

**OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS ON THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF HABITAT AGENDA**

**FOR: THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR  
HUMAN SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

In recognition of the importance of Regional and Local Government, the new government of the Republic of Namibia that came to power at independence in 1990 established the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing. The most serious political conditions for the new government were its desire to remove the last legacy of the oppressive and divisive apartheid era. In its place, the government established regional and local government structures that are truly democratic, foster national unity and promote people's participation in the development process.

### **1.1 LEGISLATION FRAMEWORK.**

Right from its establishment the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing obtained its mandate with respect to housing from the constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia provides a framework for legislation and policies to safeguard Namibian's equal rights to shelter.

### **1.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Immediately after Namibia's independence in 1990, Government identified housing as one of its four priority areas of development along with Education, Health and Agriculture. The government's commitment in the area of housing led to the formulation of the National Housing Policy which was approved by Cabinet in July 1991. The Central goal of the Policy is "to make resources available for the development of infrastructure and facilities so that every Namibian family will be given a fair opportunity to acquire land with water energy and a waste disposal system, and to facilitate access to shelter in suitable locations at cost and standard which is affordable to the family on the one hand and to the nation on the other hand". The policy clearly states that the role of government is to facilitate and promote the partnership between the public, private, local and regional institutions, CBOs, NGOs, and individuals. National, regional and local strategies underpinning shelter delivery and human settlements development in Namibia were formulated and are intended to guide the activities of all stakeholders and agencies involved in land and housing delivery in the country.

Based on the policy, the Ministry of Regional Local Government and Housing with the assistance of the UNDP and UNCHS has developed an implementation strategy for the National Housing Programme which is called the Build Together Programme.

### **1.3 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT**

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the right to acquire housing has been recognised as an important component of the right to an adequate standard of living. The Government of the Republic of Namibia is signatory to the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, 1996 and committed itself to the implementation of:

## The Habitat II Agenda and The Global Plan of Action

### 1.4 NATIONAL COMMITMENT

The Namibia Government prepared a National Development Plan NDP1 from 1995/96 until the year 1999/2000. The NDP1 elaborates the following national development goals:

- Reviving and sustaining economic growth
- Creating employment opportunities
- Reducing inequalities in income distribution
- Eradicating poverty

A six pronged strategy is identified to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

- Providing an enabling environment for private sector development
- Human resources development
- Investing in people
- Increasing people's participation
- Ensuring development is sustainable
- Making government more efficient & responsive.

### 1.5 NATIONAL HABITAT COMMITTEE

In 1994, the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing established a National Habitat Committee, represented by all stakeholders active in the housing sector. The Committee was established, inter alia, in order to obtain broad and comprehensive participation in the country's preparatory activities, for consideration at the Habitat II Conference, 1996. The Committee subsequently prepared Namibia's National Plan of Action, which was forwarded to the Habitat II Secretariat for incorporation into the Global Plan of Action. The National Committee has continued to function after the Habitat II Conference. Through the efforts of all partners, Namibia National Committee shall ensure that human settlements are developed in the country on the basis of social, environmental and economic sustainability.

As a result of government commitment this led to the establishment of a sub-division of Habitat Coordination under the Directorate of Housing, Habitat, Community and Early Childhood Development Coordination. The main function of Habitat Coordination is to coordinate, monitor and oversee the national process of implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

### 1.6 DECENTRALISATION

The Government of the Republic of Namibia adopted a policy of decentralisation. Housing and Community Development provision were among the functions identified to be decentralised to regional and local authorities. As from 1 April 1999 housing was decentralised under delegation

to local and regional levels. Action plans for Decentralised Building Together Programme and Community Development have been formulated and approved as implementing instruments to be followed by local institutions. It is anticipated that the National Housing Development Bill and the Decentralization Enabling Bill which will allow certain functions and legal powers to be decentralised will be enacted by Parliament before end of year 2000.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF HABITAT COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The aim of establishing a National Habitat Committee was to forge the partnership concept and participation of all actors in human settlements development. During 1999 all institutions represented on the committee submitted progress reports in respect of their activities. The extent of success achieved by these stakeholders may be assessed in terms of progress towards adopting principles of adequate shelter and sustainable settlement development in respect of land and, housing delivery and / or social programmes.

