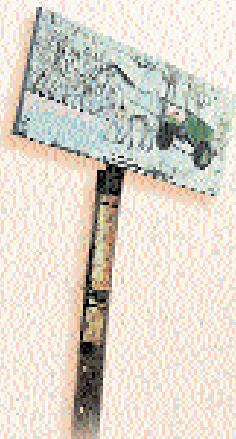


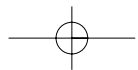
SAND AND WATER
CHAPTER
NINE

LIMITS

Whose land?



A long divide: the border between Botswana and Kavango.





Kavango covers an area of 48,456 square kilometers, much of which is declared as communal land. The accepted meaning of communal implies that the government ultimately owns all land, and traditional or customary rights to the use of land are given to people living in the area. A further aim of government ownership is to ensure that land – and thus its resources – is available to people too poor to buy their own land. In short, the government holds communal land in trust as a safety net for the poor. It may seem odd, therefore, to ask ‘whose land?’ but,

as we shall see, there are a multitude of owners and much of the land is not available to its intended users.

There are five major categories of ‘owners and users’ of land: the central government, the regional government, traditional authorities, small-scale farmers, and large-scale private farmers (FIGURE 72). In some areas, all land is under the clear and direct control of one of these bodies, but in many other areas different organizations exercise complex, overlapping and sometimes confusing kinds of authority.

CENTRAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A total of 20% of the region is used or controlled by the government or several of its agents. By far the biggest area (7,508 square kilometres) is for conservation in the form of the Khaudum, Caprivi, Mahango, Mangetti and Popa Game Reserves or Parks. Proposals have been made to adjust some boundaries in the Caprivi to cut out areas now inhabited by large numbers of people, to amalgamate it with Mahango and to call the park the Bwabwata National Park (see FIGURE 39, page 73).

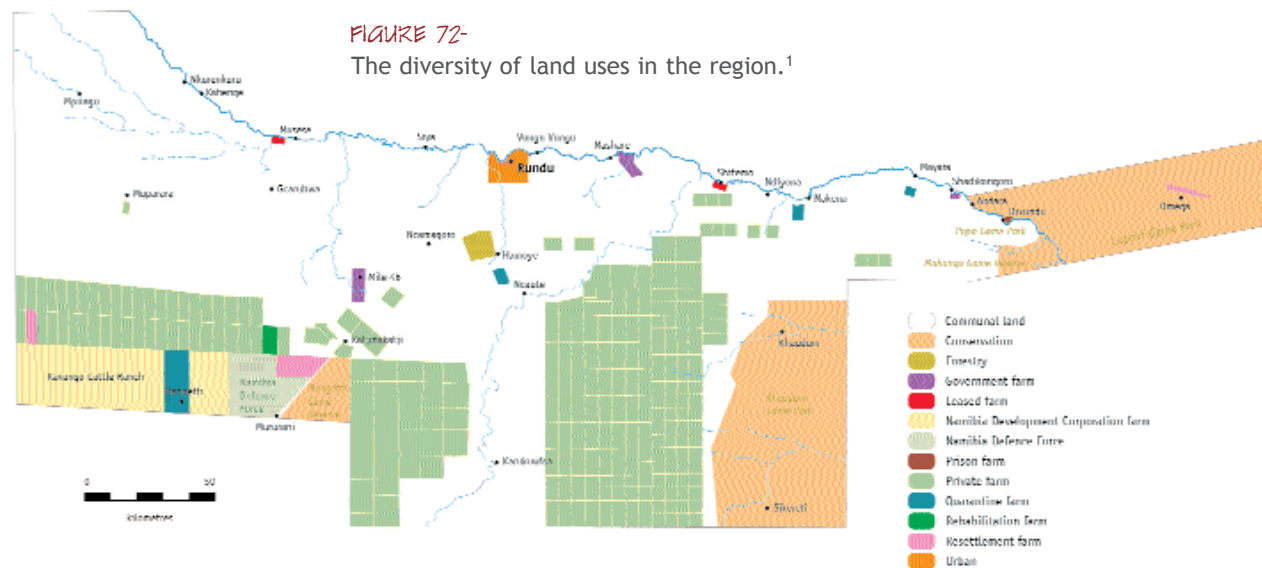
Other large areas are used by the government for farming activities at the Kavango Cattle Ranch, Mashare agricultural research farm and the Mile 46 cattle-breeding farm. The original Kavango Cattle Ranch consisted of 45 farms, 30 of which are still used for cattle ranching by the parastatal, the Namibia Development Corporation (NDC). Three others are used as the Mangetti quarantine farm, while nine farms now belong to the Namibia Defence Force, and another three are leased to war veterans. Other government farms at Shadikongoro, Shitemo, Musese and Vungu Vungu are now leased to private individuals. Apart from the Mangetti quarantine farm, three more quarantine farms were

recently established near Ncaute, Makena and Mayara by Meatco, also a parastatal.

