



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HON. DR. PEYA MUSHELENGA

MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**ON OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
2019 ANNUAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REVIEW AND
PLANNING WORKSHOP**

HELD AT

ONGWEDIVA TRADE FAIR HALL, OSHANA REGION

10 JUNE 2019

Director of Ceremonies

Hon. Elia Irimari, Governor of Oshana Region

Other Hon. Governors present

Hon. Gerson Hannu Kapenda, Chairperson of Oshana Regional Council,

Other Hon. Chairpersons and Councillors of other Regional Councils

Your Worship Hon. Cllr Angelina Angula, Mayor of Ongwediva Town

Prof. Dilip Vishnu Deshpande, our distinguished guest speaker

from the Asia-Africa Rural Development Organisation (AARDO)

Esteemed representatives of our partners of choice in Rural

Development of UNICEF and FAO and the academia (UNAM)

Chief Regional Officers and other senior officials from Offices,

Ministries and Agencies

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I greet and welcome all of you with the following quote from Sri Aurobindo, which says and I quote:

The village is the cell of the national body and the cell-life must be healthy and developed for the national body to be healthy and developed.” End of quote.

This quote sums up the central place that rural areas and communities occupy in any nation, and by extent the imperative need for deliberate measures to improve living conditions of communities in rural areas and for rural development to be an integral part of any national development.

Ladies and gentlemen

I bring to you all warm fraternal greetings from the Hon Minister who wanted to be here this morning with us in person but is unable to do so due to other work commitments elsewhere, but will be joining us from tomorrow or Wednesday. I am therefore here to deliver an Opening Address on his behalf.

Director of proceedings

Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you all to this year's Annual Rural Development Review and Planning Workshop. I have noted with appreciation that, unlike in the past, this year's event is also being attended by Hon Regional Governors as well as foreign experts on sanitation and rural development. I extend a special word of welcome and appreciation to them.

As the Ministry tasked with the responsibility of coordinating and leading national plans and interventions of rural development, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development remains grateful and renews its appreciation to all stakeholders and role players in rural development at national, regional and local levels as well as our external development partners such as UNICEF, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Union (EU) and Spanish Development for your continued partnership and contribution to the improvement of the living standards of our fellow countrywomen and men who reside in rural areas.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

Namibia continues to battle with high levels of poverty and extreme income inequality. While poverty is found even in urban areas, it is predominantly a rural phenomenon. The rural poor are typically undereducated, have limited access to health care, safe water, adequate sanitation, markets, employment opportunities, inputs, security of tenure as well as electricity supplies. In addition rural households are vulnerable to food shortages and hunger as a result of frequent crop failure, insufficient grazing due to drought, crop pests and livestock diseases, environmental degradation due to overstocking and poor agronomic practices and crime, which lead to loss of livestock and crop income. Nutritional intake is also consistently poor.

Although Namibia is classified as a middle-income country and has made remarkable strides in reducing poverty and income disparity levels, there is still a wide and marked gap in income and development levels between rural and urban areas.

In this regard, the eradication of poverty and inequality and the development of rural areas are part of key priorities for the Government of Namibia. In this connection, Namibia's national development frameworks have identified that and I quote "*Inequality and poverty endangers social harmony, peace and democracy*". Accordingly as a nation, and with the support of our development partners, we have set out ourselves a long-term objective to see to it that "*poverty is reduced to the minimum*". This commitment is encapsulated in the declaration by our President, His Excellency President Dr Hage Geingob, of any all-out-war against poverty and the incorporation of rural economic development as an integral part of our Fifth National Development Plan.

Director of proceedings
Esteemed ladies and gentlemen

By their nature, poverty and under-development are complex and cross-cutting phenomena, and an effective strategy that seeks to address them requires and has to involve various interventions and stakeholders at different levels.

In this connection, Namibia, like other countries, has adopted a National Rural Development Policy and Strategy that provides for deliberate actions that are aimed at improving living conditions of rural communities by providing basic social and economic services and creating a political, legal, economic and social environment which empower such communities to benefit from and take charge of their development.

