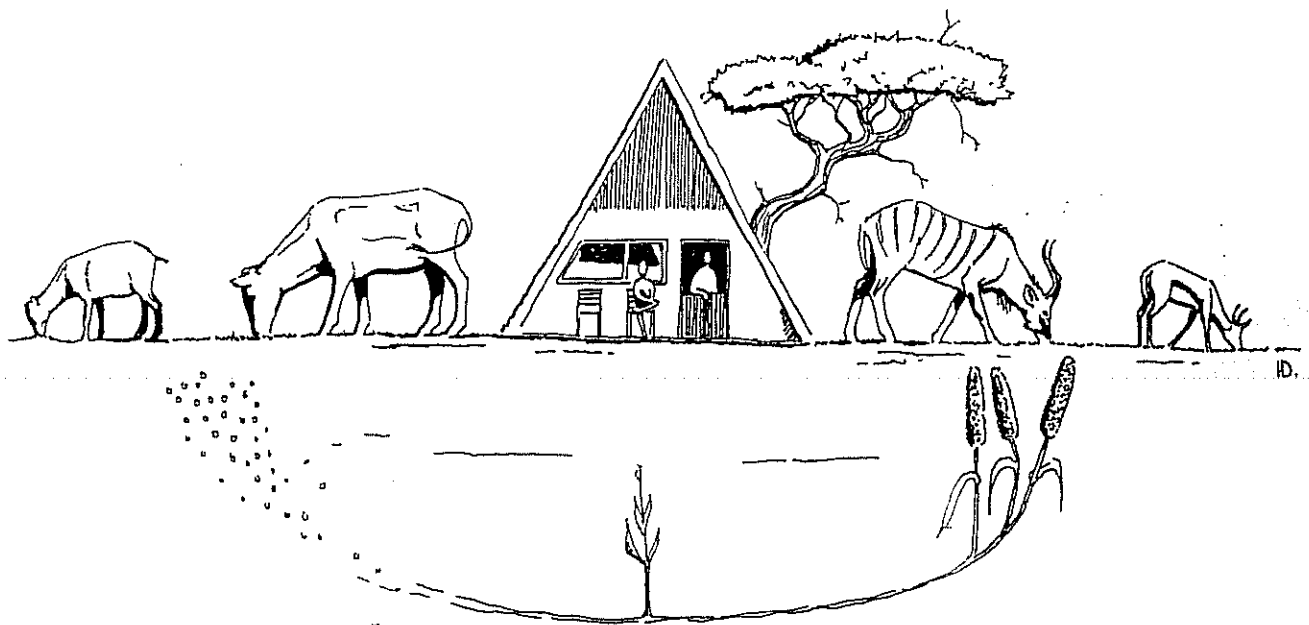




REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

# NAMIBIA'S NATIONAL POLICY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION



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## Namibia's Policy to Combat Desertification

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Namibia Development Trust  
Rossing Foundation  
Wildlife Society of Namibia  
Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation  
Naye-Naye Development Foundation  
Save the Rhino Trust  
Life Science Project  
Namibia Economic and Policy Research Unit  
Namibia Nature Foundation  
Small Industries Project  
Arid Zone Ecology Forum  
Kaoko/Opuwo Community Representatives  
Omusati Community Representatives  
Epukiro Community Representatives  
Bergsig Community Representatives  
Sesfontein Community Representatives  
Khorixas Community Representatives  
Naye Naye Community Representatives  
Oshona Community Representatives  
Southern Namibia Farmers Union Representatives  
Spitzkoppe Community Representatives  
Okamatapati Community Representatives  
Rundu Community Representatives  
Kamanjab Community Representatives  
Otjiwarongo Community Representatives  
Niko Community Representatives  
InterConsult Associates, Namibia  
Namibia Resource Consultants  
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Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH  
Natural Resources Institute (UK)  
CSIRO (Australia)  
National Botanical Institute (RSA)  
University of Botswana  
University of the Witwatersrand (RSA)  
U.S. Peace Corp  
International Medical Corp  
Swedish International Development Authority  
United Nations Development Programme  
Secretariat of the INCD