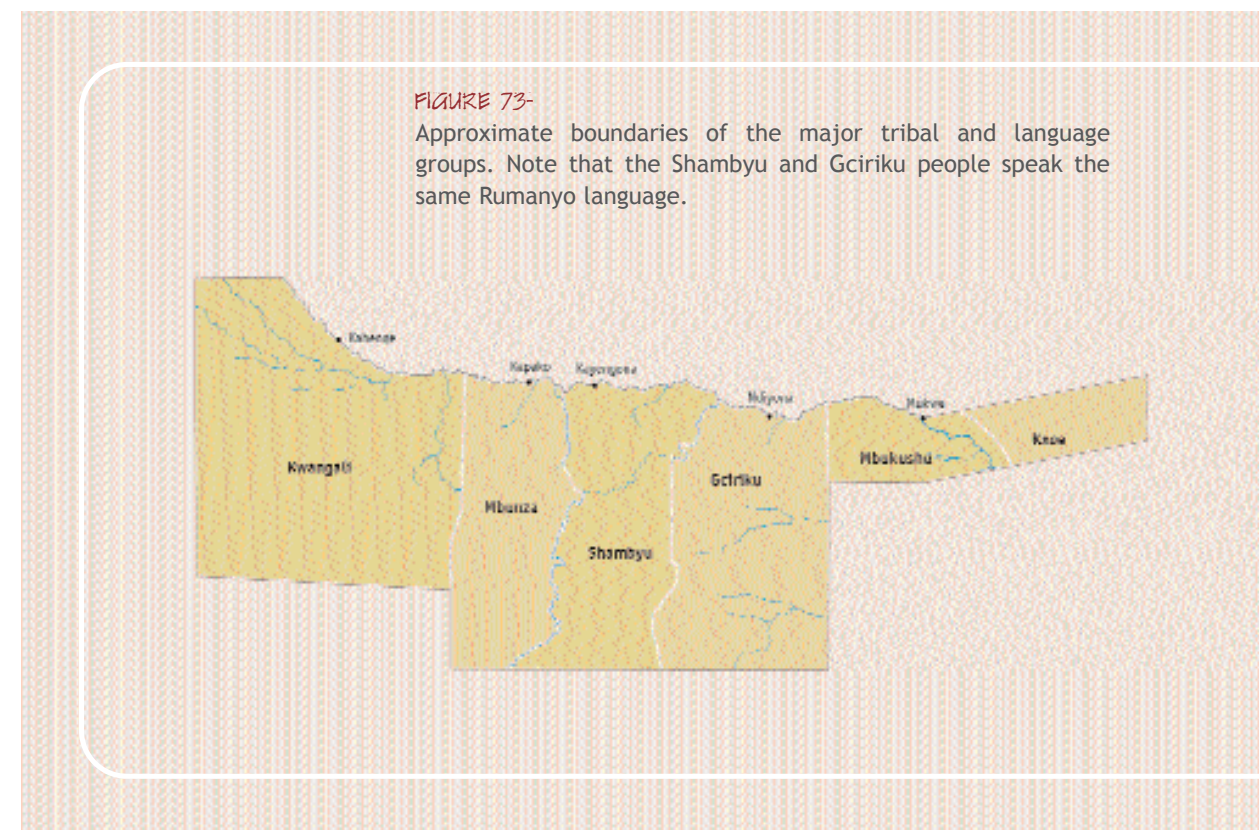
There are also resettlement farms and schemes at Divundu, Omega, on one of the Mangetti farms and at Shadikongoro. All are under government control. Rehabilitation programmes for handicapped people are run at Siya and on a new 5,000 hectare farm adjacent to the Mangetti block of farms.

