well as the duty on the State to protect it, is further supported regionally through the **African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights**.

The African Charter states that all people are equal²² and that every individual may freely partake in the cultural life of their community, with the State being tasked to promote and protect the morals and traditional values attached thereto.²³

Internationally, these rights are linked to the **right to self-determination** which indicates the legal right of people to determine their own destiny.²⁴ As the OvaHerero, we have the right to decide how we will develop as a people, and to have our development be in line with our cultural practices and way of life, and to have these be respected.

The **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** states that all people have the right to self-determination and that they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.²⁵ It adds further that in countries where ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.²⁶

The principle of self-determination necessitates that the Namibian and Angolan governments, by means of their Constitutions and legal frameworks, safeguard the rights and interests of minority groups, including groups such as the OvaHerero.²⁷

The right to our way of life, and to not be forced to adopt the way of life of any other group or modern society, is further emphasised in the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**.

UNDRIP states that Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture,²⁸ and that they have the right to belong to an Indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned.²⁹

20 Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and Article 13 of the Republic of Angola.

21 Article 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, and Article 79 and 87 of the Republic of Angola.

22 Article 19 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

23 Article 17(2) and (3) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

24 [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/self_determination_\(international_law\)](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/self_determination_(international_law)) Accessed on 28 September 2023.

25 Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

26 Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

27 See for example, Van Dyke, V. (1969). Self-Determination and Minority Rights. *International Studies Quarterly*, 13(3), 223-253. Although written in 1969, Van Dyke's arguments link well with the contents of UNDRIP that was adopted in 2007.

28 Article 8(2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

29 Article 9 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Laws that protect, promote and preserve traditional knowledge and cultural heritage

In order to give effect to our right to self-determination, we must be able to practice our way of life, including our culture, and the traditional knowledge attached thereto must be protected. The traditional knowledge which we hold must be preserved through the passing of knowledge to our young people.

Namibia's **Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007** provides that '*Namibia's cultural ... heritage...must be protected and respected for the benefit of present and future generations*'.³⁰

Similarly, the Angolan **Constitution** affords citizens and communities the right to have their cultural, linguistic and artistic identity respected, appreciated and preserved.

It also places the responsibility on the State to promote and encourage the conservation and appreciation of the historic, cultural and artistic heritage of the Angolan people.³¹ To ensure that young people are able to enjoy their cultural rights, they must be afforded special protection in culture.³²

30 Section 3 of the Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007.

31 Article 87(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola.

32 Article 81(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola.

33 Article 13(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

34 Article 11(1) and (2), Article 12(1) and (2), Article 31(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

This is further supported by Article 11 of the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** which requires that the education of the child be directed to the preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures.

The UNDRIP places the responsibility on the State to ensure that this right is upheld. It states that "*Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons, and that the States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected*".³³

The UNDRIP also recognises the importance of having access to our cultural sites as well as the use of cultural objects and resources in the practicing of our culture, and our intellectual property attached thereto. Where we are not provided access to these sites or to cultural objects which are now in the possession of the State, the State has the responsibility, in consultation with us, to ensure that this is remedied.³⁴

The responsibility on the State is not only to protect our tangible cultural heritage, but also the intangible practices which inform our way of life and are central to who we are as the Ovaherero people.

This too should be done in consultation with us to ensure that the measures implemented respect our way of life.



Photo | International Rivers

The **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** provides that the State shall *“take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, and among the safeguarding measures referred to in Article 2, paragraph 3, identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations”*.³⁵ The State should also ensure that communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage are actively involved in the management of measures which are implemented.³⁶

As parties to the United Nations **Convention on Biological Diversity**, Namibia and Angola should, *“subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices”*.³⁷

This provision is particularly relevant as there is growing interest in traditional knowledge and traditional ways of life. The interest has seen a push for research to be done to understand the traditional practices of Indigenous and local communities. This poses a risk to us due to the

35 Article 11 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

36 Article 15 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

37 Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

possible negative impacts on our cultural and intellectual heritage.

In light of this, the **Tkarihwaie:ri Code of Ethical Conduct under the Convention for Biological Diversity** was developed in cooperation with Indigenous and local communities to ensure respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.³⁸ The ethical principles held in the Code can inform Namibia and Angola in their efforts to safeguard traditional knowledge and foster sustainable biodiversity practices.

Furthermore, **the Nagoya Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity** was developed to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources,³⁹ as well as ensuring that traditional knowledge associated with genetic

resources that is held by Indigenous and local communities is accessed with the prior and informed consent and involvement of these Indigenous and local communities, and that mutually agreed terms have been established.⁴⁰ It is the responsibility of both the Namibian and Angolan governments to take into consideration Indigenous and local communities' customary laws, community protocols and procedures with respect to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.⁴¹

As a result, Namibia's **Access to Biological and Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge Act 2 of 2017** was developed to regulate access to biological or genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, and provides a mechanism for the fair and equitable benefit sharing in respect of these resources.



Photo | International Rivers

38 The Tkarihwaie:ri Code of Ethical Conduct to Ensure Respect for the Cultural and Intellectual Heritage of Indigenous and Local Communities Relevant to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity.

39 Article 1 of the The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

40 Article 7 of the Nagoya Protocol.

41 Article 12 of the Nagoya Protocol.

Laws that promote the protection and conservation of the environment and land

Domestic laws in Namibia and Angola recognise the relationships people have with their environment. The laws require that the State actively pursues the protection and promotion of these relationships.

As the OvaHerero people, our relationship with the environment and land is intrinsic to who we are - we cannot be separated from it. Thus, the protection and conservation of our environment means that we as a people are protected and affirmed in our way of life. Furthermore, the protection and promotion of this way of life ensures that our children are able to live as our ancestors have, and allows our cultural heritage to be preserved and respected.

The **Constitution of the Republic of Namibia** requires the State to promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting policies aimed at the maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia, and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.⁴² Similarly, Namibia's natural heritage, including its biological diversity, must be protected and respected for the benefit of present and future generations, and damage to the environment must be prevented.⁴³

In **Angola, the Constitution** provides that everyone has the right to live in a healthy and unpolluted environment and the State has a duty to defend and preserve it. It requires that the State take the requisite measures to protect the environment and species of flora and fauna throughout the national territory, maintain the ecological balance, ensure the correct location of economic activities and the rational development and use of all natural resources, within the context of sustainable development, respect for the rights of future generations and the preservation of species.⁴⁴

Internationally, learning to respect and appreciate the environment and all that it holds is considered essential to the welfare of children.

The **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** calls on children to be educated, to respect the environment and natural resources.⁴⁵



Photo | International Rivers

42 Article 95(l) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

43 Section 3(g) and (l) of Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007.

44 Article 39(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola.

45 Article 11(2)(g) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

As stated previously, because of our interconnectedness with nature, education around respecting the environment and natural resources means respect for our way of life and cultural heritage.

The relationship we hold with the environment is spiritual and sacred, and includes the use of the natural resources which exist within it and have been used by our people for generations.

As a people, we have the right to continue to use these resources and to not be prevented from accessing the lands where these resources are found. The access and use of the land is central to the preservation of our culture and our daily livelihoods.⁴⁶ Additionally, access to and use of

these resources by others which are found on the lands we have occupied and still rely on today, should be determined in consultation with us.⁴⁷ It is the responsibility of the State to establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.⁴⁸

Laws protecting our rights to make decisions

As set out in the Section 7 below, we have developed a system of decision-making over many generations. International agreements have recognised our right to self-determination and our right to make decisions through our own decision-making institutions. We have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which will affect our rights, and to do so in accordance with our cultural systems.⁴⁹ Furthermore, States are required to develop processes which utilise our decision-making systems to reach decisions involving the land and resources we have traditionally occupied and used.⁵⁰



Photo | International Rivers


46 Article 24, 25, and 26(1) and (2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
47 Article 32(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
48 Article 29(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
49 Article 4 and 18 of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
50 Article 27 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.