### **2.1 MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING :**

#### **2.1.1 DIRECTORATE OF HOUSING**

The Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing has implemented a National Housing Programme and Housing Strategy called Build Together Programme. The Build Together Programme assists households, which, on account of their low income have no access to housing delivered by private sector developers or the National Housing Enterprise, a parastatal. The private sector caters for the middle and upper income groups, while the National Housing Enterprise targets the low and lower middle income groups, earning between N\$ 1250.00(US\$ 201) and N\$ 4000.00 (US\$ 645) per month. In 1993, an estimated 63% of all urban households were earning less than N\$ 1250.00 and thus not have access to decent housing. The Build Together Programme was designed for this particular target group.

The Ministry has been successful in obtaining community support and recognition of the central concept of the Build Together Programme, as being "people's process". Communities have participated in their own housing and have been empowered in the process. The programme assisted in job creation and poverty alleviation. The majority of Build Together Programme houses have been constructed through self-help and by using the informal sector. The programme has encouraged home ownership as a means of security and mutual support. Women in particular have benefited. The programme has been designed to improve awareness and care for the natural environment. Since 1996, progress has been made under four housing sub-programmes of the Build Together Programme which is an umbrella programme for these sub-programmes:

1. - Urban/Rural Housing Loans sub-programme
  - This programme has been implemented in all 13 regions in Namibia

- National Council on Disability
- An Estate Valuation Unit
- National and Regional Land use and Environment and Boards
- A National Resettlement Council
- National Land Policy
- Communal Land Bill (to be enacted in the near future)

In 1999, the Ministry successfully negotiated funding from central government to proceed with the proposed tenure system. The Ministry immediately re-activated the finalisation of the flexible land tenure system for Namibia. The flexible land tenure system is set to become a parallel land registration system alongside the current formal system, which is cumbersome but which provides highly secure freehold title. It is envisaged that the flexible land tenure act will be promulgated by the year 2000.

### **2.3 MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING:**

The Ministry though not directly involved in land & housing delivery, fulfils an essential role as information supplier. A good example is the launching of a monthly Government Magazine, the Namibian Review in which a number of articles on housing and people empowerment have been published. Furthermore, the Ministry organs in the region, such as the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation, (NBC) the New Era and Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA) have contributed to empowering people through effective communication.

### **2.4 DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AFFAIRS**

Immediately after independence the department of women affairs was established under the Office of the President and headed by a director general a post equal to the deputy minister. It actively participated in the consultative process of formulation and approval by Cabinet of a National Gender Policy in December, 1997 and a Gender Plan of Action for empowerment of women in December 1998.

Through the department's involvement, the Married Equality Act, 1996 was passed by Parliament. The laws on rape, maintenance and inheritance are all in various stages of draft. The department has promoted and established income generating activities aimed at women, and women and child abuse centres have been established at local level. Gender Sensitization and awareness training workshops have been conducted; and 23 business man training workshops were coordinated and established. In October 1998, the department coordinated and facilitated in country training of 24 Gender Focal Points by the British Council. A data Bank on professional women has been initiated.

### **2.5 NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL**

Through partnership with schools, the University, Polytechnic and Colleges, the council has

managed to attract attention to a number of issues pertaining to human settlements development, and youth associated problems. In conjunction with local authorities the council has managed to train 25 youth leaders from each region in skills of leadership, strategy, finance and project management and training. In cooperation with regional councils, regional and district youth forums have been established. These fora are used as the main link with youth at the grassroots level and have been used to inform them about the Habitat II Agenda.

The casual labour centre with its headquarters in Windhoek was selected as a best practice by the Africa Regional Youth Consultation for Habitat II. The project targets unemployed youth and those outside the formal school system. The future intention of the Council is to replicate this project in other urban centres. The project focuses on specific population, unemployment, poverty and illiteracy questions facing Namibian Youth. An adolescent and Youth Reproductive Health Project has established a pilot project in Okahandja, 70 km from the capital city. The project provides, through existing medical structure and resources persons intensive family planning programmes, counselling services, re-creational activities, educational opportunities, youth empowerment programmes, and HIV/AIDS related activities.

## **2.6 NATIONAL HOUSING ENTERPRISE (NHE)**

The National Housing Enterprise is a parastatal which was established in 1993 to provide housing to low and lower middle income families. As from 1995 / 1999, 1892 lower middle to low income and self – help houses were constructed, upgraded and / or extended. Again, 2 community centres and 2 after school centres were established. The NHE conducted a training programme for 29 small building contractors. The institution further, embarked upon a nationwide housing demand research programme to assess housing need and demand patterns in the country, including affordability, status quo on land delivery and the economic situation in the various towns. All constraints to effective housing delivery were identified and possible solutions for those have been formulated.