Recently and importantly in the context of land uses and rights, a regional government has been formed to manage various functions on a decentralized basis. There are now nine constituencies in Kavango, each represented by an elected regional councillor. One councillor is appointed as the Regional Governor, and regional office officials are employed to administer various regional government responsibilities. However, systems have yet to be implemented for most of these intended functions. In terms of the recent Communal Land Reform Bill, one or more land boards will be established to play a direct role in controlling the use and allocation of land.

The approximately 16,000 hectares of Rundu townlands are administered by the Rundu Town Council (see below) and four villages have been declared as settlement areas: Nkurenkuru, Kahenge, Ndiyona and Divundu. These are expected to develop into towns in the future.



Land use	Square kilometres	Percentage
Communal land	26,497	54.68
Conservation areas	7,508	15.50
Forestry area	100	0.21
Government farms	108	0.22
Leased farms	23	0.05
Namibia Development Corporation farm	1,683	3.47
Namibia Defence Force farms	535	1.10
Prison farm	4	0.01
Private farms	11,295	23.31
Quarantine farms	279	0.58
Rehabilitation farms	62	0.13
Resettlement farms	200	0.41
Rundu urban area	162	0.33
Total area of Kavango	48,456	100





TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES AND SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

While the regional government and its councillors are expected to play an increasing role in the administration of land, certain issues of land management remain under the control of traditional authorities. The most prominent of these represent five major tribal groups, from west to east: Kwangali,

Mbunza, Shامbyu, Gciriku and Mbukushu (FIGURE 73). There are tribal administrative offices at Kahenge, Kapako, Kayengona, Ndiyona and Mukwe. Most of the boundaries between the five major tribes are well established, but there have been recent debates over the borders that the Shامbyu people share with the Mbunza and Gciriku tribes. A relatively small number of Kxoe people live in the Caprivi Strip while there are scattered small groups of San people elsewhere. Tribal



FIGURE 74-

Great increases in land cleared for crops since 1943. About 26,140 hectares had been cleared in 1943 (top), 72,100 hectares in 1972 and 194,550 hectares in 1996, an average annual rate of increase between 1943 and 1996 of 3,9%.²

leadership amongst the Kxoe and San has, however, not been well organized or recognized in recent years.

The five major tribal groups in the region all have broadly similar levels of leadership. Each tribe has a chief (called a Hompa, except among the Mbukushu whose chief is the Fumu), a tribal council consisting of senior headmen and then local headmen at the lowest level of the hierarchy. The chief has ultimate authority over the allocation of land. In the case of large farm units, the allocations are made on the advice of the Land and Farming Committee (see below). Small-scale farmers get permission from the local headmen to settle on new ground, although the local headman first seeks the agreement of those already living in the area when newcomers from outside the area apply to live there. The local headman's recommendation is referred to the chief for final approval.

Claims are often made that traditional authorities previously exercised considerable control over the use of natural resources, such as the harvesting of fruit trees, cutting of timber and even communal pastures. However, it is debatable whether controls over natural resources and land were ever strong, given the many reports suggesting that traditional leadership was often weak or absent in some areas.³

Approximately 55% of the region is used for subsistence farming by about 23,800 households. Most of this area consists of fields belonging to individual households, fallow or deserted fields and communal pastures, or woodlands. Very few fields are fenced. Cattle belonging to small-scale, subsistence farmers generally graze within 10 kilometres of the households to whom the animals belong.

The distribution and extent of land used for small-scale farming has changed a great deal over the past 60 years. Almost all land cleared for cultivation in 1943 was along a narrow band near the Okavango River (FIGURE 74). By 1972, scattered fields had been cleared along many of the omurambas and interdune valleys, mostly within 50 kilometres of the river. The extent of clearing for cultivation then became more widespread, and extended further south between 1972 and 1996. Although the Mururani-Rundu road was built in the early 1960s, much of the settlement and clearing of fields along the road occurred later following the drilling of boreholes nearby. Large numbers of Angolans apparently also settled along the road during the 1990s.

Adding up the cleared areas in these three maps shows that about 3,6% of additional land was cleared each year between 1943 and 1972, and 4,2% of new land was cleared each year from 1972 up to 1996. While much of the land was cleared as the number of people increased over this period, a large part of the clearing was also due to farmers abandoning fields and clearing new ones when their old fields became less productive. By 1996,

a total of about 4% of the region had been cleared for cultivation.