Our system of governance and decision-making

When reaching decisions and providing or withholding consent, we follow the principle of Ubuntu, epitomised by the phrase “*Omundu omundu in Otjiherero*”. For us, Ubuntu is best expressed as “people are people through other people.”⁵¹ Such an understanding indicates a communal spirit where the well-being of one is intrinsically linked to the well-being of all. Decisions made within this context are done so with the collective benefit in mind, rather than individual permissions.

For any external initiatives impacting the OvaHerero’s biocultural rights, consultation with the Chief and the Chief’s council are mandatory. This authority ensures that the entire community is informed, involved, and in agreement. After thorough discussions, traditional authorities convey collective decisions to the external parties, highlighting the community-driven approach to decision-making.



The OvaHerero, like many Indigenous communities around the world, possesses a unique system of governance and decision-making that is deeply rooted in their traditions, culture, and societal norms.




Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

51 Louw, D. J. (2007).

How traditional leadership is identified

Historically, the title of Chiefdom was earned based on specific attributes, including affluence, courage in warfare and hunting, and proficiency in agriculture, genealogy, and governance. Nevertheless, the succession remains anchored in the lineage of the initial chief's family.

For Chiefdom succession, while familial ties are paramount, the community also evaluates the prospective leader based on the aforementioned qualities. These days, the community, through their Chiefs Council, appoint their leader according to the provisions of the **Traditional Authorities Act of 2000** in Namibia and in accordance with customary laws and rules in Angola. Members of a traditional community, authorised by the customary law of that community, have the right to designate either one person from the royal family or, in the absence of a royal family, any member of the community to serve as the chief or head of the traditional community. Traditionally, the community elders, referred to as Outi wambeto, were consulted for guidance and advice in cases of conflict involving succession customs or other matters. Usually, their suggestions were taken into consideration and carried out. However in Namibia, since the Traditional Authority Act, the Minister appoints inquiry teams where succession-related disputes are taken to court to be resolved.

During the process of developing their BCP, the community agreed to follow the traditional leadership structure in terms of Customary law for the purpose of decision-making. As per the traditional leadership structure, each village has their own chiefs, either the community chief or the Senior Traditional Council, appointed as per Namibia's Traditional Authorities Act of 2000, and they will represent their community. Each Chief's voice in his or her village should hold equal weight in discussions and decisions. The BCP accommodates both traditional chiefs recognised officially by the government and those who are not recognised by their governments, but are recognised by their community, treating them with equal regard.



OvaHerero system of governance and decision-making:

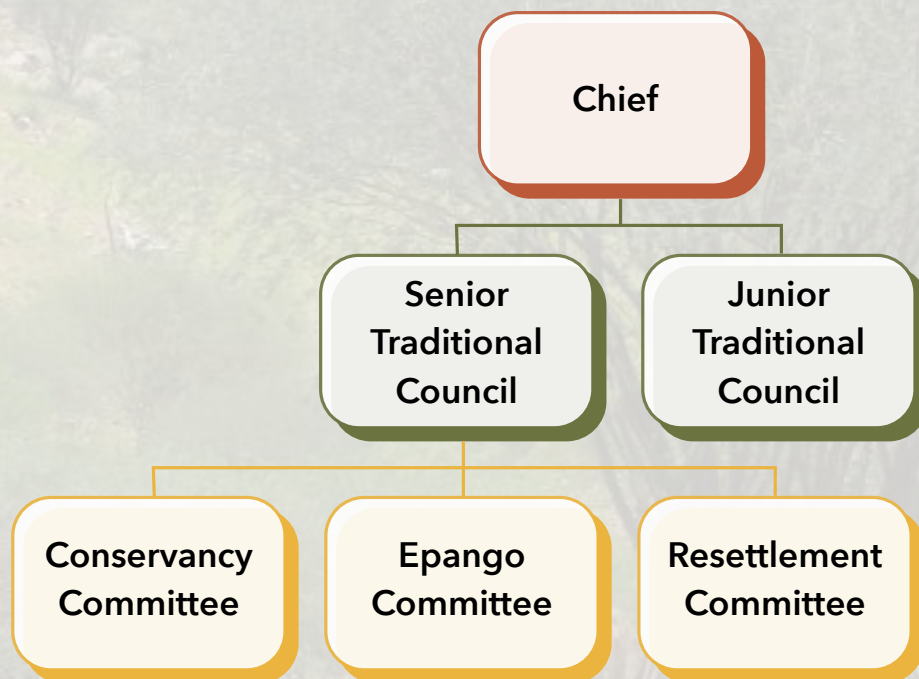
Elders and Leadership: OvaHerero community is traditionally organised under the leadership of a recognised individual. The traditional leader, supported by a council of elders, is pivotal in decision-making processes, ensuring that traditions are upheld, and disputes are resolved. That changed dramatically in 1863 when all of the OvaHerero leaders came together at Otjizingue. At this assembly, paramount chiefs were selected to rule over the OvaHerero community, subsuming all other chiefs under their tutelage.

Community Consultations: Decisions, especially those that impact the entire community or relate to the use of communal

resources, often involve consultations with community members. This ensures that a broader spectrum of voices is considered.

Ancestral Reverence: Ancestors play a significant role in OvaHerero beliefs. Often, before major decisions, rituals or ceremonies are held, we seek the blessings or guidance of ancestors.

Gender Roles: While the role of women in formal leadership might be limited, they play significant roles in various aspects of community life and decision-making, especially in matters concerning the household, children, and traditional rituals.



Organogram of OvaHerero leadership at the village level.

The principles and values found in decision-making

The following principles and values of the OvaHerero have been integrated into the Chiefs' Council to guide decision-making:

Recognition and Respect: We recognise and respect the OvaHerero leadership system, including the traditions and methods of governance.

Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC): One of the critical principles, especially when discussing matters involving indigenous communities, is that of "Free Prior and Informed Consent." This means that before any action or decision is taken that might affect the OvaHerero, we should be adequately informed about the development and its implications and give our explicit consent or choose to withhold consent. Our traditional leadership structures, including the chief and council of elders, should play an instrumental role in this process.

For the OvaHerero community, FPIC means recognising the significance of obtaining permission at various levels. The hierarchy and structure of this approach ensures that consent is comprehensive, and respectful of the OvaHerero community values, and includes the diverse voices within the community. Recognition of traditional decision-making processes can be found in **Article 19** of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**. Article 19 provides that "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous peoples through the peoples own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent, before adopting and implementing legislative and administrative measures that may affect them".

Where communities may be at odds with their traditional leader or chief, it is important to adopt an alternative approach to ensure fair representation. Establishing a community committee becomes essential. This committee, comprising diverse representatives from the

community, is entrusted with the responsibility of engaging the broader community before providing FPIC. This process ensures that the community's voice remains at the forefront and that the community's decision is final, even in the absence of a singular, traditional leader.

The integration of FPIC within the OvaHerero community bridges the gap between traditional values and contemporary rights. As the world evolves, ensuring that Indigenous communities like the OvaHerero retain their voice, rights and cultural integrity remains paramount.

