

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UNIT
NAMIBIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PLAN OF ACTION TO BE ADOPTED AT
THE WCDR, JANUARY 2005.
7 JULY 2004

1. Introduction

Namibia is classified as an arid to semi- arid country with an average rainfall of less than 500mm. This coupled with a high degree of variation in rainfall from year to year renders the country prone to drought disasters.

On the other hand, the country experiences flood disasters caused by river and coastal flooding from intense rainfall or inundation associated with seasonal weather patterns

During years of good rainfall, fire disasters are experienced. Causes of fire vary from traditional way of hunting, land clearing for farming as well as the careless discarding of cigarette ends.

We have fortunately not had any major environmental disasters at national scale in Namibia. However, at local scale, we have had pollution related incidences e.g. the spilling of chemicals in transport due to road accidents.

Being aware of the environmental impacts of industrial production, the government has committed itself to the international environmental conventions such as the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the Ozone layer and the UN framework convention on climate change.

Major epidemics experienced in Namibia are Malaria with 1282 deaths reported in the four North Western region in 2001 and 743 deaths reported in Northern part of the country in 2000. Outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis was reported in Windhoek in 2001 with 12 deaths.

HIV/AIDS poses the most serious development challenge for Namibia. The negative impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on all sectors of the Namibian economy is already being felt, and it is expected to increase considerably over the next decade.

This document will focus on the major disasters in Namibia as highlighted above i.e drought, flood, wild fire and HIV/AIDS.

2. Existing policies, strategies, plans and legislations

2.1 National policies, strategies and plans developed for disaster reduction

- a) Disaster Plan by the Emergency Management Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister
- b) National Health Emergency and Response Plan, National Aids Control Programme 1990, and the Second Medium Term Plan 1999 were established by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS). The Ministry also runs a Disaster Surveillance and Epidemic Management Section. In March 2004, the Third Medium Term Plan 2004 - 2009 was launched by MOHSS.
- c) National Drought Policy and Strategy by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development.
- d) Emergency Action Plan, Environmental Impact Assessment Policy and Draft Environmental Management & Assessment Bill by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.
- e) Other policy documents that are aimed at reducing the impact of potential disasters that could emanate from industrial and developmental activities are put in place by various Government Ministries e.g. the draft Policy and Strategy on Industrial Development by the Ministry of Trade and Industry; National Oil Spill Contingency Plan by the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication and the Manual on Disaster Management for the Police Officers by the Ministry of Home Affairs just to mention but a few.

2.2 Do these documents provide guidance and resources for disaster reduction?

All these documents provide guidance for disaster reduction. However, not all of them have enough financial and material resources in place to enable them implement the activities.

2.3 How the policies, strategies and legislations are implemented.

- a) The Disaster Plan is a document that is being used as a guideline for the coordination of disaster programmes and activities in the country. It made provision for the National Emergency/Disaster Fund that is funded annually by the Government. Other stakeholders make contribution into the fund especially in times of disasters.

The implementation of the activities related to specific disasters is the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for that specific disaster as stipulated in the Disaster Plan. The Emergency Management Unit is entrusted with the coordination of the various disaster preparedness and management activities carried out by the various Ministries. The National Emergency Management Committee comprising of Permanent Secretaries from Ministries responsible for specific disasters and other identified supportive Ministries, is a body entrusted with the formulation of policies and making decisions regarding national preparedness and emergency operations.

At the Regional levels, the Regional Emergency Management Units (REMUs) chaired by Hon. Governors are responsible for the coordination of disaster preparedness and management activities. The REMUs consist of all government departments representatives, NGOs, headmen and traditional leaders in the region. The Constituency Emergency Management Units (CEMUs) and the Village Emergency Management Units (VEMUs) play the same role at the constituency and village levels respectively. CEMUs are chaired by the Regional Councillors and are composed of representatives of government (e.g. teachers, nurses), NGOs chiefs, headmen etc. VEMUs are chaired by the village headmen and consist of community leaders, NGOs and government representative that may be available at that level.

- b) The National Aids Control Programme of 1990, was established to create awareness and prevention campaigns. The Second Medium Term Plan was launched in order to intensify the awareness and prevention campaigns through an expanded multi-sectoral national response. The plan focused on mobilizing all partners to reduce the number of HIV infections among adults and children by strengthening the support to HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts. It further aimed at supporting and strengthening the national as well as regional programme management structures to ensure effective coordination and monitoring of the national response to HIV/AIDS. It also addressed the issue of stigmatization and discrimination as well as ensuring access to quality health services for the people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Third Medium Term Plan (MTP111) was put together through an intensive consultative process with the public and private sectors, regional committees, development partners and people living with HIV/AIDS. The MTP111 recognises the gaps identified during the review of the two earlier documents. It serves as a guide for sector response to the epidemic, as well as a management and coordination tool for all those involved in the fight against the epidemic.