Land resources available to subsistence, small-scale farmers have declined as a result of three factors. First, the growing population has simply used more and more land for crop cultivation, livestock pastures and other natural resources. Second, as soil nutrients have been depleted farmers have cleared new fields, leaving old fields abandoned and of little use to anyone. Third, the increasing areas taken for large-scale commercial farms have further limited the amount of land available for smaller farmers.

LARGE-SCALE FARMS

Little of the region had been allocated to large-scale farmers until recently. Several large farms were allocated to individuals in each tribal area during the 1980s. The allocations were part of an effort to develop and encourage commercial farming activities, as was the much bigger development in 1989 of 44 farms – each about 5,000 hectares in size – in the Mangetti Block. A similar development took place at the same time in what was Owambo. The Mangetti farms are just north of the quarantine fence (FIGURE 72) and the intention when they were established was to later move the fence to a line along the northern border of the Mangetti farms.

Over the past few years, however, there has been a great increase and interest in large-scale farming. The 44 Mangetti farms are in the area traditionally controlled by the Kwangali people, and this led people in the other tribal areas to consider the establishment of new farms in the Mbunza, Shامbyu and Gciriku tribal areas (similar plans in the Mbukushu area were never implemented). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Land

Most of the 23,800 rural households tend small fields of mahangu, such as this one being weeded by family members and a group of hired labourers.





and Farming Committees were formed under the auspices of each tribal council with the function of demarcating areas that could be set aside and fenced as large farms.

A total of some 270 large-scale farms had been designated for individual farmers by the end of 2002. Most of the owners are middle or senior managers in the civil service or private business. In total, the large farms cover an area of over 1,1 million hectares, about 23% or just less than one-quarter of the whole region. Most farms are between 2,500 and 8,100 hectares in size. The following is an account of large-scale farms in each tribal area.

There are now 49 large farms in the Kwangali area, of which 44 (each about 5,000 hectares in size) are in the Mangetti Block. One is used as a resettlement farm for San people, while another is a rehabilitation farm. The remaining 42 Mangetti farms have been allocated to individuals but not all function as productive farms, mainly because some farms lack water or the owners have done little to develop the farms. However, the Kwangali Tribal Council exerts some pressure on the Mangetti farmers to be productive, and farms may be

allocated to other people if they are not developed over several years. No lease payments are made for the farms. Plans are being considered by the Kwangali Tribal Council to create a new zone of large farms along the Oshikoto border to stop farmers from what was Owambo bringing their cattle to graze in Kavango (see page 100).

Three farms were allocated in the 1980s in the Mbunza tribal area, and all remain occupied and productive. The Land and Farming Committee has recently allocated 30 new farms to the south-east of the Mangetti Game Reserve. Twenty of these had boreholes, pumps and storage tanks installed in 1992 to provide water for livestock in the case of a drought and a need for emergency grazing. Each of the 20 farms is about 8,100 hectares in size. The other 10 farms are being established to the east and south of the 20 'drought-relief' farms.

Eight large farms were established during the 1980s in the Shambyu area. Each is about 5,000 hectares, and the farms remain as functioning private and commercial enterprises. Another 88 new farms have now been allocated to individuals. Most of these farms were intended to be 5,000 hectares but that size has

been halved in line with an apparent policy that private farms in communal areas should each carry no more than 150 cattle.

There are also eight occupied and functioning 'old' farms in the Gciriku tribal area, and these too are each about 5,000 hectares. A total of 80 new farms (each 2,500 hectares) are being established. Those in the north of the blocks of Gciriku and Shambyu farms tend to be more developed with fences and water points than those in the southern, more remote areas.

The only large farms in the Mbukushu area are three occupied and operational farms near Shashasho. The tribal council has not had a Land and Farm Committee in recent years, although plans are being made to activate such a group.