Inclusive Representation: The forum will ensure that representation in the Chiefs' Council is not just symbolic. The OvaHerero representatives should have the necessary platforms and resources to convey their perspectives effectively.

Capacity Building: While the OvaHerero have traditional systems, integration into a broader forum might require certain capacity-building measures. Workshops, training, and knowledge-sharing can ensure that we navigate the forum effectively.

Feedback Mechanisms: There should be mechanisms, such as community meetings, in place for the OvaHerero community to provide feedback or express concerns regarding the Chiefs' Council's operations or decisions.

Protection of Indigenous Rights: The Chiefs' Council should have guidelines that explicitly protect the rights and interests of the OvaHerero.

By ensuring that the OvaHerero's governance and decision-making processes are recognised, respected and integrated, we believe that a Chiefs' Council can serve as a true reflection of diverse voices, while safeguarding the rights and interests of all its members.



Our vision

The OvaHerero of the Kaokoland of Namibia and Angola have, for generations, lived in harmony with the land, practicing a unique lifestyle steeped in rich indigenous knowledge systems. Our vision seeks to chart a course towards a brighter future where OvaHerero heritage thrives amidst modernity, ensuring that our ways of life are preserved, respected, and recognized on national and global platforms.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

◉ ◀ Protection of sacred sites, territories, and waters ▶ ◉

The OvaHerero community fostered over generations a deep and profound connection with our sacred sites, culturally significant territories, and the waters that have been traditionally occupied and utilised by us. This connection goes beyond the physical realm, intertwining with the fabric of our identity, beliefs, and age-old practices. The knowledge passed down through our ancestors, the stories that

define our existence, and the rituals that form the core of our community, all reside within these sacred lands and waters. Therefore, it is imperative that we have unrestricted access to our traditional territory, sacred sites, and waters, as they are not only testament to our history, but also crucial for the perpetuation and preservation of our invaluable traditional knowledge.

Safeguarding our Indigenous Knowledge systems in a modern world

We deeply value our traditions and Indigenous Knowledge systems, while recognising the benefits of modernity. We wish for access to education, healthcare, and other amenities to support our community, without undermining our culture and knowledge systems. These should be done in a manner that does not force assimilation, but rather fosters mutual respect and understanding.

We want to establish, manage and own community-run centres or other places or events where the young and old can come together. Elders can pass on knowledge of traditions,

languages, and practices to the younger generation, ensuring that our stories and ways of life are never forgotten.

Through a community-run radio station, we want to broadcast news, stories, and teachings in our local language, ensuring that even in our quest for connectivity, our voice remains authentically OvaHerero. We further want to partner with institutions and technology companies to digitise our oral histories, traditions, and rituals, to serve as a repository for the OvaHerero and for all who wish to learn about our culture and traditions.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

Addressing marginalisation

As an Indigenous community, we have often been excluded in decisions that affect our daily lives, resources, and future. The OvaHerero communities refute the characterisation of being a “marginalised community”, particularly when labelled as such by the Namibian government, raising questions about the accuracy and implications of such categorisation.

We desire to be actively involved in all decision-making processes that influence us and want to see greater OvaHerero representation at local, national and international levels. Our voice is integral in ensuring that our rights, traditions and future are protected. Through our Biocultural Community Protocol, we are starting to address this marginalisation and we want to develop further protocols and laws that respect and protect our Indigenous rights and knowledge.

Developments on our territory

We recognise the importance of development; however, it is essential that any tourism, commercial or other development respects and is not harmful to the environment, nor detrimental to our traditional ways of life. Any development initiative must involve the OvaHerero community at every step of the process, from conceptualisation to execution, and must align

to our community's needs and values. Our free, prior and informed consent must always be sought before any development is approved on our territory and the development must be done ethically and sustainably. Where developments will impact our ways of life negatively, we have the right to withhold consent.



Photo | International Rivers

Water preservation

Water is the source of life for the OvaHerero. Our ancestors knew how to harness water in the arid Kaokoland. We wish to see these traditional ways of water preservation that are rooted in traditional knowledge recognised and respected by outsiders. This includes our custom that prevents us from taking any water from a sacred site, or for any developments to take place at a sacred site.

We acknowledge the impacts of climate change on our territory and stress that this will place on our water sources. We would like to collaborate with organisations and governments to assist us in finding sustainable solutions that aligns with our traditional ways of preserving water.



Photo | Bertchen Kohrs Earthlife Namibia

Enhancing connection with the outside world

We have seen the benefits of mobile connectivity and internet to our people. This can be a window to the world, allowing us to share our culture and

learn from others. We wish to see solar energy powered network towers in our territory.



Photo | International Rivers



Conclusion



Our vision for the Ovatlerero community is a harmonious blend of the old and the new. We envision a future where our youth can access the world's knowledge while being firmly rooted in their Ovatlerero identity. Where the government sees us as partners, recognising our traditional knowledge and ways of life. Where every drop of water is cherished, and every road that is built respects the land it traverses.

This vision is not just for the Ovatlerero; it is a testament to what Indigenous communities around the world can achieve when respected by modern society.



Addendum A: Our Intangible Cultural Heritage

Our cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as **oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe** or the **knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts**.

It is recognised that while fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalisation. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life. The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next.¹

The importance of on-going documentation of intangible cultural heritage for a biocultural protocol

Unlike tangible heritage, such as buildings, landscapes and objects, intangible cultural heritage because of its invisibility is often forgotten when plans for development of infrastructure such as dams, roads and housing take place. Where manifestations of intangible cultural heritage are recognised, such as performances of dance or music, hairstyles, extraction of plants for medicinal purposes, they are often removed from the larger context of the social, cultural, spiritual and belief systems from which they are rooted and emerge. As living heritage survives and thrives on change and adaptation from within communities, for reasons which can range from social, cultural, economic, forced migration and so on, it is not always easy to define or ringfence. This makes it harder to assess in terms of threats and risks and potential mitigating actions.

However, one of the very first steps for communities is to systematically identify, name and describe the range of living heritage elements which remain of value to them. Through this process of identification, they are also able to name the risks and threats which exist within local community contexts to the living heritage, as well as external to the community, anticipating and proactively addressing development pressures.

This Annexure to our biocultural community protocol is the intangible cultural heritage table generated within communities of OvaHerero and documented by a community-based researcher. Aspects of the living heritage are cited across the BCP, for further insight cross reference the table.

¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

Oral Traditions (stories and songs) and expressions, including language as a vehicle for transmission

Name	Description	Community concerned	Location	Custodian/ Knowledge bearer	Risks/ Threats
1.1 Omitandu	Poem done as a song. This is a traditional way of learning, similar schooling. The OvaHerero believe that the meanings cannot get lost if it is done through songs. You will be scolded by your parents if you forget the song. It is passed from generation to generation to show where they are coming from. Singing is a way of showing this is our land.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	The Kunene region, Namibia and Cunene Angola	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.2 Omatendeka Mountain	Back in the day there was a war, and it teaches people the story of the mountain which appears white during the day and black at night.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Omatendeka	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.3 Otjozongombe-Kanyeza ya Uenda	This is an existing story about resettlement. It is told in memory of the ancestors after they were chased by the San. The ancestors name changed to Mondovi Mombururu (Bravery).	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Otjozongombe areas	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.4 Ohamuheke	Named after Hambambi Waktzu Omutjimba who was the first person to settle when moving from Angola to Namibia. He named all the areas in the district. He named Okauvure and named the spring that is in the river. He named Otjiwarongo (Nice place) and he built water points. The Boers renamed it Sesfontein.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland	Sesfontein/ Otjiwarango	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.5 Omavanda Mountains	In the past, people lived there and foraged wild fruits from the land for food.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland	OMavanda	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.6 Oukongo/ Otjiurunga	This song is from a place with a spring point which is very narrow. When cattle drink this water, they become fertile. The tree next to the spring is called Omukuyu and you only find baboons there. When people settled there, they gave birth to a child named Nderura/ Jjirave. Tjauvi gave birth to Nderura (meaning 'change your mind').	OvaHerero communities in Oukongo/ Otjiurunga Areas.	Oukongo/ Otjiurunga	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.