## **2.7 WINDHOEK MUNICIPALITY**

Windhoek is the capital city of Namibia and is charged with the development of affordable serviced land for delivery to all income sectors of its inhabitants. Since 1996, however, increasing institutional and financial resources have been put into land delivery for the poorest sectors of the capital city. In 1998, the city stated implementing its new Settlement Development Programme, consisting of a dual development approach, being in – situ upgrading projects and new developments aimed at resettlement. A few tentative land development projects were embarked upon during 1997 / 98, whereby 450 sites were partially serviced to accommodate excess households from the Katutura Single Quarters in Windhoek. A large erf block was developed with emergency services in order to accommodate Katutura Single Quarters, and two township extensions with a site potential of 500 sites have been developed. The city of Windhoek adopted a set of Informal Settlement Guidelines and a supportive Implementation

Strategy in 1996. Again, since 1997 a highly successful community participation structure has been developed over the last two years, a number of education and training programmes have been run with low income communities. The city also adopted a Public participation policy in early 1999. A labour intensive construction project was started with the aim of developing a sense of ownership of physical improvements and infrastructure.

## **2.8 NGO AND CBO SECTOR: NAMIBIA HOUSING ACTION GROUP (NHAG) AND THE NAMIBIA SHACK DWELLERS FEDERATIONS (SDF)**

As a result of good co - operation between these two groups – they managed to negotiate for purchasing blocks of land in four towns in Namibia for five saving groups. A successful self – help servicing programme was undertaken for 45 houses in Windhoek. Through NHAG, members participated nationwide in the development of the National Land Policy, flexible land tenure bill. Since 1995, various community groups have consolidated their savings, training and reporting activities. Subsequently a loan fund called the Twahangana Fund was established, together with a Twahangana Scheme setting out the prerequisites for obtaining loans from the fund. Ten groups consisting 109 households ( 88 % women) have received housing and servicing loans and seventeen households have installed sewerage reticulation with their loans.

### **These groups have made major inroads towards:**

- poverty alleviation,
- public participation,
- community empowerment and self-determination through aggressive saving schemes, -- provision of 131 small business loans to members ,
- offering of building training courses ,
- sharing and developing managerial, financial and organisational skills,
- participating in housing decision and saving schemes,
- undertaking regional and international study tours in exchanging of experiences worldwide.

Another NGO involved in human settlements development and a member of the National Habitat Committee is the Urban Trust of Namibia. This institution has made major strides in the area of economic development and informal sector. It participated in the drafting of small medium Enterprise Policy with the Namibia Chamber of Commerce, and on the implementation of the urban governance project, which focuses on markets, its regulatory framework and advocacy training.

## 2.9 THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector activities include the implementation of labour intensive practices in private construction industry. On the job training is offered simultaneously to ensure that useful and marketable skills are left behind in the community after completion of construction.

## 2.10. CHALLENGE

Although some good results have been recorded ,problems have also been experienced in the area of :

- finance,
- affordability ( in relation to land and housing delivery ) ,
- lack of appropriate technologies,
- shortage of professional land surveyors and equipment and
- availability of serviced plots.

## 2.11 FUTURE PLANS

The decentralisation implementation process will require affected line Ministries , regional councils and local authorities to restructure in order to re – orientate existing institutional resources towards fulfilling future roles. Studies will have to be undertaken to assess and determine the capacity of regional councils and local authorities . In the case of land and housing delivery, central government will continue with :

- budgetary provision
- inspection, monitoring and mentoring of housing providers
- source funding from international donor agencies
- assist regional councils and local authorities in planning , surveying , compiling of budgets and housing designs
- assist in capacity building of all stakeholders in human settlement development
- establish regional land boards and land tenure boards
- ensure the promulgation of the following bills –flexible land tenure , national housing development and decentralisation enabling bill
- undertake a comprehensive research on housing needs and demands
- ensure 3 years periodic review of the national plan of action

## 3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia provides a framework for legislation and policies to safeguard Namibian's equal right to shelter. The Government of Namibia is committed to the objectives, principles and recommendations contained in the Habitat 11 Agenda. As a result a National Habitat Committee was established, which offer a national forum



for alliance – building, exchange of innovative ideas and experiences on human settlement development issues. The establishments of the National Habitat Committee could be regarded as a step in the right direction. That this partnership is to be encouraged and established at both regional and local levels. Since the Namibia's Habitat activities have been concentrated directly on shelter issues, new stakeholders will be co-opted in order to ensure balanced presentation of Habitat principles in the future.

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