

Drought Relief Bulletin

Updates on civil society drought relief efforts – project rationales, activities and funding needs. Reflections and analysis of drought relief in Africa and the Basic Income Grant pilot in Namibia.

September-October 2019

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This is the second edition of the Drought Relief Bulletin, an initiative of the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE). The purpose of this Bulletin is to improve communications between and create synergy among institutions supporting or carrying out drought relief efforts in Namibia. It summarises research and reports on drought relief efforts in Namibia and other parts of the world to introduce new relief methods and elucidate lessons learned by practitioners. The Bulletin is produced regularly and each edition will focus on different aspects of drought relief.

This Bulletin is distributed to relevant government departments and the corporate private sector. Both governmental and non-governmental drought relief efforts can benefit from greater communication and understanding of the objectives, mechanisms and focal areas of their respective efforts. Furthermore, the government has called on the private sector to contribute to drought relief during the particularly severe drought currently being experienced. The details provided here will therefore be of interest to private companies wanting to heed government's call for support.

Readers are encouraged to share this Bulletin with other institutions or interested parties, such that the Bulletin expands to include as many drought relief projects in Namibia as possible. Contributions to the Bulletin in the form of details about relief projects in Namibia or reports on previous drought relief efforts (or efforts from other parts of the world) can be sent to the Bulletin editor, Gail Potgieter at gailsfelines@gmail.com.

About the Namibian Chamber of Environment

The Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) is an umbrella association of 64 organisations working in the environmental sector. NCE aims to support and represent its members on all issues relating to the environment. Rather than doing fieldwork itself, NCE looks to support the efforts of others with a view to creating and adhering to best practice standards. NCE recognises the importance of addressing social needs at the interface between the environment and society, and drought relief falls into this category.

Namibia Red Cross Society

Water, cash and food relief

NRCS is working with a number of partners to enhance household access to clean and safe water in the Kunene Region, provide cash grants to drought affected crop farmers in the Zambezi Region, and mobilise volunteers to offload food parcels in the Ohangwena and Omusati Regions.

Safe and clean water in the Kunene Region

NRCS has partnered with USAID to assist communities in the Kunene Region to enhance household access to clean and safe water through rehabilitation of water points, provision of water storage containers and water purification tablets.

Throughout the intervention NRCS, with assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry technical team, are rehabilitating 15 water points in the region. This intervention will have at least 12,000 direct beneficiaries and approximately 18,300 indirect beneficiaries.

The Kunene Region is one of the hardest hit by the drought. This poses a threat to communities, as the availability of safe and clean water is scarce. NRCS made available 125,000 water purification tablets which are distributed on a monthly basis to identified communities in isolated areas that are at risk of consuming unsafe water from various sources.

Additionally, this intervention has purchased 3,000 water storage containers with the volume of 25L to distribute to 3,000 households throughout the region. At least 15,000 beneficiaries are expected to benefit from this form of assistance. NRCS volunteers are also disseminating information on hygiene as a way to promote healthy living amongst the communities in the region.

Cash Transfer Project in the Zambezi Region

NRCS has mobilised funds for food security support in the Sibbinda constituency of the Zambezi Region, targeting 1,200 households. The intervention focuses on providing cash to drought affected small-scale crop farmers.

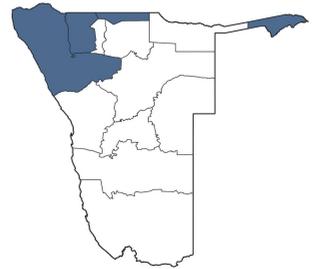
NRCS has thus far completed two rounds of disbursements to 1,211 beneficiaries, with each targeted household receiving N\$ 800. The project is expected to conclude in December 2019.

Office of the Prime Minister drought relief

NRCS in its auxiliary role to the government has mobilised 30 volunteers in the Ohangwena (15) and Omusati (15) Regions to assist in the loading and offloading of drought relief food parcels.