1.7 Otjiurunga-area	This area has two mountains which have a hole where cattle pass through. The area has deep wells. One day an elephant appeared and went to drink the water and left their dung. Millet started growing there and they wondered where it was from. This resulted in the idea that you can plant something in a dry area. People learnt how to grow crops and then trained the OvaHerero on how to plant crops.	OvaHerero communities in Otjiurunga	Otjiurunga	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.8 Owaruze River	It starts in the area of Othanga and leads to the ocean. It is where the marula tree grows. It is said that once they go to the river, they don't have to worry their parents for food as the marula tree will provide.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Starts from Epupa	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
Story of Origins of the Matriarchal Group					
1.9 Ovakueryuva	Known for their bravery. They are a dominant group during times of fighting. They do not give up and always fight. They are very successful and always finish what they start.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/Cunene region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.10 Ovakwauti	They are associated with the elephant. They don't drink water from puddles with insects. They are very clean and tidy people, and they are very merciful.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/Cunene region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.11 Ovakwendata	When a spring drains, there is mud. They were sisters that were left behind by other groups and were said to be left in the mud. They are known to be strong willed and are very good-looking people. Associated with mud.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/Cunene Region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.12 Ovakwendjandje	They are known for their curiosity which sometimes doesn't make sense. They tried to get a zebra to interbreed with cattle. They put some milk in the well to see how long it will last. Colonists copied their way and made butter from their methods.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/Cunene Region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.13 Ovakwatjivi	Originally there was an Ovakwatjivi woman that married a man and then she miscarried. It is said that the reason for it was that she had bad luck. They are known for their bad luck. You can't argue with them because they will give you bad luck or a curse. In Angola they are known for their healing.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/Cunene Region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.

1.14 Ovakwenata	There was a lady who was pregnant with twins and part of a clan. Because of the war, people said that she must kill the children but she refused and remained behind with her eldest son. They did not inherit anything and had nothing which is why they remained where they were.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene / Cunene region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.
1.15 Ovakwenambura	Came from the same family as the Ovakwauti. There were sisters who were traveling to a funeral when it rained. The Ovakwauti said; "we cannot walk in the rain" and remained under a tree and the Ovakwenambura said she will continue in the rain.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene/ Cunene region	Elders	People tend to forget stories that are oral and have not been documented.

2. CRAFTSMANSHIP, including the knowledge and skills for making weapons, tools, jewellery, etc.

Name	Description	Community concerned	Location	Custodian/ knowledge bearer	Risks and threats
2.1. Ehoru	Container for storing milk made out of wood from the omorenda, omungorwa omotungi omokange and omotaku, and omukongo and omombara trees.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	The men make it and teach young boys to make it. Learn from the father or brothers, however women are not allowed to make it.	Younger generations are no longer interested in learning how to make this.
2.2. Ombako	Funnel for milk and it is made out of wood of the omurenda, omungorwa, omotungi, omokange, and omutaku and omukongo and omumbara trees.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region	Only men	Younger generations are no longer interested in learning how to make this.
2.3. Orotuwo	Big or small wooden spoon used to drink milk and eat. Made from the wood of the Omungwindi, Omupanda omukwinty and omama, omkongo tree	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Only men	Over-harvesting of the trees. Climate change.
2.4. Otjiku	Bow and arrow made with wood and iron. The wood of the Omungwindi, Omupanda, omukwinty and omwama, omukongo trees	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Only men	Because it is considered a weapon, different laws are preventing the community from using it.
2.5. Otjimbara	A basket used as a plate and to keep milk. Used for similar things, it is made from Evare, palm trees.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region	Only women	The younger generation not interested

2.6. Otjihanda	Small basket/diffuser. Made from tree branches by placing palm fronds around to build it and use it to burn smoke.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Only women	Modernity as people rather buy fragrances now.
2.7. Onyunguheyi	Clay pots	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	North-western region	Made originally Ovambu and Ovawtwe women and adopted by ovaHerero women.	Modernity as people now prefer to buy stainless steel pots.
2.8. Onya	Container made from cattle horns to store lotion made of animal fat or butter or Vaseline.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Women	No threats
2.9. Erembe	Headpiece for mature women made from lamb skins. It symbolises the passage from adolescence to womanhood.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Women	No threats
2.10 Ekori	Bridal headpiece made from lamb skin only used during wedding ceremonies.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Women	No threats
2.11 Epando	A belt that the women wear. If a woman passes away, it will be given to her husband. They remove a section of the woman's band if her child or husband dies.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Made by Women	No threats
2.12 Ozongaku	Sandals are made of cattle skin and giraffe skin. Style differs between those worn by men and women.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Made by Men	Most people go to the shops now and buy shoes
2.13. Oruyo	Knife made of wood and iron. Wood of the Omungwindi, Omupanda, omukwinty and omama, omukongo trees. They get the iron from tools and scrap metal.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Made by Men	People buy knives and there is a scarcity of metal to make the knives
2.14. Evau	Big plate made of wood of the mungwindi, Omupanda, omukwinty, and omama, omkongo trees. It is used to serve meat for the men at festivals etc. Only some women who are highly respected within the community can eat from these plates.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	It used to be everywhere but now only in the North of the Kunene region	Made by Men	People now buy big plates from shops
2.15 Otjihumba and Outawotjihumba	Otjihumba - a musical instrument made of wood from the mungwindi, Omupanda, omungwindi, and omwama, omukongo trees. Part of the thread for the instrument is made from goat meat. There are two types of instruments - a big one played with the hands and a small one played with the mouth.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Only in the north of the Kunene region	Only men play it, and they make it	Very few people know how to play and make it these days.

2.16. Erose	Musical instrument played with the mouth. Made from oryx horn.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Men play and make it	Conservancies restricted hunting oryx.
2.17 Ondjuwo	Houses made from wood of the Mopani tree and cow dung. In the past the structures were round and as the culture evolved the house structures evolved with different designs and architecture. Now they are trying to keep the main hut to have a similar structure and architectures across regions where the Ovaherero resides.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Built by Men and Women	Modernisation and people want houses made of bricks
2.18 Ehahe	A different house structure which are built from the Mopane tree and plastered with sand and animal dung. They cut branches and tie them on top and cover them with cow dung.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Built by Men	No threats
2.19 Orwondo	This is also a house structure but is stronger than Ehahe. Built from palm trees, Omavare, and plastered with sand and animal dung. Cut branches are placed in cylindrical structures.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Built by Men	No threat
2.20 Okisini	House structures are built from mopane trees, and plastered with sand and animal dung, branches and leaves. This house has two types of wood. One type in the ground and another on top. This is mostly in Kunene where they are built with wood from mopane trees.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Built by Men	No threat
2.21 Eonga	The spear was made from the wood of the omundjete tree but has no arrow at the top. It's used to kill animals.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Built by Men	Conservancy laws forbid them from using it.
2.22. Orutatua	A small kraal for protection against animals. Mostly made of rocks, they use tree branches with stones in cases where there are no rocks.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region	Built by Men	They don't build them anymore because the conservancy says you can't build it because it interferes with the animals.

