



Blueprint Document¹

Priorities in the area of Migration, Environment and Climate Change

Every year, millions of people around the world are displaced by disasters and conflicts. According to the World Risk Index, Namibia is classified as one of the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. The country experiences significant agricultural production losses, upon which more than 70% of the population is directly depended for food security and survival. The effects of climate change and natural hazards pose serious threats to the livelihood of communities and socio-economic development at large and therefore also induce the displacement of people that are affected by such environmental factors.

Namibia is vulnerable to environmental factors, especially droughts and floods amongst others. Although occurring at different scales, floods have become a recurring event and seem to be worsening each year. Concurrently, the country also experiences extensive and prolonged droughts. Due to increased frequency and intensity of these extreme weather events, the affected communities are forced to migrate from one area to another, mostly to escape flooded areas (short-term) or in search for better livelihood such as water, grazing, arable land or employment opportunities (long-term).

In light of this situation the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), commissioned an assessment on the interlinkages of migration, environment and climate change (MECC) in Namibia². Based on the findings of this assessment, the first of its kind in Namibia, as well as on the National Dialogue on MECC which was held in Windhoek on 13 December 2017, the relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders identified the following seven priority areas as relevant at the national as well as SADC level in order to adequately work on issues related to MECC:

1. Legal Policy Frameworks

In this priority area the stakeholders are of the opinion that aspects of MECC are best captured in relevant policy frameworks and sectoral strategic frameworks by adding the migration angle to them. Hence, MECC should be mainstreamed. This is not to deny that it could be beneficial to establish a

¹ This Blueprint Document was developed by members of relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the framework of the National Dialogue on the Findings of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Country Report which took place in Windhoek, Namibia on 13 December 2017.

² The assessment was conducted within the IOM Development Fund (IDF) funded regional project «Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean» which covered Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique and Namibia.

separate policy framework on MECC, however in the national context as well as in the regional SADC context, the aspects of MECC could be integrated in existing legal and policy frameworks in an efficient and effective manner and ensure there is a common understanding of MECC. The following areas could be explored:

- Draft, review and harmonise relevant national policy frameworks, such as the National Policy on Climate Change, the Migration Policy, the Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, the Disaster Risk Management Act, etc., as well as regional policy frameworks with regard to issues related to MECC and if necessary adequately integrate these issues during the review process of the relevant policy frameworks.
- Integrate aspects related to MECC into national and regional development planning instruments, such as National Development Plans, United Nations Partnership Assistance Frameworks (UNPAFs), etc.

2. Data collection and management

The availability of relevant data in order to demonstrate the interlinkages between migration, environment and climate change was a key challenge as mentioned in the country assessment for Namibia. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders identified the following areas for future action:

- Improve data capture for international migration in order to include reasons for migrating that include environmental factors.
- Improve data collection for internal migration by adding relevant MECC variables into the national census as well as several, regular NSA reports, such as the Migration Report.
- Capture data on migration during natural disasters even in situations when the disaster is not declared to be of concern to the national level.
- Improve data collection with regard to the impact on people, communities and migration of environmental factors, such as wildfires, floods, droughts, etc.

3. Research

Quality research at the national and regional level is key for a comprehensive understanding of the links between migration, environment and climate change, be it within or across borders. It will also strengthen our understanding of how environmental migration impacts on the environment at the place of destination. Hence, the stakeholders identified the need for quality research as a priority area:

- Advocacy within government and with development partners in order to conduct and finance quality research with regard to various aspects related to MECC. In Namibia the priority focus should be on communities at risk of displacement due to droughts and floods.
- Inform Namibian research institutions, including universities, about the relevance and the need for research related to MECC.

4. Building community resilience

As highlighted in the country assessment on MECC for Namibia, migration due to environmental factors is mainly a result of these factors negatively affecting people's livelihoods or grazing opportunities for livestock etc. It is always a lack of ability to cope with the adverse environmental factors that lead to human mobility. Hence, building resilience of communities at risk of displacement (permanently or

temporarily) due to environmental factors, including climate change, could help to prevent migration and would in a Namibian context regularly represent a desired outcome. Therefore the stakeholders identified the following priority areas:

- Identify all communities at risk of displacement due to environmental factors including natural disasters and climate change.
- Conduct a comprehensive vulnerability mapping of communities at risk of displacement due to environmental factors and provide information on the negative impact on the people and the economy if displacement happens outside of a well structures mechanisms.
- Identify communities at risk of displacement across borders, including pastoralists, due to environmental factors including national disasters and climate change.
- Advocate with government and development partners for the implementation of programmes that increase the resilience to environmental shocks of communities at risk of displacement (within and across borders) due to environmental factors.
- Climate Change Adaptation needs to be mainstreamed into all relevant interventions.

5. Migration as an adaptation strategy

In line with the information provided in the Country assessment on MECC in Namibia, migration has served over generation as an adaptation strategy to climate change and natural hazards. Be it to migrate along routes with adequate grazing opportunities for livestock or be it temporary migration out of flooded areas. Migration as an adaption strategy also represents a reality in the 21st century and hence the relevant stakeholders identified this as a priority area:

- Explore mobility facilitating strategies such as circular (or temporary) labour migration schemes within Namibia as well as at the SADC level.
- Transform short-term adaptive strategies, especially related to migration, into long-term strategies that help solve some of issues at hand in a more permanent manner.

6. Displacement

Even though early warning systems are in place, there will be situations where migration and displacement happen outside of a well-structured framework, such as during the potential occurrence of flash floods or other environmental hazards that are difficult or even impossible to foresee. Hence the relevant stakeholders suggest to focus on the following priority areas:

- Ensure the availability of support structures for people that are displaced due to slow-onset environmental changes (at present the support structures mainly focus on people displaced due to sudden onset environmental changes).
- Uphold the capacity at national and regional level to provide temporary shelter solutions, including tools for camp coordination and camp management, for people displaced due to natural hazards.
- In contrast to those displaced internally by disasters³, those displaced across borders by disasters are not currently the subject of dedicated policies or laws at the regional or international level, which is considered a «protection gap». Hence, the relevant stakeholders

³ The ratification of the African Union's 2009 Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa represents a major milestone in this regard, being a binding document at the regional level which explicitly includes those displaced not only by natural disasters but also climate change.

suggest to explore possibilities, at the national and at the SADC level, to close this protection gap for people displaced across international borders due to natural hazards.

7. Coordination

In line with Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) partnerships and coordination are also crucial in the area of MECC. As indicated in the country assessment, the data and knowledge in the area of MECC are scattered across different institutions and even within institutions it can be challenging to locate the needed and relevant data. In light of this, the stakeholders suggested within the National Dialogue the following priorities:

- Creating a coordinating platform on MECC at the national and regional level in order to improve data collection, knowledge management and capacity-building in the area of MECC.