The whole issue of large-scale farms on communal land is obviously a difficult and controversial one. The massive development of new farms contravenes government policy on the use of communal land, especially in protecting land (and its resources) for the use of people who are unable to buy their own farmland or live by other means. This is the first of several negative aspects to the farms. A second problem is that the formation of large-scale farms leads to greater social and economic disparities between wealthy landowners and those who remain as subsistence farmers on small pieces of unproductive land. Thirdly, the enclosure of large farms restricts access to communal pastures and other natural resources, a problem that has become severe in Oshikoto as a result of fencing of communal land. Fourthly, while it is hoped that large farms should be run as productive and commercial units, there are farmers who only see and use their farms and cattle herds as capital investments. Surplus incomes are ploughed into the farms without any immediate benefit to them or other people.

But there are also advantages to having these large-scale farms. First, a limited number of job opportunities are created, especially for cattle herders and other labourers. Secondly, land enclosed in large ranches is usually much less degraded than that used by small-scale farmers, especially where slash-and-burn clearing, overgrazing and excessive cutting of timber occurs. Third, if the farms are used productively, we can expect economic benefits to Namibia and especially to the region, perhaps leading to further improvements in social conditions. Fourth, the farms can contribute to food production in the region and Namibia as a whole. Finally, much of the land now being developed into large farms is not of immediate benefit to anyone in its present form, simply because it is so remote and no water is available. One may also question if any real benefits would be achieved if these areas were opened up for small-scale farming. This is because small-scale farming, as it is presently practised in the region, is unproductive, unsustainable and serves only to keep a segment of the population living close to the limits of poverty (see page 108).

If large-scale, commercial farming is to continue in the Kavango, steps should be taken to formalize the farms, thus ridding them of their doubtful and controversial status. The farms should be properly surveyed for a start, and their owners should be given title deeds or formal leases, perhaps something like 'permissions to occupy' (PTOs). This will allow secure developments and investments to be made, and it would enable farmers to borrow money from banks or building societies. We might then start to see the kinds of improvements that are now routine – and expected – among freehold farmers elsewhere in Namibia.

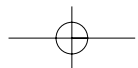
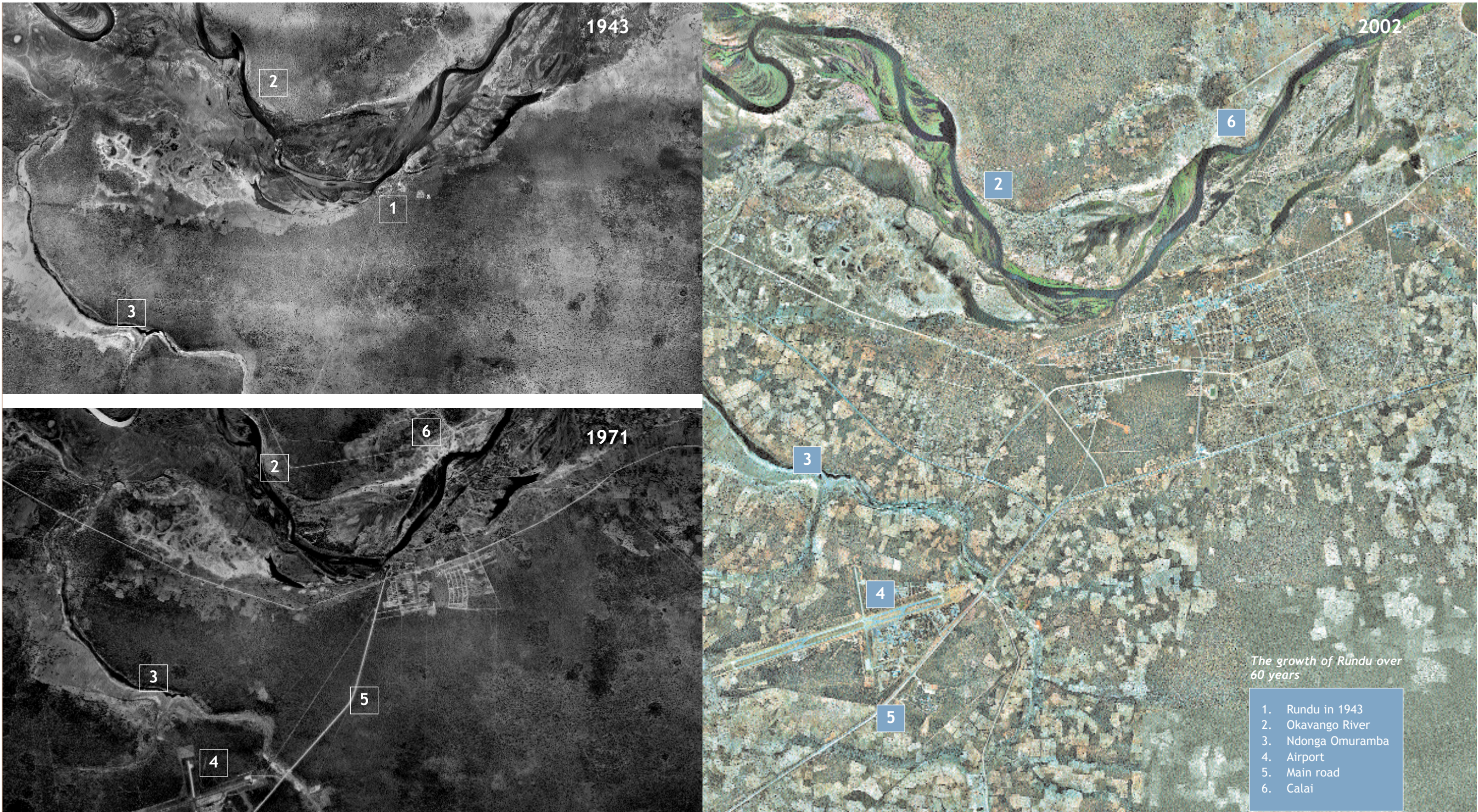
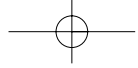
RUNDU - A GROWTH POINT