3. Social Practices, rites, rituals and festivals

Name	Description	Community concerned	Location	Custodian/ Knowledge bearer	Risks/Threats
3.1 Okuruuo	Each main household where the holy fire is, believes in Okuruuo (holy fire). This is how we connect with our ancestors to speak to Ndjambi (God) on our behalf.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene and Angola region	Head of the household who has the holy fire	Due to tourism some communities have become tourist sites and have a holy fire lit as a tourist attraction
3.2 Okukamburwa pokuruwo / omarukiro wena po omana	Naming ceremony. The name given can be by more than one person from the father and mother's family. A child can have multiple names. Need to be careful with naming because we believe that the child will become that name.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene and Angola region	The head of the household will lead the ceremony.	Children are born in hospital and the child returns already named and registered as required by the government
3.3 Okuvareka	The father proposes or arranges marriage for his daughter.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene and Angola region		Sometimes couples go to court or church to get married.
3.4. Ondjova	Can also refer to the official welcoming of a bride to the groom's home. This is after engagement. Before this, you are not allowed to be intimate, but you can be on this night. Once you are intimate before the cattle kraal, where you are for one night only), the man becomes Otjoto. There is also the construction of a temporary hut done by the father's sister and takes the couple inside the house. This is done in the absence of the father's parents. Then the second phase in the morning is done by the husband's parents.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	The head of the main house with his wife on the husband's side will lead the process.	No threats
3.5 Otjoto	After marriage men are allowed to eat certain meat	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Father will take the son through the process	No threats
3.6 Okukara komayuva	Menstruation ceremony. When a woman begins menstruating, they remove her necklace (ovitjuma), and when the ceremony is done they give it back to her.	OvaHerero women of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region	Women born in the same year lead the ceremony	No threats

3.7 Ombimbi/ Omuhero	Only practiced during the funeral of brave men who have killed predators (lions, snakes, elephants, etc.) and are Otjoto. Starts at the main house and moves to holy fire and then to the graveyard.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Only men can perform this ceremony	People want to do it at women's funeral as well.
3.8. Okuka	Stage in a woman's life when she goes through menopause	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region		No threats
3.9 Okutara oura	Intestine reading. This can take place anywhere as long as you slaughter a goat, sheep, etc. It can be any ruminant animal.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Anyone with indigenous knowledge will do the reading and an expert will do the slaughtering. This is done mostly by men.	Younger generations do not live at home and therefore don't know of reading the intestine.
3.10 Okuhiua/ Okukuurua	Removal of lower incisors. Must be treated with the use of indigenous knowledge. Used by putting the fingers by the fire to become hot and then massaging the wound. These ways of practice among Ovaherero communities differentiate themselves from other tribes. That's why today we can be able to know the skulls of the Ovaherero and differentiate from the Nama skulls in the Ovaherero and Nama 20 th century genocide	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene region	Expert in the removal	Modernity and people practice it everywhere
3.11 Otjamberero	Commemoration of heroes is done every year by going to different grave sites.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region	The owner of the main house conducts the ceremony.	Now it's seen as a sketch/play
3.12. Okurangerera	Appeasing Ancestors during hunts. Before embarking on hunting expeditions there is a ritualistic appeal to the ancestors. This is done to seek protection for the hunters and to ensure that they encounter and secure game that is rich in fat and nutrition. This act not only reflects a spiritual connection but also emphasises sustainable hunting practices and the value of animals in our territory.	OvaHerero Communities of Kakoaland and Angola	Kunene Region and Angola	The owner of the main house does the practices.	No threat.

3.13 Epaha	Twins' ceremony. The rituals are done as a ceremony for twins. These rituals are done to the twins of human beings and when cattle has twins they do the same rituals too.	OvaHerero Community	Kunene region	Owner of the main house	They need to find a tree called Omundjoze that is used to separate the twins. If you cannot find that tree, it will be difficult to separate the twins.
3.14 Eroze	Breaking of the traditional gun. When the man who was having a holy fire passes away people break his traditional gun as a sign that the owner is no more. Breaking happens at the graveyard of the owner.	OvaHerero Community		The father or another man in the family	Modernization
3.15 Otjivetero/ Okusukara	When the male child is being circumcised, the father of the child slaughters a cattle, cow, or sheep for their child's celebrations of manhood. this is done behind the main kraal in the forest.	OvaHerero Community	Kunene region	Expert	Experts are being paid to do this and do it anywhere in any manner
3.16 Orondo	Necklace given to a daughter by his father. Given to every second child. This tradition differs in areas as sometimes they put it on the firstborn.	Only some OvaHerero communities	Kunene Region	Done by the father's sister	Because it is heavy, children remove it when they are in school.
3.17 Okutuwa otjitenda	When the father passes away, the firstborn son will get a bracelet to symbolise that they are an orphan. It can be removed during the Otjamberero when they are going to commemorate his father.	OvaHerero Community	Kunene region	The father's father will do it and if he is not alive, a man in the clan will do it.	Modernisation therefore people do not practice it anymore.
3.18 Okutengwa	Done for girls and boys. For boys, if you're not married you keep a short beard and father cuts the back of your hair at the holy fire. For the girls it is also at the holy fire and hair is braided by the sister.	OvaHerero Community	Kunene region	Father's sister	Modernization
3.19 Okusetwa	Coming of age. When a girl child is mature and coming into adolescence it is the first time to braid her hair. The father has a party for her to celebrate the daughter's growth into adolescence.	OvaHerero community	Kunene region	Any expert	Modernization
3.20 Okuwapehi kokwisako ombwena (ovaingona)	The first time a girl menstruates, the father gives his daughter a sheep to slaughter and eat with fellow girls during those days of her menstruation. During that period the girl stays outside the homestead.	OvaHerero Community	Kunene region	Father's sisters	Modernization

4. Performance Arts

Name	Description	The community that does it	Location	Custodian/ Knowledge Bearer	Risks
4.1 Outjina	Happy Dance. Traditional songs and dances are performed when people are happy or having a joyous celebration. An example of a joyous celebration is when performed as a ceremony in commemoration. This is also done the day before the close of the funerals. (Okupitisa ovakaendu mondjuwo).	OvaHerero community	Central area in Botswana		Due to modernisation, traditional ways are gradually not observed due to a modern way of living. This was initially a cultural norm done when people were happy. Now it is also performed when people are intoxicated. The intoxication has led to violence and police involvement. Now done in clubs and streets, as opposed to homestead.
4.2 Ondjongo	Happy Dance. Traditional songs and dances are performed when people are happy or have a joyous celebration. An example of a joyous celebration is when performed as a ceremony in commemoration (otjambererero) of an expert who passed on. It can also be done in the form of a dance battle or competition to see who the better dancer is.	OvaHerero community	Kunene region	Community	Due to modernisation, traditional ways are gradually not observed due to a modern way of living. This was initially a cultural norm done when people were happy. Now it is also performed when people are intoxicated. The intoxication has led to violence and police involvement. Now done in clubs and streets, as opposed to homestead.
4.3 Omuhiva	Happy Dance. The day after the funeral they take people out of the mourning place and perform this to celebrate the deceased person. The specific dances will reflect the level of importance of the deceased.	OvaHerero community	Kunene region	Men and women	Due to modernisation, traditional ways are gradually not observed due to a modern way of living.
4.4 Okukwirira Ovinamuinyo	Competition/category of livestock of one person or group competes with another to see which one is the fastest. Done in commemoration of the owner of the livestock.	OvaHerero community	Kunene region	Young men	This practice results in livestock getting thinner/ losing weight. This is not ideal. This also devalues the worth of animals when they are auctioned for instance. Also because of drought livestock are not healthy anymore.
4.5 Okukondja	Traditional wrestling. This used to be a respectable method of resolving conflict and gaining respect.	OvaHerero community	Kunene and Angola region	Young Men	It has become too violent. You can also be charged with assault. Due to modernisation, traditional ways are gradually not observed due to a modern way of living.