Focal Areas



Quick Look

Target demographics: Women, children and people living with physical and mental health challenges.

Funded by international donors. In Kunene Region: 12,000 direct beneficiaries of water points, 125,000 water purification tablets to be distributed, 3,000 households received water containers. In Zambezi Region: 1,211 households received N\$800 each over two months.

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Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE)



Investigating best practices

One of NCE's key functions is to identify and disseminate best practice information on issues relating to the environment, socio-economics and livelihoods. NCE has therefore hired a consultant, Brian Jones, to collate information from Namibia and other countries on best practices for drought relief and long-term socio-economic support mechanisms. He will also be involved in monitoring and evaluating current relief efforts funded by NCE.

Rationale for the project

While the current drought is a crisis and therefore requires urgent intervention, NCE believes that reducing the vulnerability of communities in the long-term will reduce the social impact of future droughts. The NCE will therefore explore the wider implications of emergency response and social grants, and the effectiveness of delivering support to vulnerable people. The national and international bodies of research and practical experience in the disaster relief and social grants sectors need to be brought together in a logical, structured and accessible fashion that provides good clear analysis and recommendations for Namibia.

Namibia currently has at least five social grants mechanisms that are run largely independently. In unpredictable drought and flood situations, Namibia has to mobilise its efforts almost from scratch each time there is such an event. There is also little transparency in the prioritization, planning and effectiveness of the measures and the outcomes achieved. This project will provide recommendations for improving the social grants system such that it can be scaled up during emergency situations to provide extra support for vulnerable people with minimal extra administrative costs.

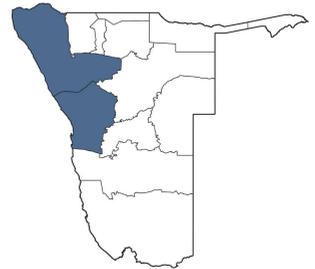
Key activities

Phase one of this consultancy will deliver the following outcomes:

- A desktop study of national/international best practices and delivery mechanisms providing emergency relief for vulnerable people.
- A study based on interviews and a review of legislation and policies regarding social grants and drought relief implemented by government departments and civil society.
- Based on the above, provide an overview of strengths and weaknesses of the current social grant and emergency relief systems in Namibia and provide recommendations for improving these systems inline with international best practices.
- A full report combining both studies, with single page summaries to inform stakeholders and policymakers.

Phase two will monitor the cash-for-work project implemented by IRDNC with funding from NCE. This includes measuring the impact of the project on beneficiary households and the broader community in which they live, and interviewing recipients before and after project implementation. Suggestions for improving this form of drought relief from recipients and project managers will also be included in recommendations for future relief efforts.

Focal Areas



Quick Look

Programme focus: Investigate international best practices for emergency response and long-term social grants systems. Review current Namibian emergency response and social grants systems and recommend improvements to align with best practices. Monitor and evaluate NCE and IRDNC drought relief programme.

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NCE and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)

Cash-for-work programme

NCE created a broad conceptual framework for emergency drought relief that:

- Targets the most vulnerable areas of Namibia based on rangeland condition
- Targets the most vulnerable villages and families within these areas
- Identifies appropriate cash-for-work projects that deliver socio-economic and environmental benefits to local communities
- Ensures that over 90% of the drought relief reaches the target recipients, with a minimal amount used for logistic overheads.

IRDNC worked closely with communities in remote conservancies in the northern Kunene region to develop proposals that met the above criteria. After review, NCE signed an agreement with IRDNC for an amount of N\$ 1 million for implementation of the proposed projects. This drought relief funding was generously provided by B2Gold Namibia in response to the government's request for assistance from the business sector in the current drought and economic downturn.

Rationale for project

IRDNC has worked with the communal conservancies in Kunene for many years, knows the people and their needs and can therefore initiate productive drought relief support with transparent governance mechanisms relatively quickly using local institutional structures. The components identified are related to natural resources and tourism development, as these are key aspects of the conservancy programme.

