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NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY



The policy was published in 2012



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Vision

The National Rural Development Policy (NRDP) vision is to bring about:

"Socially cohesions, stable rural communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people, who are equipped to contribute to growth and development."

Goal

The policy states that:

"The purpose of the NRDP is to guide rural development practitioners, including service providers and the rural communities, towards the adoption of efficient and effective, equitable and sustainable approaches to rural development, to raise the matter high on the national agenda, and to broaden public perception on the issues involved."

Leading Offices / Ministries / Agencies (O/M/As)

According to the NRDP, **rural areas of the country include all land that is not a township or under the control of a municipality.** Therefore, rural land includes "freehold and State owned communal and resettlement land."

Rural development is a simple sounding term that however contains many aspects critical to human development ranging from agricultural and environmental protection to rural healthcare and social services. In Namibia, **rural development currently falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Rural and Urban Development (MURD).**

Many other O/M/As play a role in rural development, such as the **Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS), Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and the Regional Councils (RCs).** However, **all O/M/As are called upon to consult with MURD on a regular basis, regarding their respective plans, activities and budgetary allocations for rural areas.** Importantly, all O/M/As and RCs need to appoint a focal person or desk officer to coordinate rural development interventions and strengthen existing coordination structures. In addition, the NRDP requires that O/M/As will share all relevant needs assessment reports with MURD, which is required to establish a database to store this information.





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What does the policy say about responsible bodies?

The policy states that: **"the overall coordination of rural development interventions be the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for Rural Development Coordination."** Therefore, *MURD* is seen as key in leading the coordination and planning of rural development. The *NRDP* further states that it **does not replace any sectoral policies concerned with aspects of rural development.** Instead, the policy seeks to "integrate them and amplify their efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services to the rural communities." In other words, the policy **seeks to serve as an overarching framework to integrated and coordinate the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural development initiatives by all stakeholders.**

It is therefore *MURD*'s responsibility to implement the *NRDP*. The ministry is further tasked with ensuring that **the coordination mechanisms at regional level are "strengthened, active and functional."** These structures include the **Regional Development Co-ordination Committee (RDCCs), the Constituency Development Committees (CDCs)** and the **Village Development Committees (VDCs).**

MURD is also responsible for convening, chairing and serving as the secretariat, of the **Rural Development Focal Person Forum (RDFPF).** The *RDFPF* "will oversee all major rural development initiatives" as well as being responsible for the policy's coordination and implementation by all stakeholders at all governance levels – national, regional and village level.

The *RDFPF* reports to *MURD*'s Executive Director. In addition, the *RDFPF* is mandated to formulate and implement a rural development strategy – based on the *NRDP* as well as to review both the policy and the strategy.

The *RDFPF* is made up of focal persons from relevant line ministries, RCs, Non-governmental Organisation (*NGOs*), civic and private organisations that play a role in rural development.

Finally, various *O/M/As* are assigned specific responsibilities however always with the consultation of *MURD*. For example, the former Ministry of Education is tasked with adequately staffing rural education facilities and offering incentives to attract qualified people to work in rural areas. Similar tasks are assigned to the *MHSS* when it comes to rural health facilities.

What main measurable and positive outcome should be produced by the policy?

It has to be acknowledged that the *NRDP* is dated as it stems from 2013. The policy is primarily focused on improving the social and economic lives of citizens living in rural areas. However, to do so government and relevant stakeholders need to coordinate and integrated their respective plans and ensure that the use of limited resources for rural development brings the most benefit as possible while doing so in an equitable way. The policy is therefore less concerned with defining measurable outcomes. Instead, it seeks to establish an overarching framework for all stakeholders active in rural development, to address identified challenges, improve services and the socio-economic environment of rural areas.

Notably, the National Rural Development Strategy 2013 – 2018 (*NRDS*) links directly to the policy, its vision and objectives. The strategy specifically targets economic growth and poverty reduction. Among others, the *NRDS* aims to half unemployment from 130,000 to 65,000 over a five-year period through "skills training and support to creation of own income generating activities."