4.6 Ombundje	<p>Traditional Combat Sport with Sticks.</p> <p>It used to be a way to prepare for war and used for resolving a conflict.</p>	<p>OvaHerero community</p>	<p>Kunene region</p>	<p>Young Men</p>	<p>It is generally not practiced. There are Human rights concerns.</p> <p>Due to modernisation, traditional ways are gradually not observed due to a modern way of living.</p>
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5. Knowledge and practices that relate to nature and ways of being in the world.

For example: consulting the cosmos to predict weather patterns and making traditional medicine

Name of the feature	Description and significance	Community concerned	Location	Custodian/ Knowledge bearer	Risks & Threats
Mountains					
5.1 Okarundu Kambeti mountain on the Angola side by Otjitaazu.	<p>It is our traditional mountain. All of us as Herero are from there. That is where our ancestors align. It is where the Herero's separate and also our different languages. Before we separated, we were all the same.</p> <p>This is where we go for cultural ceremonies and traditional commemoration. On the mountain we go to a Mopane tree to collect its leaves. The leaves are placed in orunyara. The ancestors are then called. From there we kneel down and start crawling towards the holy fire. The leaves and water are placed in your mouth and spat it out. The elder person who went with them on the mountain will place it on the forehead of the father.</p> <p>The mountain connects us to our ancestors and forefathers and provides us with direction. It is where we get our inspiration.</p> <p>There are certain taboos that we are not allowed to do there e.g. No gunshots, No game hunting.</p>	<p>OvaHerero community</p>	<p>Ruacana borders Namibia and Angola</p>	<p>The elders of the OvaHerero</p>	<p>We are fighting over the mountain with other groups. There is an Ovambo tradition of using force to claim our mountain. We can access it currently, but there are some forces.</p> <p>They opened a dam by the mountain and there is now water over our graveyards. We are now unable to visit our graves.</p>
5.2 Okare yanaonga mountain on Angola side	<p>We came from the big mountain to this mountain and when we die, we are now being buried here. It is because of the war, we were protecting ourselves from the war by this mountain. Even if we go there, livestock and person, we put our footprint, take sand, and taste the sand calling out to our ancestors. When you do this, you will not have any trouble.</p> <p>If you do not spit and take sand, trouble will find you. As the mountain stands like it, surrounding it and going down the hill, it is a sacred place on its own.</p> <p>It is a holy place where we go to pray and ask forgiveness. We connect with our ancestors here.</p>	<p>Ovaherero community</p>	<p>Otjitaazu, Angola</p>	<p>Elders</p>	<p>A threat is that people are no longer respecting the traditions and customs associated with the mountain.</p> <p>The government is not respecting our sacred places and traditions. The government has made a camp there and they are placing their livestock there.</p>

	<p>We perform our rituals here. There is a way you go into that mountain. There are certain things that you have to do not to be harmed e.g. falling, snakes, etc. You can get lost if you do not pray. If you are going to that mountain, ladies that collect traditional perfumes have to go with someone who can perform the rituals.</p>				<p>At that mountain, the government has taken land and fenced land that the community is no longer able to use.</p> <p>The big threat is large infrastructure developments which will impact our livelihood and way of life</p>
5.3 Yorukoro mountain	<p>These two mountains are some of the most sacred mountains. They are 30 km apart.</p> <p>There are rituals performed by women, calling out to their ancestors. They do not go by themselves. They are led by a man. If you do not pray beforehand, you will find nothing there.</p> <p>At the top of the mountain, there is a lake. Inside the lake, there is a big clay pot which was made by our ancestors. That pot, if you remove it, take it to your house, the water will be gone. If it happens, Elders will take the pot back.</p> <p>There, big elders sacrifice a sheep and water comes. Those that can light the holy fire are allowed to do this.</p> <p>Other taboos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No shooting gun • You can't plan your trip to Jorukoro • If you find otjizumba (traditional perfume) you don't shout that you have found it • If you stumble, you don't complain about it • No making noise • There is a spring that one can't drink from <p>There is a story that there once where a white man that went to make his tent and left it there and when he returns he never found his tent again.</p>	OvaHerero Community	Epupa, Namibia	Elders	Large infrastructure developments which will impact our livelihood and way of life
5.4 Otjirambo mountain	<p>It is situated in Angola, surrounding Orokaue. There is a water point, a small well. It is prohibited to drink from this well. We believe that if there is frost on top of it then it will rain in three days or so.</p> <p>Same as Yorukoro.</p> <p>Taboo: If you lose your livestock, you don't search for it.</p>	OvaHerero community	Angola	Elders	Large infrastructure developments which will impact our livelihood and way of life

5.5 Otjipemba	We go to the area which is a sacred site. If you want to get married, want rainfall, or any other prayer you go there.	OvaHerero Community	Near the Kunene river on the side of Angola.	Elders	Large infrastructure developments which will impact our livelihood and way of life
5.6 Tjamarindi	<p>These two mountains are sacred mountains. They are 30 km apart. It is a sacred place, because wherever we go to war we pray there.</p> <p>There are rituals performed by women, calling out to their ancestors. They do not go by themselves. They are led by a man. If you do not pray beforehand, you will find nothing there.</p> <p>At the top of the mountain, there is a lake. Inside the lake, there is a big clay pot that was made by our ancestors. That pot, if you remove it, take it to your house, the water will be gone. If it happens, Elders will take the pot back.</p> <p>There, big elders sacrifice a sheep and water comes. Those that can light the holy fire are allowed to do this.</p>	OvaHerero Community	Near the Kunene river on the side of Angola.	Elders	Government wants to build campsites on the mountain. They want to force us from the mountain.
5.7 Otjitanga's mountain	<p>It is a holy place where we connect with our ancestors</p> <p>First it is where we take our livestock. There are different areas in the mountains where we plant sweetcorn, pumpkins, gather perfume for women etc. It is not the same, as the mountain keeps on growing the perfumes smell different.</p> <p>In this mountain, the sand is black and very rich. That is why we plant there, settle there, and keep our livestock there because of the beauty of the land.</p> <p>The livestock grows in numbers there. The food in the mountains is a lot. We are happy there.</p> <p>Purposes: Food and using for body are found on the mountain: ozonyutji, ozoheu, omizuu, omive, omahuu, omahwee, ozonduvi, ozondjendjere, ozohamati, ozohe, ozondjenja, ozoninga.</p> <p>Taboos: No noise, No collection of firewood</p>	OvaHerero community	Orwe, Namibia	Elders	Mining developments
5.8 Orokaue	It became sacred after a woman died there. It is where we are surviving, our grazing area. Our graves are here. Our perfumes for our women are found here. There is a Boabab tree, which has fruit that we eat. It is a very important tree. We mix it with milk from our goats. Honeybees are found here and we get honey. There is a fruit called ozondindi which is important to us. For us in the area, this is the main place where we farm.	OvaHerero community	Epupa, Namibia & Angola	Elderly	Mining developments