The target communities requested a combination of cash and food parcels to be paid for their work. The identified work activities are based on existing conservancy needs that require a larger workforce than the conservancies can afford. Consequently, the work achieved during this project will itself contribute to conservancy development and conservation goals.

Key activities

IRDNC and NCE have chosen to focus on two components of cash-for-work: 1) Clearing roads for annual game counts in conservancies and 2) opening access to new tourism infrastructure (hiking trails, campsites, etc.) in currently underdeveloped conservancies (see map alongside for respective target conservancies).

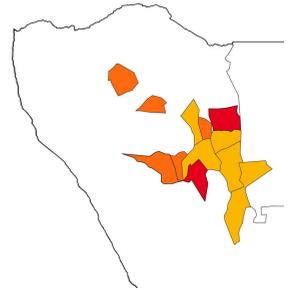
Equal numbers of men and women will be offered employment at N\$ 100 per day per person, N\$ 40 of which given in the form of food parcels. An average of 6 people per village in each conservancy will be employed, with some variation allowed for particularly big or small settlements.

Possible expansion with further funding

If more funding becomes available for this project, IRDNC will implement two other components of this project: 1) Cleaning waste sites and collecting litter; 2) Cleaning and fixing water points. This would increase the number of employment opportunities in each village.



Focal Areas



The map shows target conservancies in the Kunene Region: those in yellow will be developing tourism infrastructure, those in orange will be clearing game count roads, conservancies in red are targeted for both cash-for-work components.

Quick Look

Programme funding and focus: N\$ 1 million available for two components of the cash-for-work programme. Extra funding would allow another two components to be added to this project.

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Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)

Cash-for-cattle programme

IRDNC want to address the issue of cattle dying in the drought and moving into wildlife-only areas within conservancies. An estimated N\$ 2.6 million is required to implement the project; IRDNC have started engaging with potential funders and have a full project proposal for those interested in supporting it.

Rationale for project

Many people in the Kunene Region depend on subsistence livestock farming for their livelihoods. The current drought has caused numerous cattle deaths and forced farmers to move their cattle into areas that have been designated for wildlife. This is both a socio-economic and environmental issue, as cattle owners are losing their livelihoods, conflict with wildlife is increasing and the remaining grazing areas are being over-utilised. The current crisis may also have long-term impacts on wildlife populations and associated tourism, which is a key industry for rural development in these areas.

IRDNC commissioned an investigation into the state of cattle farming in the area, met with local farmers, and hosted a brainstorming session with other stakeholders in Windhoek to plan a way forward. As a result of these deliberations, they have proposed raising funds to buy cattle from people who have moved into core wildlife areas in nine target conservancies. Although this project will seek contributions from target conservancies, it is not a conservancy-based programme as such, and will include other local stakeholders in the region.

Key activities

IRDNC will buy the weakest cattle from farmers at a flat rate of N\$ 2,000 per animal and distribute the meat to vulnerable people in those communities. Their target is to raise N\$ 2.6 million to buy 1,300 cattle in and around key wildlife areas in the target conservancies.

Farmers in the region have already indicated that they want to keep the cattle that are most likely to survive the drought so that they can rebuild their herds when the rains come. Commercial abattoirs would not accept their weakest cattle, and these would likely die in transit anyway. Consequently, IRDNC will buy and slaughter cattle close to the areas where they are currently grazing and distribute the meat via the conservancies, which already have game meat distribution systems.

Possible expansion with further funding

Donations received beyond the current target will go towards purchasing more cattle in areas that require further de-stocking. These areas will be selected based on the response from farmers in the first round of cattle purchasing. IRDNC is also looking for a donation of salt to tan the skins of slaughtered animals, which the communities can use to make leather goods for own use or sale.



Focal Areas



Target conservancies in the Kunene region are highlighted above.

