

SCALING UP THE PROVISION OF URBAN LAND FOR HOUSING

DWN/NCE land delivery approach adopted by 2. National Land Conference

MoU being developed between MURD and DWN for the national implementation of the land delivery programme

The executive director of Development Workshop Namibia (DWN) had the opportunity to participate in the 2. National Land Conference from 1 to 5 October 2018. More than 800 delegates from across the country were present, including governors, CEOs, mayors, councilors, traditional authorities, ministers, deputy ministers, permanent secretaries, members of the President's Office, party representatives, unions, civil society representatives and academics. President Hage G. Geingob attended the conference throughout.

The Minister of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) stated early in the conference that the provision of minimally serviced land for housing is to be a priority to address the urban crisis and rapid informal settlement growth. DWN and its partner, the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE), have been advocating this approach to the Ministry over the past months, in parallel with the development of two pilot projects in Oshakati and Karibib. It means that the DWN/NCE land programme is now fully and officially supported by national urban development policy.

The second encouraging event was the very open and frank discussion in the urban land break away working group in which DWN participated. In the same group, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) was represented by two lecturers from the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, and the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia by key members. In an effort to join forces, the representatives of these three institutions agreed to push for following major issues during discussions:

1. To declare the urban crisis a national emergency, in order to mobilize additional resources and to put the urban crisis on top of the political agenda;
2. To develop an explicit urban reform policy and programme within one year, as a way to create a more enabling framework for sustainable urban development in Namibia;
3. To scale up successful programs, including participatory informal settlement upgrading (Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia) and provision of affordable land (DWN).

All these issues were adopted by conference. In the final speech, the President designated the urban crises as a national emergency. The development of an urban land reform programme and the scaling up of successful settlement upgrading and land delivery programmes are both stated in conference resolutions. In his closing speech, the President further emphasized that administrative inefficiencies must no longer be obstacles for the implementation of socially oriented land programmes, and that government relies on partnerships with academia, civil society and the private sector.

The political urban development context therefore has taken a positive turn. It is now up to the individual actors and institutions to effectively use this newly created space.

Scaling up of the DWN/NCE programme for the provision of low-cost land for housing

During the land conference, DWN has been approached by the Mayor of Keetmanshoop to establish the DWN/NCE land programme in her constituency and to engage the towns in southern Namibia. DWN has also been invited to initiate activities in Oniipa and Walvis Bay, and received an invitation to talk to local authority CEOs and mayors at the AGM of ALAN, the Association of Local Authorities in Namibia, on 18 October 2018. Some 360 copies of the DWN book on informal settlement and an equal number of fact sheets on the DWN/NCE land programme were distributed in the course of the conference.

On 9 October, shortly after the conference, a DWN delegation had a follow up meeting with Deputy Minister Hon. Derek Klazen at MURD. It was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding shall be signed between the Ministry and DWN for the nation-wide implementation of the DWN/NCE land programme.

In this rapidly evolving context, DWN's priority is now on fundraising to allow the establishment of revolving funds in the new towns that want to participate in the land programme.