

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAMME

Home-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Food Security



BACKGROUND

The Government of the Republic of Namibia has declared a state of emergency and has closed schools and borders to reduce the spread of the virus. A lock-down is currently in place in Khomas and Erongo Regions and job loss and loss of income due to the virus has already started and will accelerate in the coming weeks. Windhoek's informal settlements with more than 180,000 residents are likely to be the first and hardest hit by the lock-down over the coming weeks.

In Windhoek's informal settlements alone, there are approximately 350 Kindergartens with an estimated 15,000 registered children, between 2-6 years of age.

INTEGRATION ECD AND FEEDING INTO DW ACTIVITIES

Over the last weeks, Development Workshop Namibia (DWN), with the support of the Botnar Foundation and technical support from UNICEF and the EU have been testing a pilot programme to support children and their families to promote home-based ECD during the Covid-19 pandemic. This programme is a natural addition to DWN's sanitation activities as Kindergartens act as community hubs and have been used as central points under the DWN sanitation programme.

Under this ECD programme Kindergarten teachers are providing learning materials, food, information and support to the households of children enrolled in their centres. The teachers are developing activities for children, and guidance for parents to facilitate home-based learning and how to safeguard against COVID-19.

As loss of income will be heightened due to the virus, it is recognized that without provision of basic foods, ECD, and virus prevention measures will not be prioritized if families' primary concerns are survival. Therefore, this programme includes the provision of food packages and/or food vouchers.

These engagements take place through sessions at the ECD centres (with numbers limited to ensure social distancing is practices) or home visits. All necessary Covid-19 precautions are being taken to ensure that the family visitors are kept safe and are not spreading or being

exposed to the virus. The pilot has been running at one centre, with 5 ECD teachers, and reaching 60 children and their families. Parents have been providing positive feedback and neighboring centres are requesting to be involved.



SCALE UP

As the virus response is geared up and lock-down is extended beyond the initial school holiday period, a larger scale intervention is needed to support children and families. 20 Kindergartens are currently being involved in a second phase, while some 130 kindergartens will be engaged from May onwards, with support from the EU and UNICEF. These 130 Kindergartens represent all informal settlement Kindergartens in Samora Machel and Moses Garoeb constituencies, reaching out to more than 5000 kids and their families. Additional support is currently sought to also include a similar number of Kindergartens in Tobias Heinyeko and Khomasdal constituencies, as well as other regions where DWN and the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) are initiating the implementation of COVID-19 emergency sanitation measures (Zambezi, Karas, Erongo, Otjozondjupa, Oshana, Omusati).

For a recent coverage of the pilot initiative by OneAfrica TV, please see the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/OneAfricaTelevision/videos/223055542270699/>

On the following page is a map with the location of the kindergartens in Samora Machel and Moses Garoeb constituencies.