Rundu began in the early 1900s as a recruitment centre for migrant labour to work on mines and farms elsewhere in Namibia. Hopeful recruits came here from far and wide in Namibia and Angola to what was then called 'Runtu'. This is a rather dismissive term for a loose, disorganized grouping of people. The name Runtu was formally changed to Rundu in 1968, which is the Rukwangali word for a hill.

The administrative centre moved to Rundu from Nkurenkuru in 1936. A telegraph and phone office was opened in 1937, but it was only in 1947 that a post office was established at the small town. Rundu must have remained small for many years because even in 1970 it was reported as having only 1,539 people. Growth since then has been very rapid: 12,307 people in 1981, 29,890 in 1991, and 41,364 people in 2001. The rate of growth since 1981 has been over 6% per year. Should that rate continue, the population would double in 12 years and would amount to about 130,000 in the year 2020. Another perspective on the town's rapid expansion is given by the photographs of Rundu in 1943, 1972 and 2002 on the following pages.

The approximately 16,000 hectares of Rundu townlands are administered by Rundu Town Council and are divided into three zones. The first is the proclaimed township of 860 hectares in which freehold or title deed ownership is available for residential and industrial land. Although the townlands and Town Council were established just after independence, formal ownership was only possible after the township was proclaimed in 1999. The second area of 1,425 hectares consists of informal residential area covering the areas of Sauyemwa, Kehemu, Kasote, Ndama and Kaisosi. Finally, there is a surrounding rural area consisting largely of scattered homes, fields and open bush. The many fields in this area belong to many of the town's residents who grow crops and derive a small proportion of their livelihoods from this source. This unusual feature is not seen in many other towns.

The majority of people in Rundu have moved here in recent years, mainly from rural areas in Kavango. There are also many residents who originated in Angola, since about one-