The implementation and monitoring of the activities as stated in the MTP111 is as described on the attached Organogram of the National Aids Coordination Programme.

c) The Objectives of the National Drought Policy & Strategy is to:

Ensure that households food security is not threatened by drought,
Encourage and support farmers to adopt self-reliant approaches to drought risk,
Preserve adequate reproductive capacity in livestock herds in affected areas during drought periods,
Ensure the continuous supply of potable water to communities, and
Minimise the degradation of the natural resource base during droughts.

The above mentioned objectives are reached through:

1. Government

- Finance and manage targeted income transfer programmes to support household food security in times of disaster drought;
- Reorient long term development programmes in favour of poverty reduction as a means of mitigating the effects of drought;
- Help farmers manage drought-induced income variability and reduce vulnerability to drought mitigating farming practices, diversification of income generating activities and provision of early warning information;
- Provide subsidized assistance to farmers in disaster drought years;
- Ensure that short term relief programmes in times of disaster drought and long term strategies support sustainable natural resource use under conditions of climatic variability; and
- Draw up and implement appropriate post-disaster recovery and preparedness programmes.

2. Farmers

- Manage agricultural activities in an economically and ecologically responsible manner and in a way that takes low rainfall, crop and grazing production and consequent income variation into account.
- Develop ways of reducing vulnerability to drought in the longer term.
- Contribute in normal rainfall years toward the cost of financial assistance during times of disaster drought.

d) The objectives of the Emergency Action Plan by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

- Provide immediate response to disastrous emergencies falling under the scope of the Ministry;
- Design mitigative measures to lessen the effect of potential environmental disaster;
- Strengthen early warning capacities for environmental disasters, and
- Monitor the possibility of out-breaks of disasters

These objectives are reached through setting up appropriate structures at national, regional and community levels as well as mobilizing the necessary resources.

2.4 Constraints encountered in implementing

- a) Lack of policies, strategies and legislations on flood, pest infestation and disaster management.
- b) Staff turnover
- c) Limited skilled human resources due to lack of staff on the established structures.
- d) Limited financial and material resources

2.5 Success Story: Caprivi Flood Emergency

The Kabbe constituency and part of the Katima Rural constituency of the Caprivi region were affected by the flood during the month of April – June 2004. Most villages and grazing areas in the Kabbe constituency were either submerged or surrounded by water with only isolated pockets of dry land left. Schools and other Government buildings were completely surrounded, rendering such institutions inaccessible. Twenty thousand people were affected by the flood of which five thousand needed relocation to higher ground. The flood has also tremendously impacted on shelter and household items, leaving people homeless and without sufficient clothing and blankets. As a result communities in the affected areas were then depending on Government and donor relief.

The Government through its Caprivi Regional Emergency Management Unit identified and prepared five relocation centres for temporal resettlement of the 5000 people that were evacuated from the flooded areas. Even though 6 lives were lost, the timely intervention of the Government and its Development partners resulted in more lives being saved considering the intensity of the flood. Structures were put in place for the administration of the centres and monitoring of the flood situation. All necessary food and non-food items were provided by both the Government and Development Partners.

Although a large number of livestock was moved to higher ground before the flood, a sizeable number remained in the flooded areas with the result that such livestock were at risk of dying due to water born diseases or attacks by crocodiles. Fodder was provided to wild animals i.e. Buffaloes that were trapped on isolated islands.

Currently the relocated people are being transported back to their areas of origin. The Government is consulting with other stakeholders and development partners on the feasible projects that could be implemented in order to mitigate the effect of potential floods.

2.6 How to advance disaster risk reduction in Africa

Building capacity of relevant staff members both at National and community levels.

Allocation of sufficient human, financial and material resources to disaster risk reduction.

Formulation and implementation of relevant policies, strategies and legislations.

2.7 Priorities that Namibia wishes to be addressed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

Strengthen disaster preparedness through formulation of relevant policies, strategies and legislations.

Strengthen resources mobilization mechanisms to address human, financial and material resources constraints.

Strengthening of the governments interventions to HIV/AIDS.

Implementation Mechanisms

Figure 6: Organogram of the National AIDS Co-ordination Programme

