

Environment ministry faces N\$165m funding gap for anti-poaching, park infrastructure



Photo: Gondwana Collection Namibia

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The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is facing a funding shortfall of approximately N\$165 million, raising concerns about the sustainability of conservation.

The funding constraints are outlined in the parliamentary standing committee on natural resources' final report on a capacity-building workshop with stakeholders held at Swakopmund, which was tabled before the eighth National Assembly.

For the 2025/26 financial year, the ministry has been allocated a total budget of N\$797 million. Of this amount, N\$382 million is allocated to personnel costs for the ministry's 1 742 employees, reflecting the labour-intensive nature of environmental protection, conservation enforcement and regulatory oversight.

Additional allocations include N\$89 million for park maintenance and N\$76 million for conservation programmes. Despite these allocations, the committee reports that the ministry remains significantly under-resourced in key operational areas.

The report identifies an immediate funding gap of N\$45 million for anti-poaching equipment, which the committee says is essential for protecting wildlife across Namibia's 21 protected areas, including flagship conservation sites such as Etosha and Sossusvlei. These protected areas span more than 13 million hectares and are currently safeguarded by 648 rangers.

In addition, the committee highlighted a backlog of N\$120 million for park infrastructure upgrades, citing ageing facilities, inadequate ranger accommodation, deteriorating roads and insufficient visitor infrastructure.

According to the committee, these shortcomings not only undermine conservation effectiveness but also limit tourism growth and revenue generation.

The report further notes that only 35% of the required climate adaptation funding has been secured, placing pressure on programmes aimed at climate-smart agriculture, wetland restoration, drought mitigation and the development of carbon credit frameworks in communal areas.

The ministry's regulatory responsibilities also continue to expand. The committee reports that the ministry processed 412 environmental impact assessments, issued 187 environmental clearance certificates and suspended 83 non-compliant mining operations to enforce environmental standards.

These activities, the committee says, demonstrate strong regulatory oversight but place increasing strain on limited financial and human resources.

To improve financial sustainability, the committee noted that the environment ministry has proposed a 15% increase in tourism concession fees, the introduction of biodiversity offset mechanisms and the strengthening of private sector partnerships to mobilise conservation financing.

The committee further notes that while Namibia has established a robust policy and legislative framework for environmental management, targeted investment is urgently required to close funding gaps and prevent the erosion of hard-won conservation gains.

The ministry's mandate is anchored in Article 95(1) of the Namibian Constitution, which obliges the state to maintain ecosystems, protect biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for present and future generations.