Quick Look

Target demographics: Cattle owners in sensitive wildlife areas will be invited to sell their cattle. Meat distributed to schools and vulnerable people.

Project funding and focus: N\$ 2.6 million required to buy 1,300 cattle, extra funding will buy more cattle from selected areas.

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The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN)

Cash distribution programme

ELCIN has secured about N\$ 400 000 for their drought relief programme similar to their successful project in 2013/14 (see the first Drought Relief Bulletin for details).

Rationale for project

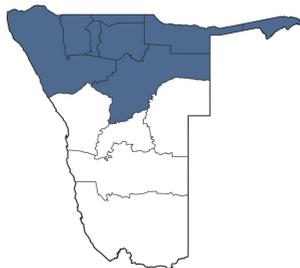
These funds will be used for cash distribution for selected communities. All community residents are given N\$ 100 per month for the duration of the drought. Cash payments provide greater flexibility for beneficiaries than food, as they can use it for a greater variety of household needs. See the Reflections and Analysis section of this Bulletin for more information on how cash grants increase community resilience to drought.

Possible expansion with further funding

ELCIN have identified two other priority areas for drought relief besides cash distribution: psychosocial support and disaster preparedness. Psychosocial support training helps local pastors and volunteers address potential negative impacts of cash distribution (e.g. alcohol abuse and gender-based violence) within the target communities to maximise the benefits of cash-based relief. Disaster/emergency preparedness training for local pastors and volunteers is designed to increase community resilience and internal capacity to respond to drought and other emergencies. ELCIN will use any additional funding to provide these training courses to their target communities.



Focal Areas



Quick Look

Target demographics: Whole communities identified as most vulnerable to drought according to baseline information.

Programme funding and focus: N\$ 400,000 currently available to support two communities. Extra funding will provide psychosocial support and disaster preparedness training to community leaders. Funding of more than N\$ 150,000 will extend the programme to include other communities.

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Taking the long view of drought relief.

This brief summary highlights two key issues relating to long-term drought management. Although the current drought is a crisis and must be treated as such, it is worth taking a longer view of the situation even while we respond to current needs.

Short-term relief efforts must beware of unintended long-term consequences

Hazell (2000) considered the influence of drought and its relief mechanisms on traditional livestock farming systems in semi-arid areas, with examples from Africa. He looks at the long-term consequences of two different types of drought relief for livestock farmers 1) delivery of livestock feed at subsidised rates; 2) restocking programmes after the drought has broken.

In the first example, he uses evidence from arid North African countries (e.g. Morocco and Tunisia) and Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Syria and Jordan) with livestock feed subsidies. Prior to government interventions, large numbers of livestock (25-70% of national herds) died during each severe drought, posing a clear threat to livelihoods. The governments responded by providing barley and concentrated livestock feed products at 32-50% of its cost. After several years of these efforts, the following observations were made:

- Livestock numbers were no longer badly affected by drought, and numbers continued to increase in good and bad rainfall years.
- Continued high numbers of livestock, especially concentrated around feed distribution points, led to rangeland degradation. [The provision of subsidised fodder to Namibian farmers prior to independence has similarly been identified as one of the factors contributing to rangeland degradation and bush thickening (de Klerk, 2004).]
- More farmers planted barley in areas not suitable for the crop due to the high prices offered by the government; this further reduced available grazing land.
- The programmes cost US\$ 58-116 million, depending on the country.
- The main beneficiaries were owners of large livestock herds, rather than the poorest members of society. Some countries have started permanently subsidising livestock feed for farmers, even after the drought had broken – this comes at great cost to the state. Jordan discontinued the programme altogether.

