



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

OPENING STATEMENT

THE NATIONAL PLATFORM

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONWIDE

DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAMME, 2024/25

BY

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PRIME MINISTER

Wednesday, 25 September 2024
Gateway Center, Windhoek, Khomas Region

Check Against Delivery

- **Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Honourable Ministers and deputy Ministers**
- **Hon Laura McLoud-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region and
other Regional Governors;**
- **Chairpersons of Regional Councils;**
- **Members of the National Disaster Risk Management Committee
and the Secretariat;**
- **Chief Regional Officers;**
- **Development Partners present (WFP);**
- **All Regional Disaster Field Coordinators present;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

A very Good morning!

1. I wish to welcome you all to this important meeting of stakeholders in disaster risk management. As important stakeholders in disaster risk management, your role in the implementation of the drought relief programme currently under implementation nationwide is central to its success. Your presence at this meeting is therefore important.
2. As we are all aware, Namibia is enduring a severe drought, compounded by climate change impacts and El Nino, which have seriously compromised the livelihoods of our communities and resultantly the food security situation in the country. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification under the Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA), this situation drives about 1.15 million people to severe levels of acute food insecurity during July to September 2024, driven also by the combined impacts of rising food prices, in addition to the El Niño phenomenon.
3. The food insecurity situation is expected to heighten in the period from October 2024 to March 2025, with 1.26 million people expected to be affected, before it moderates to 776,000 people after March 2024 up until June 2025.

4. The government welfare program provides a useful shield against poverty and vulnerability to emergencies, reducing the incidence and the severity of the insecurities to hunger and other disasters induced situations. As a result, a reduced number of the population in Phase 4 (Emergency) is expected during the current and projected periods thanks to the mitigation efforts through government welfare programs.
5. This Platform is convened to ensure a common understanding and uniform implementation of the drought relief programme to enhance its effective implementation and to optimize its impact.
6. Drought relief interventions must not only be seen in the context of the provision of immediate relief to drought affected communities, but it must be located in the broad programs aimed to build resilience to emergencies and ensure sustainable livelihoods of our communities. Implementation of the planned interventions should thus take that into consideration to ensure that the relief efforts yield outcomes that makes us better prepared and more resilient to emergencies. Not every emergency should become a disaster. With better preparedness we can weather strong storms with less disruptions and less expenditures.

7. Currently, disaster response expenditures are enormous and often crowding out other priority expenditures that are necessary to promote economic growth and development and which are beyond our ability to afford and thus threaten fiscal sustainability and counter progress towards sustainable development. It is therefore as important if not even more, to address resilience to disasters as it is to provide relief in the aftermath of disasters. I therefore call upon all stakeholders in disaster risk management to give due attention to this important aspect of emergency management.

8. I also call for cooperation and coordination amongst stakeholders to ensure efficiency and timely execution of emergency programs. The impact of food insecurity is not the same amongst all citizens. For some citizens, there is no other coping mechanisms, such as ability to buy food from shops. These are the vulnerable and should be seen as a priority for emergency relief as without it they can face malnutrition and death from hunger.

9. There are those who have income with which they can purchase food to supplement their harvest. These are implored to show understanding and make use of other interventions such as water supply, livestock support and nutrition and food security programs

that seek to create resilience and empower them to optimize the production and their income.

10. The Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis indicates that, of the total population of 3.0 million people, 1.26 million people (or 41.5% of population) are regarded to be in emergency situation and require urgent action to reduce food gaps and protect livelihoods; The remainder 1.77 million people (or 58.5%) are affected, but are regarded to be not in a Crisis or Emergency situation. These are, not covered under the food relief program, but are covered under seeds and livestock program and they benefit under the water supply program.
11. The food assistance program is to be extended to urban centers through the roll out of the Conditional Basic Income Grant (CBIG).

Honourable Governors

Distinguished Participants

12. The Disaster Risk Management Frameworks embraces the whole-of-society approach, a comprehensive and inclusive strategy that engage all sectors and stakeholders within a society to manage and

reduce disaster risks. This approach recognizes that disaster preparedness, response, and recovery involves the active participation of all segments of society. Our presence here today is a testimony of our enduring commitment of answering to this noble call.

13. The Regional Governors are mandated to establish the Regional Disaster Risk Management Committees in the respective Regions. Such provision places the Regional Governor at central role in overseeing the activities of the Regional Disaster Risk Management Committees, supported by the Regional emergency Committees. Other structures are also provided for Constituencies, Towns and villages, and same places responsibilities on Heads of Constituencies, Town Councils and villages to oversee the implementation, within the set policies and programmes.
14. These structures, once operationalized, ease the challenges of coordination and implementation.
15. The Government has noted with concern reported incidences of the thefts of drought relief food items. We also condemn the reported politicizing of emergency food assistance. These incidences must be addressed by all involved stakeholders within the applicable policies

and systems. We will not be able to effectively address the vulnerabilities created by the drought if we allow such incidences to continue as they undermine efforts to ensure needed assistance to all those in need.

16. The drought relief interventions cut across various sectors and institutions. The Food Provision is coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister, while the Livestock Support Programme and Water Provision are coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform. The implementation of these interventions is a shared responsibility to popularize for the targeted beneficiaries to partake.
17. The Government budget for drought is N\$1.3 billion. These investments should be optimized to yield the desired outcomes, through rigorous and correct implementation. Some interventions, especially the livestock support record low uptakes across Regions. We should publicize the program and encourage communities to make use of it. Challenges of timely payment of claims were noted and are being addressed through the processing of claims at submission points.
18. This National Drought Platform serves as a platform to take stock of what is working well and to exchange best practices through learning

from our unique experiences as different regions, as well as to interrogate areas where we need to improve, in order to ensure a smooth implementation of the drought relief programme. We note the challenges experienced in the implementation of the drought relief programme. This platform will formulate collective actions to overcome such.

19. As I draw to conclusion, I wish to urge Namibians to prepare for the post-drought period. Government has invested in seeds and farming implements such as tractor services to assist farmers to improve their farming practices. These services are available at Agricultural Development Centers country-wide. Let us create awareness and sensitize our communities, especially the farmers, on the positive rainfall prospects to ensure early action and preparedness to optimize the potential of this forecast.

20. The funding for the drought relief is drawn largely from our own resources. But, following the appeal launched, development partners are coming through with assistance which is greatly appreciated. We have thus far recorded donations worth of N\$12 million, while N\$229.7 million worth of pledges were made.

21. In conclusion, I wish you a fruitful deliberation. Let us use these two days optimally to share our insights, so that collectively, we overcome the current challenges and ensure a seamless implementation of the drought relief programme.
22. With these remarks, I hereby declare the National Platform on the implementation of the 2024/25 nationwide drought relief programme officially open and for fruitful engagements.

I thank you!