Our strategy on rural development consists of the following four core focus areas of intervention:

- **Coordination and capacity development**, which refers to an inclusive process of planning and implementation of rural development initiatives and communication among stakeholders;
- The second focal area is **Rural economic development**, which entail creating and improving conditions and opportunities for investment and development in rural areas through interventions such as rural finance, value chain development, improved farming, improved land tenure and rural land management;
- The third focal area is **Social and employment development**, which has at its center empowerment of rural communities through among others functional literacy and basic technical skills and short-term rural employment opportunities; and
- The fourth focal area and objective is **spatial planning, environment and climate change**. This refers to pro-active spatial planning, management and development of settlements and growth points and regions as well as the adoption and implementation of a effective climate adaption and disaster risk management framework.

Our shared commitment towards improving the socio-economic well-being and quality of life in rural areas is re-affirmed in our Fifth National Development Plan where we have set ourselves the following goals:

1. To reduce rural poverty rate from 37% in 2010 to 25% by 2022 and rural unemployment rate from 30% in 2014 to 20% by 2022;
2. To reduce the percentage of rural households who are practicing open defecation from 72% in 2016 to at least 60% by 2022; and
3. To reduce the percentage of rural households with access to proper sanitation from 28% in 2016 to 40% by 2022.

The strategies that we have identified to enable us to realise the desired outcomes that I have just outlined are:

- Investment in the development of **sustainable infrastructure** in rural areas – road networks and transport logistics, rural electrification, telecommunication networks, access to water and sanitation, rural industrial development, rural development centers, markets for rural products, and rural housing schemes.
- Development and promotion of community-based social enterprises by among others incentivizing private sector to invest in rural areas and creating conditions for rural communities especially the youth and women to access to finance and market information;
- The other identified interventions are the development of the **resilience** and capacity of rural communities to mitigate the impact of climate change as well as proactive development of **regional master plans** and **growth poles**;
- Our identified strategic interventions in respect of sanitation are:
 - **Increased advocacy, partnerships** and coordination among all stakeholders and especially through greater emphasis on **community-led sanitation** and local leadership; and
 - Access to basic bulk water and sanitation infrastructure.

Director of ceremonies

Ladies and gentlemen

Despite the obvious challenges and gloom picture that is often presented, rural areas are home to most farming, tourism, mining and other vital economic activities and also boast of an oasis of often untapped human capacity, which if nurtured can transform the rural areas for the better and also greatly contributed to the realization of broad national development goals of industrialisation and economic growth.

In his book entitled *Rural Development, Putting the Last First*, Robert Chambers, a renowned development scholar, has challenged some of the current approaches to rural development saying that quite often rural poverty and the state of development or under-development of rural areas is misperceived by what he calls “outsiders who are not rural and poor”

The moral and emphasis here is on the planning and implementation of development in rural areas in a sustainable, inclusive and coordinated manner.

Director of proceeding, Ladies and gentlemen

While the tradition and focus of workshops of this kind have been to simply review the implementation and impact of rural programmes that fall under and are executed by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and Regional Councils for a given financial year, an effective way to measure the impact of our interventions require that we also take stock of the activities by other key role players, Offices, Ministries, public organisations and non-State parties.

In addition, a proper measure of the relevance and real contribution of our interventions should be done taking into account the key performance indicators and desired outcomes as set out in the Harambee Prosperity Plan and the Fifth National Development Plan Agencies.

This is important as there is a danger and risk that we may all be too busy doing things and investing resources but actually doing the wrong things and thus not being effective. As you know, efficiency is the art of doing things right, while effectiveness is doing the right thing.

Our success in bringing about effective and impactful rural development calls for the following:

- Adoption of an **inclusive, participatory approach**, which involves the target rural communities;
- Enhanced and **effective coordination** with and among all stakeholders;
- **Good governance and accountability** – I have noted with concern quite often Regional Councils and other institutions and individuals who are entrusted with the implementation of rural development are either not effectively implementing their programmes and/or are not fully accounting for the resources that are provided to them. This is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.
- The other imperative requirement is to ensure that our interventions are well planned and appear as part of our **Strategic and Annual Plans with clear performance indicators and timelines** and are resourced; and
- Lastly, we must at all times record and keep reliable data on our activities and their impact.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

It is now my pleasure to declare this Workshop officially opened. I wish you fruitful deliberations, and I thank you for your attention.