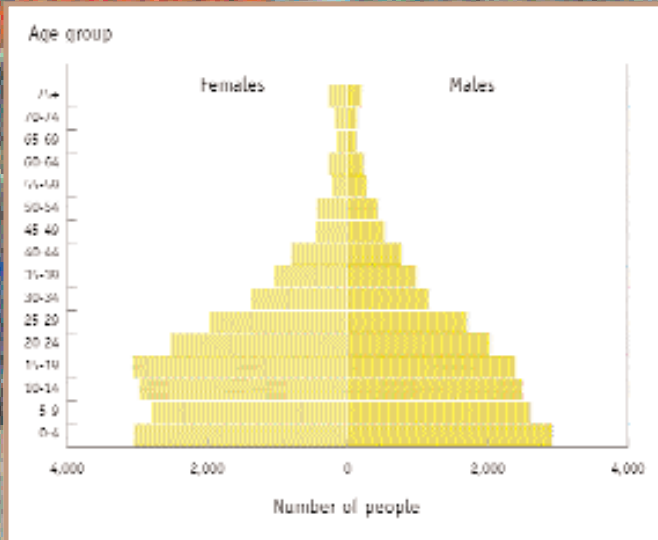
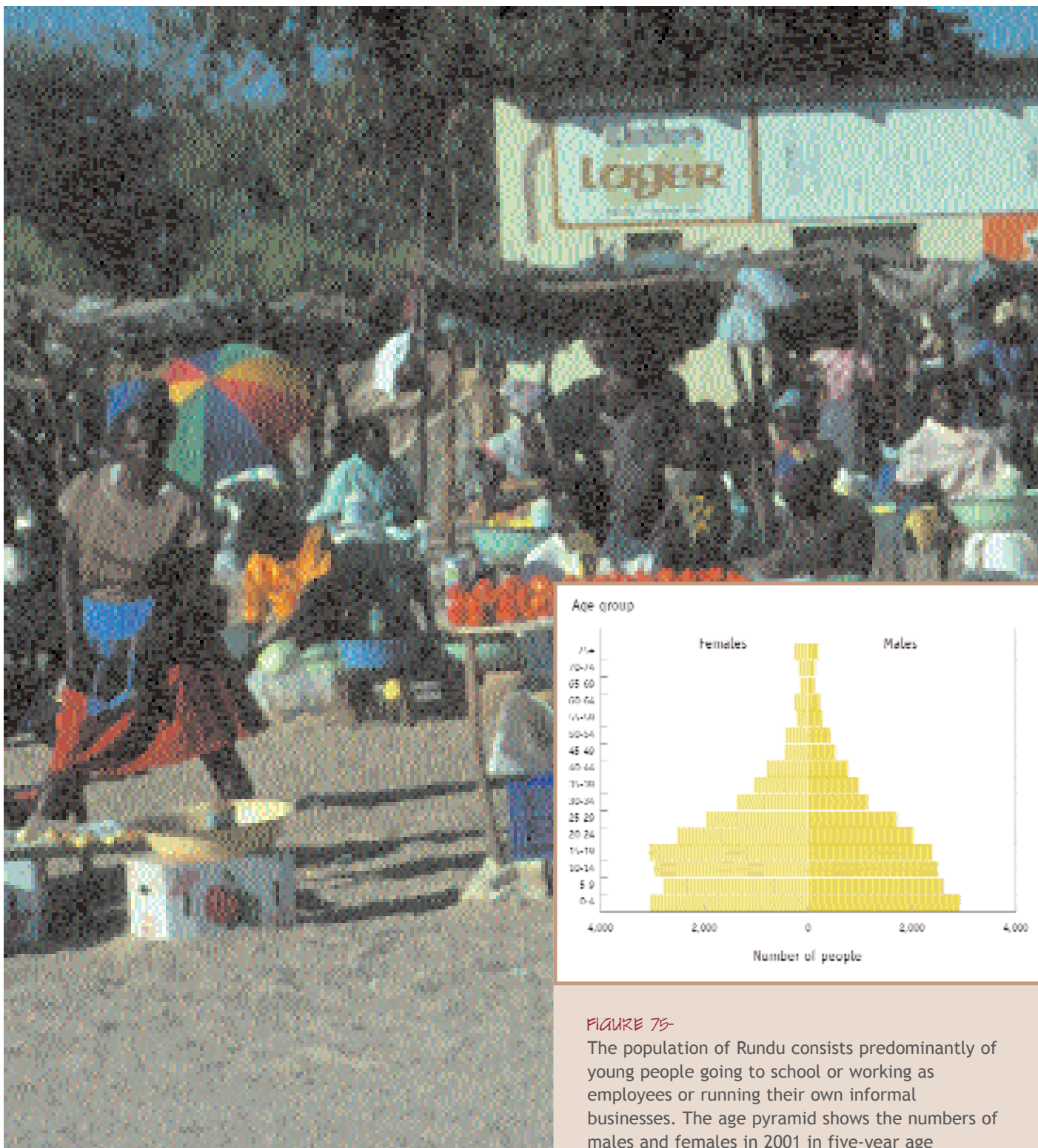


FIGURE 75- The population of Rundu consists predominantly of young people going to school or working as employees or running their own informal businesses. The age pyramid shows the numbers of males and females in 2001 in five-year age categories.⁴

Busy markets are obvious indications of the growing informal cash economy in Kavango.