In the second example, Hazell (2000) looks at restocking programmes that various sub-Saharan African countries have used to help livestock farmers rebuild their herds after a drought. This involved buying live animals from farmers during the drought and keeping them in feedlots. They are then sold at an affordable price or given back to the farmers once the drought has broken. This system has clear benefits for farmers and extra discounts can be given to the poorest farmers. It also has a lower impact on the rangeland than the livestock feed subsidy example above. There are some drawbacks, however:

- It is difficult and costly to administer such a programme, as government bears the feedlot costs for the duration of the drought and is unlikely to recoup these costs.
- Targeting one area is likely to draw farmers from other areas to sell and/or buy cattle, thus drawing more livestock into the affected area.
- There is no monitoring data available to show the possible impacts of quick restocking on long-term productivity and rangeland condition. [We know from Namibian experience that failure to give rangelands sufficient time to recover after drought is one of the main causes of long-term rangeland degradation and bush encroachment in Namibia (de Klerk 2004).]
- Livestock traders who buy from government at discounted rates and sell at market rates after the drought appear to benefit most from the system.

Resilient communities are less vulnerable to drought

A report for the United Nations points out that drought is both a physical and socio-economic phenomenon (Tadesse, 2018). While we have little control over the physical side (i.e. making it rain), we have much greater control over socio-economic aspects. One of the most critical social issues is the vulnerability of parts of society to the effects of drought. The poor who are dependent on natural resources to survive will be most severely affected. People with alternative livelihoods that do not depend directly on livestock or crops will be less affected.

Reducing poverty through supporting alternative livelihoods is therefore critical to building long-term resilience among communities and thus lessening the impact of drought. The previous issue of the Drought Relief Bulletin included a summary of a cash grant programme implemented by the Lutheran Churches in Namibia (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2015). Although this grant relieved drought stricken communities at the time, Haarmann et al. (2019) recommend that a Basic Income Grant (BIG) be rolled out for all Namibians at all times.

Their recommendation stems from the results of a BIG pilot study in Otjivero village near Omitara in the Omaheke Region. Everyone under 60 years old (thus not receiving a pension) residing in the village at the time of project inception in 2008 was given N\$100 per month for two years. The key scientific findings from their earliest report (Haarmann et al., 2009) revealed:

- People from other villages started migrating to the target village due to its improved local economy, even though they were not eligible for the grant themselves (a national-level BIG would reduce this).
- 76% of households were below the food poverty line in the year before the grant, this declined to 37% during the first year of implementation.
- More working-age people started generating their own income with the BIG (55%) than before it (44%), several people used their grant as start-up capital for small businesses (e.g. brick-making, dress-making and bread baking).
- 43% of the children in the village were malnourished prior to the BIG; this dropped to 10% by the end of year one.
- Money was also used for health (particularly by HIV-positive people) and education (school attendance rates increased; drop-out rates decreased from 40% to 0%).
- Household debt decreased by N\$443 per household and savings increased.
- Crime decreased by 42% and fewer women were forced into prostitution for survival.
- Alcoholism did not increase; the community elected a committee to advise people on spending their money and prevent alcohol sales on BIG paydays.

Despite the success of this pilot project, it was discontinued at the end of 2009, in the hope that a BIG scheme would be rolled out nationally soon thereafter. This has not occurred, and Haarmann et al. (2019) revisited the village 10 years later to report how the grant recipients' lives changed during the BIG project and in the time since it ended.

Five interviewees had started small businesses with the BIG money and sold their products mostly to local people who had increased buying power due to the BIG. When the project stopped, all of the businesses declined due to lack of money to buy raw materials and fewer local customers. One person started poaching on a nearby farm while another reported stealing firewood since the BIG stopped. In a particularly tragic story, an HIV-positive man used the BIG to pay for transport to the clinic and food to maintain his health; he died not long after BIG stopped due to a poor quality diet. Most interviewees said that the BIG had a positive social effect on the community in that they were more likely to help each other financially and practically. All of them wanted the BIG to be rolled out nationally.

The interviews and data collected by Haarmann et al. (2019) show that community resilience increased dramatically due to the BIG. It boosted the local economy and helped people start businesses that are not directly reliant on livestock or other natural resources. An intervention like this would thus reduce vulnerability to drought on a long-term basis.

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