5.9 Ondao mountain	<p>The importance is the same as the other mountains.</p> <p>During the war, we came together here.</p> <p>An airplane cannot pass over the mountain.</p>	OvaHerero community	Otjinungua (Marienfluss), Namibia and Angola	Elders	Tourism
5.10 Ondundu ya Tjinguindi	<p>This is an important mountain. If you are coming to the mountain some go and call for the ancestors. Only some can go. There are certain people, the ones with fathers buried there.</p> <p>Taboos: When collecting firewood, you may not make a noise when throwing the wood down, no hunting, no debate, and not allowed to collect wild fruits.</p>	OvaHerero community	Otuzemba, Omuhama	Elders	Large infrastructures
5.11 Ehomba mountain	<p>This is a sacred place to us and belongs to the OvaHerero and is where we are from, where we lived and where our ancestor graves are. As you are reaching the mountain, when you come to a mopane tree. You sit, take one shoe off, take sand, and spit it out. By this, we are telling the ancestors that we are going up the mountain.</p> <p>There are a lot of taboos attached to this place. Some of these, include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an airplane can't fly on top of it, • you can't climb straight towards it, • no cutting of the Omuvapu plant, • you should sleep next to graves when you get lost, thirsty or hungry, • no pouring of water, no hunting, • it only catches wildfire at one side and pouring of water is prohibited during the night. <p>The mountain is also a source of food</p> <p>When moving from one place to another, you pray to the ancestors by putting leaves under the tree to have a safe journey</p> <p>If something bad is about to happen, the mountain will show you a strange sign.</p>	OvaHerero community	Ehomba	Elders	Mining developments
Areas of land					
5.12 Orutjandja (Area)	<p>This is a big field and we are not allowed to hunt there.</p> <p>We used to have a war there. And when it is summer, we are not allowed to settle there.</p> <p>There may be no conflict there.</p> <p>This is an ancestral place where we have come to pray for our ancestors. There is one woman, Kavari buried there. She is important to us.</p>	OvaHerero community	Otjikonda-virongo, Namibia	Elders	Mining developments
5.13 Okoruuri	<p>This area is a sacred site and there is a traditional well where people do not drink from. White people cannot enter this site as they will get lost there.</p> <p>Only livestock can drink from the well when they go there unintended.</p>	OvaHerero Community	Otjikonda-virongo, Namibia	Elders	Mining developments

<p>5.14 Epako raMuhiva naTjinguma</p>	<p>It is a road between two mountains. At this place, we are grazing, and planting vegetables, and tobacco.</p> <p>It is a sacred place to us. Certain people who have the surname, Ongueuva, do not go there, it is taboo.</p> <p>There was a relocation between two brothers, and now there is a debate between two households. This has made this land to be sacred.</p>	<p>OvaHerero Community</p>	<p>Otjikondavirongo, Namibia</p>	<p>Elders</p>	<p>Mining developments</p>
<p>5.15 Omivero's hills (Ourundu wamivero): Okarundukendumba and Okangundumba</p>	<p>Sacred site</p> <p>Taboos include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may not use firearms, • riding horses/dogs at high speed is not allowed, • no smoking, • no noise making, • women are not allowed , • no shooting, • no sexual intercourse. • You cannot hide ozondjumba (traditional omaere storage), • You cannot collect water and firewood • There are grape trees but people cannot eat from them. 	<p>OvaHerero Community</p>	<p>Okangundumba</p>	<p>Elders</p>	<p>Mining developments</p>
<p>5.16 Ongango main water point/ell (korui kongango) in Ongango</p>	<p>People are buried there because of the war. It is a significant place as the San people killed the OvaHerero there. Rituals are performed at this place.</p> <p>No one may pass there as there are a lot of taboos associated with this place.</p> <p>Taboos include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is prohibited to kill invertebrates; • no fetching of water with black cooking pots; • Not allowed to say unnecessary things disrespectfully or debate about anything; • You can't bring firewood and water home after sunset (this applies to the whole village); • You can't pour water randomly at night without putting hot coal before pouring; • People do not take baths with soap. You take a basic container and go bath somewhere away from the sacred water; • When fetching water, make sure that your container does not make any sound when filling it, or else you will see a big snake or swarm of bees. 	<p>OvaHerero community</p>	<p>Ongango, Namibia</p>	<p>Elders</p>	<p>Mining developments</p>
<p>5.17 Otjivize water point</p>	<p>You do not fetch water with black container or a pot.</p>	<p>OvaHerero community</p>	<p>Ombandi</p>	<p>Elders</p>	<p>Mining developments</p>

5.18 Ombombo yovambo water point	You do not fetch water with a black container or a pot.	OvaHerero community	Otjiurunga	Elders	
5.19 Kunene River (Okuvare)	<p>There is a certain place in the river where we go and bury our people. Sometimes we go and plant food on the islands in the river. At the islands, we pray to the God of the water and pray that our children will not be taken away with the river. We regard it as sacred.</p> <p>There are taboos associated with the river including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not eating or drinking anything when crossing the river • Do not make noise when fetching water otherwise, you will call crocodiles • No sexual intercourse • You cannot fetch water with Ohoro <p>There is a certain tree (omutira honi) that protects against crocodiles.</p>	OvaHerero community	Border of Namibia/ Angola	Elders	<p>Mining developments and tourism.</p> <p>We start seeing the effects of climate change. When it is rainy season, the water is less than it used to be.</p> <p>In Ruacana where they have put the fence, the water has become less. Our fish dies.</p>
5.20 Kaoko-Tavi area	<p>It has monuments to ozombindi</p> <p>It has a flowing spring for drinking, for livestock, wild animals, and gardening. When cleaning the spring we slaughter heifer sheep.</p> <p>When there is a dispute we pray to our ancestors for guidance and protection.</p>	OvaHerero Community	Kaoko-Tavi	Elders	Mining developments
5.21 Otjimborong-bonga area	<p>Sacred site with spiritual protection for the people that live there. When the army came to take two boys to kill them, the boys managed to find their way back.</p> <p>People living here have survived drought and war. It changes people's lives in a good way.</p> <p>Good source of food for grazing and browsing. Rich source of medicinal herbs.</p> <p>If there is no good rain, elders pray to their ancestors and it does not take long to rain</p>	OvaHerero Community	Omaanda in Namibia and Angola	Elders	Mining developments
5.22 Omuatjivingo area	<p>Sacred site.</p> <p>Taboo: No arguing; you do not come with a freshly made walking stick that is not dry yet.</p>	OvaHerero community	Omuatjivingo	Elders	Mining developments
5.23 Omuangete area	<p>If you want to harvest red ochre, you must ask for permission, otherwise it will disappear. People will call a naked child and start speaking. The red ochre will come back.</p> <p>If the child is lost, another child will be called to speak to the ancestors and the lost child will come back.</p> <p>If there is mining and people argue, there will only be sand. We will tell a child to call the ancestors and then stones will come back.</p>	OvaHerero Community	Omuangete	Elders	Mining developments

Addendum B: Our Traditional Knowledge

The OvaHerero hold extensive traditional knowledge of fauna and flora which have been passed down for generations. This traditional knowledge includes the properties, uses and location of natural resources such as herbs, plants, wild fruits and vegetables, and the wisdom to predict weather and future events through reading animal intestines.

This addendum sets the most important fauna and flora that we hold traditional knowledge over and the important function and use that they have for us.

