REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HON. SOPHIA SHANINGWA, MP

MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

TRAINING WORKSHOP ON VERMI COMPOSTING AND LOW COST ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

20 FEBRUARY 2017

NEUDAMM UNAM CAMPUS
Director of Ceremonies;

Hon. Silvia Makgone, Deputy Minister, MURD;

H.E. Khumar Tuhin, Indian High Commission to India;

Hon. Penina Inga Ita, Councillor for Windhoek Rural Constituency;

Prof. Lazarus Hangula, UNAM Vice Chancellor;

Dr. Alfonse Mosimane, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Neudamm UNAM
Campus;

Our esteemed experts and training facilitators from Native
Establishment of Empowered Women (NEEW), India, Mr. Jeetendra
Singh Sevawat and Ms. Prerna Madhok;

Officials from the Ministries of Urban & Rural Development and
Agriculture, Water & Forestry;

Other invited guests;

The trainees and workshop participants;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am delighted to be here this morning to officiate at the opening of
this very important, which has been purposely organised to impart
knowledge and skills on vermi composting or organic compost
making and low cost agriculture to our small-scale farmers and staff
members from the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and
Regional Councils.
Director of Ceremonies;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Rural areas and rural development are important for a number of obvious reasons. Firstly, rural areas are home to majority of our population up 53.3% and are characterised by a relatively high level of poverty rate in comparison to urban areas.

Secondly and very important, while rural areas are often known for their lack of basic essential infrastructures and services and high levels of poverty, they hold enormous potential, which if harnessed and exploited can greatly contribute to poverty eradication and the realisation of our national economic and social development goals.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

In keeping with its Constitutional obligation of promoting and maintaining the welfare of the people of Namibia, the Government has adopted and is implementing various policies and programmes that are aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing unemployment and income inequalities. The Government’s commitment has been underscored in the declarations that have been made by our President His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, namely an all-out war against poverty, hunger and inequality; and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. Enhanced food production and safety and rural development are some of the key national development strategies that have been identified to address the developmental challenges that I have just outlined.
In this connection, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development has been assigned the responsibility of spearheading and coordinating national strategies aimed at improving the livelihood of communities living in rural areas. Our rural development policy and programme is complemented by other national development policy initiatives such as the National Agricultural Policy which is aimed at increasing and sustaining the levels of agricultural productivity, real farm incomes and national and households food security, within the context of our fragile ecosystem. In this regard, the Government, through the National Planning Commission (NPC), the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) and Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), has put in place appropriate policies and planning frameworks on rural development and agriculture.

Our rural development interventions seek to empower rural communities as well as to optimize their potential, productivity and income generation capacities. Our strategy consists of the following components:

- Coordination and integration of Rural Development Actions;
- People’s empowerment and civic participation;
- Rural infrastructures and services development;
- Environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources; and
- Social welfare services, rural agriculture as well as human wildlife conflict management support programmes.
Director of Ceremonies;

Ladies and gentlemen;

According to statistics, about 27% of our population is food insecure. Among others, food production and security especially in rural areas is affected by drought conditions and depleted soil fertility.

It is a known fact that soil fertility and crop production can be increased by the use of fertilisers. The widely used and available chemical fertilizers are however very expensive and society became sensitive due to their negative effects to the soil and environment. As such, countries the world over, including Namibia, are looking for economically viable, socially safe and environmentally sustainable alternatives to the destructive chemical fertilisers, which will not only maintain but also enhance farm production.

In this connection, I welcome the training on organic compost making and low cost agriculture techniques which we are here to commission because it is in line with our goals of empowering our rural farming community and officials charged with rural development and will no doubt promote rural agriculture and the use of natural and environmental friendly soil nutrients.

Director of Ceremonies;

Esteemed participants;
Going through the programme of the workshop, I can see that the participants will be introduced to and empowered with easy methods of producing organic manure and other low cost agricultural techniques. I am informed that the inputs of producing this organic compost are just cattle-dung and worms. This presents an opportunity or possibility that each household owning from as few as 3 cows can start to produce organic compost. The produced compost can be of households' own garden use and the surplus can be sold. This is indeed value addition, an important feature of the Namibian Growth at Home strategy.

I therefore wish to appeal to the people who have been identified to attend and benefit from the training to take full advantage and internalise all what they will be taught and for them to practise and transfer what they have learned to others when they go back to their communities. I want to see tangible results from this training in the form of increased use of organic manure, enhanced rural farming techniques, farm production and yields.

I am glad and proud to inform you that the capacity building initiative that has brought us here has been made possible through collaborative efforts. In this connection, I wish to recognise and commend the partnership between the Governments of the Namibia and India and the generous technical support from the India-based African-Asia Rural Development Organization (AARDO), which mobilised the experts in organic compost making and low cost agriculture techniques who will be conducting the training. To this end, I would like to convey my gratitude to the Government of India.
through His Excellency the High Commissioner and to the Indian experts, Mr. Jeetendra Singh Sevawat and Ms. Prerna Madhok.

We are equally grateful to our local partner, the University of Namibia, which generously agreed to host the training here at its Neudam Campus. Prof. Hangula and your team thank you!

I have no doubt that the knowledge and skills that will be imparted will go a long way to enhance the capacity of our rural communities to improve their livelihood and the contribution of rural crop farming and production to national food security and the eradication of rural poverty and food insecurity.

As such, I would like the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Regional Councils and UNAM to continue to work together to build on the training that will be taking place here and to roll it out to other needy rural communities.

Remember, a nation that cannot feed itself can easily compromise itself in many instances, and therefore let us train many of our men and women who are willing to make a difference in our society. It is therefore my humble request that while our good Lord is providing the country with good rains, let us join hands and produce food for our household consumption and also for future use. Together, we can do it.

Director of Ceremonies;
Ladies and gentlemen;
The link between the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and India’s Native Establishment of Empowered Women (NEEW) was established during an official trip to India by a delegation led by my Deputy Minister, Hon Makgone. A tangible outcome of that visit is the coming of the two NEEW experts to Namibia and the hosting of this training workshop. As such, I wish to thank Hon. Makgone and the team that made this connection and this capacity building workshop possible.

In conclusion, it is now my pleasure to declare the Vermi Composting and Low Cost Agriculture Training Workshop officially open. And I thank you all for your attention.