## 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 Namibia is the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa; 22% of the land surface is arid (<100 mm of rain per annum), 70% is semi-arid (100-500 mm) and 8% is dry subhumid (>500 mm). Rainfall is also highly variable and unpredictable. These factors characterise and contribute to the fragility of Namibia's environment.
- 1.2 Namibia's economy is largely reliant on renewable natural resources, including those in the sectors of agriculture, tourism, fisheries, wildlife, forestry and water. About 70% of the population are directly dependent for their livelihood and survival on the land and its resources.
- 1.3 Namibia has experienced significant to severe environmental degradation in many parts of the country, resulting in a loss of productivity and biotic diversity. Increasing human pressure on the fragile environment has been the main cause of degradation, exacerbated by the variable climate and periods of droughts. The processes leading to a loss of productivity in arid regions are known, collectively, as "desertification".
- 1.4 The manifestations of desertification in Namibia include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, bush encroachment and salinization. Ultimate factors leading to desertification are often complex, and may originate in seemingly unrelated sectors. They might include issues of economic and fiscal policy, marketing, land rights and use, human population pressure, international trade, resource management practices, etc.
- 1.5 The quality of life of all Namibians, particularly the rural poor, and the development potential of the country, are threatened by desertification. Desertification leads to increased poverty, reduced food security, poor health and nutrition, and increased pressure on the environment and the national economy.

## 2. POLICY

In view of the above, it is the policy of the Government of the Republic of Namibia to combat the processes of desertification by establishing a national programme and by supporting other activities that:

- a) promote the sustainable and equitable use of land and renewable natural resources, in keeping with Namibia's variable climatic conditions;

- b) recognise that poverty and population growth are interlinked with the processes of desertification, and support and/or develop programmes to address these issues;
- c) aim to understand and positively influence the proximate and ultimate factors affecting the processes of desertification, including bio-physical, socio-economic, policy and legislative framework factors;
- d) encourage broad-based participation and strengthening of, and communications between, relevant organisations and individuals, at all levels;
- e) promote awareness, education and training at all levels through the preparation and distribution of appropriate materials, and through the active interaction of individuals and institutions;

### 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Namibia's policy to combat desertification provides a framework for a national programme which is based entirely on Namibia's needs and conditions, while making use of regional and international experience as appropriate. This programme should be dynamic, responsive, participatory, based on sound information and, above all, implementable by government, NGOs the business sector and resource users. The following "guiding principles" are applicable:

- 3.1 Combatting desertification involves long-term integrated strategies aimed at arresting degradation and improving productivity of land, leading to improved living standards, particularly amongst rural communities.
- 3.2 Integrated strategies should address the physical, biological, social, economic and policy aspects of the processes of desertification.
- 3.3 Strategies for poverty alleviation, including alternative livelihoods for rural communities, should be included into efforts to combat desertification.
- 3.4 Strategies to combat desertification should interlink with those in related fields, e.g. biodiversity, water and wetland management, early warning and food security programmes, agricultural, forestry and wildlife programmes, planned urbanisation, etc.
- 3.5 Local, regional, national and international cooperation and communication should be strengthened to support the combatting of desertification.

- 3.6 Strategies to combat desertification should be dynamic, flexible and adaptive to cope with different local socio-economic and bio-physical conditions, and to respond to new research findings.
- 3.7 Informed decision-making should be facilitated at all levels by identifying information needs, and collecting, analysing and communicating appropriate information to relevant individuals and institutions.
- 3.8 Broad-based participation of the resource users, resource managers, extension staff and policy makers is essential for the success of a national programme to combat desertification.
- 3.9 People directly dependent on land and natural resources should be empowered to making decisions regarding their management. These rights over decision-making should be linked to obligations of wise and sustainable management and utilization.
- 3.10 Factors influencing resource management and issues such as desertification can originate in sectors seemingly far removed from those in which the problems manifest themselves. For this reason, decision-makers at all levels and in all relevant fields should be made aware of desertification processes, and all policies should pass through an environmental assessment procedure before being approved.
- 3.11 Provide an enabling environment for Namibians to effectively combat desertification over the long-term by supporting and, where necessary, strengthening relevant institutions, programmes and legislation and, where they do not exist, enacting new laws and establishing appropriate institutions, programmes and strategies, and promote education, awareness and training at all levels.