Traditional knowledge: Plants and trees

OtjiHerero Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Function and use
Okahunokundu	Potato-bush	<i>Phyllanthus reticulatus</i>	Medicinal.
Omutendereti	Shepherds Tree	<i>Boscia albitrunca</i>	Drought- resistance, shade and medicinal.
Omungwati	Wild Tamarisk	<i>Tamarix usneoides</i>	Erosion control, habitat for various species and medicinal.
Omuzema	Wild Ebony	<i>Euclea pseudebenus</i>	Medicinal, wood crafting and traditional practices.
Omuama	Aru/ Worm-cure Albizia	<i>Albizia anthelmintica</i>	Medicinal.
Omuryandjima	Ondongo	<i>Albizia brevifolia</i>	Shade, wood crafting and medicinal.
Otjindombo	Windhoek Aloe	<i>Aloe littoralis</i>	Medicinal and ornamental.
Omutaurambuku	Sand-veld Acacia	<i>Acacia fleckii</i>	Erosion control and energy.
Omukaru	Buffalo-thorn	<i>Ziziphus mucronata</i>	Medicinal and food.
Omutungi	Blue-leaved Corkwood	<i>Commiphora glaucescens</i>	Medicinal and other purposes.
Ouzuwo	Bushman poison	<i>Adenium boehmianum</i>	Ornamental and symbolic.
Omuhako	African star chestnut	<i>Sterculia africana</i>	Wood crafting and medicinal.
Omurenda	Velvet corkwood	<i>Commiphora mollis</i>	Medicinal, cultural and food.
Omusepa	White Puzzle- bush	<i>Ehretia alba</i>	Medicinal, food and erosion control.
Omuhama	Purple-pod cluster-leaf	<i>Terminalia prunioides</i>	Medicinal, wood crafting and food.
Omuninga	Blue Sourplum	<i>Ximenia americana</i>	Food, cosmetic and medicinal.
Omungaraha	!Nara	<i>Acanthosicyos horridus</i>	Food and creation of oil.
Ohwanga	Bottle Tree	<i>Pachypodium lealii</i>	Medicinal and ornamental.
Omukandakanda	Butterfly leaf	<i>Adenolobus garipensis</i>	Soil stabilisation, food for livestock and medicinal.

Omutete	Oshihone	<i>Pavetta zeyheri</i>	Medicinal and ornamental.
Omundjoze	Elephant's root	<i>Elephantorrhiza elephantina</i>	Medicinal and cultural.
Omuriahere	Wild Pear	<i>Dombeya rotundifolia</i>	Wood crafting and medicinal.
Omuzu	Baobab	<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	Food, medicinal and water storage.
Omumborombonga	Leadwood	<i>Combretum imberbe</i>	Shade, wood crafting and rainwater harvesting.
Omusaona	Swarthaak	<i>Acacia mellifera subsp. Detinens</i>	Firewood, timber for construction, food for livestock and medicinal.
Orusu	Umbrella-thorn	<i>Vachellia tortilis</i>	Shade, construction, wood crafting and medicinal.
Onyarayongwe	Four-thorns	<i>Azima tetracantha</i>	Fence and barriers.
Omutindi	Gelber Kurzdorn	<i>Rhigozum brevispinosum</i>	Ornamental, medicinal, food and household.
Omukuyu	Sycamore Fig	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>	Food and habitat for various species.
Omuparara	Weeping Wattle	<i>Peltophorum africanum</i>	Shade, ornamental and medicinal.
Omunjandi	Jackal-berry	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	Food and medicinal.
Omumbonde	Camel-thorn	<i>Acacia erioloba</i>	Shade, firewood, food for animals and medicinal.
Omungambu	Mustard bush	<i>Salvadora persica</i>	Medicinal, personal hygiene, and food.
Omundjendjere	Small-leaved Cross-berry	<i>Grewia tenax</i>	Food and Medicinal.
Etengu	Lammerdrol	<i>Maerua schinzii</i>	Medicinal and food for livestock.
Omutuuru	Knobbly Combretum	<i>Combretum mossambicense</i>	Erosion control.
Omumbuti	Kudu-bush	<i>Combretum apiculatum subsp. apiculatum</i>	Food for livestock and medicinal.
Omukeka	Visgif	<i>Mundulea sericea</i>	Ornamental, personal hygiene and medicinal.
Omukongo	Marula	<i>Sclerocarya birrea</i>	Food, beer and for making oil.
Omangandjamba	Weeping Candle- pod Acacia	<i>Acacia hebeclada subsp. Tristis</i>	Ornamental
Otjindanda	Peeling-twig Combretum	<i>Combretum psidioides</i>	Ornamental
Ondomo	Snuggle-leaf	<i>Pouzolzia mixta</i>	Medicinal and traditional rituals.
Omutjete/ Omundjete	Sicklebush	<i>Dichrostachys cinerea</i>	Food for livestock, wood crafting and medicinal.
Omutangaruru	Mululwe	<i>Cassia abbreviata</i>	Medicinal and ornamental.
Omuzuvakuvare	Sandpaper Fig	<i>Ficus capreifolia</i>	Food, medicinal and soil erosion.

Omuhe	Sandpaper Raisin	<i>Grewia flavescens</i>	Food, medicinal and traditional rituals.
Omumbara	Omumbara (cork wood)	<i>Commiphora virgata</i>	Resin production and medicinal.
Okahua	Wolfdoring	<i>Lycium bosciifolium</i>	Fencing, barrier and medicinal.
Omunguindi	Noeniebos (smelly Shepherd's bush)	<i>Boscia foetida</i>	Food for human and animals, and medicinal.
Otjimbuku	Candle-pod Acacia	<i>Acacia hebeclada subsp. Hebeclada</i>	Wood crafting, construction and shade.
Omutaareka	African Resin-tree	<i>Ozoroa insignis</i>	Resin production, and medicinal.
Omusiasetu	Silver Cluster-leaf	<i>Terminalia sericea</i>	Shade, wood crafting, construction, food for animals and medicinal.
Omuteyatupa/ Eteyatupa	Camphor Bush	<i>Tarchonanthus camphoratus</i>	Medicinal and ornamental.
Orweyo	Flame-thorn	<i>Acacia ataxacantha</i>	Traditional weapons.
Omutapati	Kaoko Combretum	<i>Combretum wattii</i>	Erosion control and soil stabilisation.
Orupunguya	Slapdoring	<i>Acacia nebrownii</i>	Shade, wood crafting, construction and medicinal,
Omuhombo	Water Pear	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>	Food and habitat for various species.
Otjinanguruve	Brosdoring	<i>Phaeoptilum spinosum</i>	Fencing and barriers.
Omundjenja	Nombumbu	<i>Vangueria infausta</i>	Food for humans and animals, and medicinal.
Omuhero	Strangler Fig	<i>Ficus burkei</i>	Habitat for various species, ornamental and medicinal.
Omungongomwi	Yellow-bark Acacia (Fever tree)	<i>Acacia erubescens</i>	Shade, wood for crafting, construction and food.
Omue	Anaboom	<i>Faidherbia albida</i>	Food for humans and animals and medicinal.

Traditional knowledge: Animals

Otjiherero Name	Common Name	Scientific name	Function and use
Onḍu	Sheep	<i>Ovis aries</i>	Traditional rituals.
Ongombe	Cattle	<i>Bos taurus</i>	Traditional rituals.
Ongombo	Goats	<i>Capra aegagrus hircus</i>	Traditional rituals.
Ohorongo	Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	Cultural heritage and traditional rituals.
Ongaka	Pangolins	<i>Smutsia temminckii</i>	Cultural heritage and traditional rituals.



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