

# NAMIBIA

## **National Environmental Health Policy**

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### **I. Background**

#### *i. Environmental health situation*

1. Several pieces of legislation and regulations exist, some of them are out-dated and the administration is fragmented between different government agencies.
2. The co-ordination and formal interaction between the Ministry of Health and Social Services and with relevant government agencies is limited and inadequate. Intersectoral co-operation and community participation is currently weak and needs to be strengthened at different levels.
3. In most peri-urban and rural local communities, small to medium enterprises and informal settlements, the environmental health services are limited and not well developed.
4. The inadequate technical, material and financial support are major constraints to implementing the environmental health programmes.
5. The number, skills and distribution of Environmental Health Officers responsible for enforcing and monitoring environmental health intervention measures are limited and require skills enhancement and upgrading. Training in environmental health can only be undertaken at institutions outside Namibia.

### **II. National Environmental Health Policy**

#### *i. Principles/Philosophy of environmental health policy*

1. Commitment to environmental health for all.
2. Establish and provide for an enabling environment for statutory inspections, monitoring and surveillance system.
3. Intersectoral coordination and cooperation.
4. Establish criteria, develop and enforce statutory environmental health quality standards.
5. Give high priority in allocating the necessary financial and materials resources to enable the effective and efficient implementation of the environmental health programmes at all levels.
6. Strengthen the capacity and technical competencies of personnel involved at every level in implementing the environmental health intervention measures.
7. Provide general technical and administrative direction for the Regional Management Teams and for co-ordination within the Ministry of Health and Social Services and with relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
8. Information and data management.

9. Increase national awareness and education on environmental health factors and occupational health hazards.
10. Research and technology.
11. Environmental health impact assessment.
12. Establish and maintain streamlined control systems and procedures for inspecting and certifying imports and exports that may be sources of diseases from other countries.
13. Develop national legislation, regulations policies and guidelines that are consistent and based on internationally accepted principles and standards.
14. Decentralization and equitable distribution of services.
15. Develop indicators and standards that can be used to determine, measure and assess whether the environmental health services are effective and adequately address the goals and objectives of the policy.

## *ii. Policy goals and objectives*

### *Policy Goals*

1. Give high priority and support for environmental health measures aimed at preventing and controlling of environmental health factors and occupational health hazards.
2. Recognise and consider environmental health a fundamental right to good health, well-being and to improved quality of life.
3. Promote the principles of integrated environmental health intervention measures based on intersectoral and community participation and improved coordination within the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and with relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
4. Establish a pro-active and accessible integrated and holistic co-ordinated environmental health services at national, regional, district and local levels with delegated or shared responsibilities with relevant government agencies, local authorities and the private sector.
5. Ensure the provision of effective financial, material and technical support in order to plan and execute uniformly environmental health services for the benefit of all the people.

### *Policy objectives*

1. Review existing legislation to remove any ambiguity, gaps, inconsistencies and duplication.
2. Institutional organisation: At the national level, the directorate of primary health care services is responsible for formulating and implementing policies and programmes in addition to regulating and monitoring of compliance with statutory requirements on environmental health and for defining the roles and responsibilities at different levels.
3. Establishing of regional management teams.
4. Integrated environmental health management.

5. Capacity building.
6. Intersectoral and community participation.
7. Education and training.
8. Guidelines for environmental health impact assessment.
9. Regional management teams and local authorities in consultation with affected communities shall promote and facilitate the preparation of environmental health action plans.
10. Technical support services.

***iii. Responsibilities of stakeholders concerned with the provision of environmental health services.***

*Environmental health services*

Environmental health includes: safe drinking water, sanitary disposal of human excreta, safety in the use, handling and disposal of harmful chemical substances, radiation protection, notifiable diseases, vector borne diseases, control of environmental pollution, appropriate waste management practices, occupational health and hygiene services, port health, pest control, food hygiene and safety practices, housing and infrastructure settlements, personal hygiene and general household cleanliness.

*Provision of environmental health services*

The Directorate of Primary Health Care Services is implementing the environmental health policy through the Division of Public and Environmental Health Services which comprises of four sub-divisions: Public Hygiene; Occupational Health Services; Radiation Protection and Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, at national level. The implementation of the environmental health policy at regional level shall be carried out by environmental health officers and local authorities.

Roles and responsibilities have been defined for the different levels of environmental health services. The levels comprise the national, regional, enterprise, and community level. In brief responsibilities involve, at the national level:

1. Initiate the review and development of legislation, standards, policies and guidelines on environmental health.
2. Establish mechanisms for intersectoral co-ordination and community participation.
3. Develop guidelines for an integrated and decentralized environmental health management system including environmental health impact assessment and action plans.
4. Provide adequate financial and material resources for the management of environmental health at regional level.
5. Ensure equitable distribution of and access to environmental health services and environmental health officers.

At the Regional Level:

1. Participate in regional management teams and development committees.
2. Review and approve environmental health impact assessment reports and action plans.
3. Conduct education and information campaigns to promote environmental health.
4. Ensure timely response to emergencies and management of epidemics.
5. Enforce and ensure compliance with statutory regulations and standards on environmental health.
6. Prepare periodical reports on the state of environmental health in the region.

At the Enterprise Level:

1. Formulate sector environmental health policy and procedures.
2. Ensure compliance with all statutory regulations and standards on environmental health.
3. Conduct environmental health impact assessments of the enterprise and prepare environmental health action plans.
4. Establish training and information programmes for workers and surrounding communities.
5. Carry out surveillance of workers' health and working environment.

At the Community Level:

1. Establish community-based development and management committees for environmental health programmes.
2. Participate in policy decisions to identify and determine local priorities in resources, developmental projects and services in environmental health.
3. Participate in the planning and implementation of environmental health impact assessment process and environmental health action plans.
4. Develop plans and mobilise the community for timely response to emergencies and management of epidemics.
5. Participate in the monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of environmental health intervention measures.

***iv. Implementation of the policy***

1. The implementation of the environmental health policy shall evolve from the Directorate of Primary Health Care Services which will be responsible for the co-ordination with relevant government agencies at the national level and supervision of regional management Ttams, promotion of intersectoral co-operation and define the shared responsibilities with local authorities and encourage community participation

2. To ensure effective implementation of principles of the national environmental health policy, a strategy to implement each of the environmental health programmes should be formulated and developed in consultation with stakeholders and community participation.