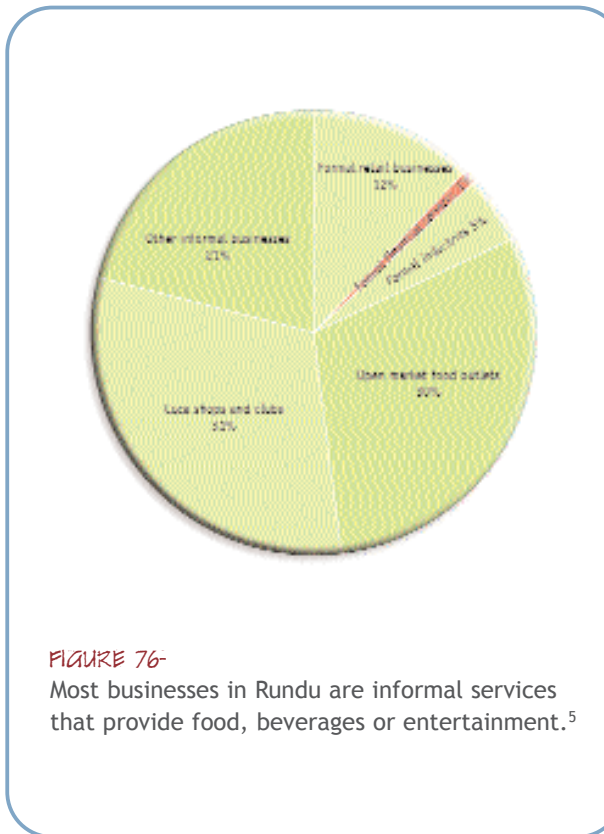


FIGURE 76- Most businesses in Rundu are informal services that provide food, beverages or entertainment.⁵

third of people speak an Angolan language. Irrespective of origin, the main reasons for people coming to Rundu are to find a job or to go to school. The population of the town is therefore dominated by school-goers and young adults aged 20 to 40 (FIGURE 75). There were also many more young women than men in Rundu in 2001.

Most business activities in Rundu are informal, especially those providing food, beverages and entertainment (FIGURE 76). The majority of businesses were also established very recently. The results of a survey done in 1999 suggest something of a recent explosion of economic activity since 60% of formal and 55% of businesses had been started within the previous five years. Most businesses are small enterprises employing one or two people and owned by one of those people.

Rundu is the only town in Kavango, and there are no other significant towns within at least 250 kilometres: Grootfontein is 270 kilometres to the south-west, Ondangwa is 300 kilometres west, and Katima Mulilo is 500 kilometres further east. There are also no sizeable towns of note nearby in Angola. Rundu's isolation carries a number of disadvantages, but there are also advantages to be exploited. Many trade and other activities in southern Angola already emanate from Rundu, and it is easy to see how Rundu could develop into a large and really important regional centre.

Key notes

- Much of Kavango is communal land held in trust by the government for the common good and as a safety net for the poor.
- Major uses of land are for subsistence and small-scale farming (55% of the region), large-scale commercial farming (28%) and wildlife conservation (15% of the region).
- Land used for commercial, large-scale farming has increased greatly in recent years.
- 23% of Kavango is effectively owned by about 270 individuals who were allocated large farms, while another 55% of the region is used for subsistence farming by about 23,800 households.
- Land resources available to subsistence, small-scale farmers are declining.
- Land cleared for cultivation has increased at about 4% per year over the past 60 years.
- Formal recognition, perhaps through long-term leases, should be given to the large farms allocated to individuals.
- Rundu has grown at a rapid rate in recent years, and is becoming an important urban and business centre.

Key events

- 1937 - Telegraph and post office opened in Rundu
- 1940s - Almost everyone still lives along the Okavango River
- 1964 - Building of main gravel road from Grootfontein to Rundu
- 1968 - The name Runtu was formally changed to Rundu
- 1968 - West Caprivi Game Park proclaimed
- 1980s - Allocation of Mangetti farms
- 1989 - Khaudum, Mahango and Popa Falls Game Parks are proclaimed
- 1990s - Massive increase in large-scale farming
- 1992 - Rundu proclaimed as a formal town
- 1999 - Freehold ownership of land allowed in Rundu