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Policy objectives & benefits

The NRDP's overarching objectives is: **"to achieve a sustainable economic and social advancement in rural areas."**

The policy further outlines four specific objectives which are informed by Namibia's Vision 2030. These are to:

1. Ensure **participation of all role players in the formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development plans;**
2. Develop a **diversified, competent and highly productive human resources and institutions in rural areas, fully utilizing human potential and achieving efficient and effective delivery of customer-focused services;**
3. Accelerate a **broad-based rural industrialization and economic growth through enhanced rural infrastructure development, research and appropriate technology development, income generation and employment creation;** and
4. Ensure the **sustainable management and development of natural resources found in Namibia's rural areas and its sustainable utilization for the benefit of the country's social, economic and ecological well being.**

It can be stated that the overall benefit of the policy is **the improvement of rural development planning, activities, monitoring and evaluation.** As well as the efficient **use of limited resources and the reduction of wastage.**

What does the policy say about public participation in its creation and revision?

According to the policy document, the NRDP's development **went hand-in-hand with a consultation process that involved a large number of stakeholders, including policymakers, representatives from national and local government, NGOs, universities and development partners.** The policy further seeks to **"focus on eighteen key challenges identified in rural areas."**

The **RDFPF** which coordinates the policy's implementation is also tasked with the eventual **review of the NRDP.** It is not known when the policy review is to take place. However, it is likely tied to the review of the Decentralisation policy which started around mid-2024. However, **MURD** has conducted a **Comprehensive report on the implementation of the National Rural Development Policy 2012 – 2019,** published in 2020 and which can be downloaded on the website of the National Planning Commission.

Associated costs / budget assigned to the policy

The NRDP does not contain a budget. However, the **NRDS document contains a detailed budget, with initiatives / activities, baselines and performance indicators.** The budget is estimated to cost around N\$ 1.53 billion and be implemented over five financial years from 2013/14 to 2017/18.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Does the policy have a mission?

No, the *NRDP* does not have a mission statement.

Does the policy have an implementation timeframe?

The policy document does not provide an implementation timeframe.

What does the policy say about its enforcement?

The *NRDP* does not contain information about its enforcement.

What does the policy foresee about its evaluation?

The policy mandates that the correct coordination of rural development interventions will **require joint monitoring and evaluation by stakeholders**. The development, implementation and maintenance of an overall monitoring and evaluation (*M&E*) system and information databases will be **the responsibility of the Directorate of Rural Development Coordination under MURD** but with the **support of other Line Ministries and their respective M&E systems**. The directorate is further tasked with **supplying information to rural development stakeholders**. Finally, the directorate is **also responsible for M&E of the NRDP implementation**.

The policy itself does not contain **an implementation plan**, but calls for the development **of an implementation framework**. Hence the National Rural Development Strategy (*NRDS*) – developed shortly after the policy launch – contains a detailed "strategy matrix" framework that includes objectives, initiatives and annual performance indicators, which could be considered as an implementation plan.

What does the policy need to succeed?

The abovementioned Comprehensive report on the implementation of the *NRDP* recommends the following. The policy evaluation and review are necessary to analyse the performance and introduce improvements. Emphasis should be made in the following areas:

- Coordination and integration of rural development planning;
- Harmonization of sectoral policies;
- Capacity building at national and regional level;
- Joint monitoring and Evaluation;
- Increased development funding from the government and the private sector; and
- Rural infrastructure development through integrated planning.

In our view the policy **requires considerable joint and traceable efforts from all stakeholders to plan and coordinate their activities and M&E approach better with each other**. The *RDFPF* coordination mechanism under *MURD* as well as regional coordination structures such as the *RDCCs* and *CDCs* need to function well to implement the *NRDP*.

At this stage it would be best to launch another more refined review per objective and impact evaluation of the policy's implementation in order to provide updated crucial information and 'lessons learned' for the planned policy revision. Concrete enforceable recommendations of the review would need to be followed up by the responsible bodies.



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The policy and civil society - the policy's impact on the day-to-day work of CSOs

Currently, the *NRDP* has little bearing on the day-to-day work of *CSOs* and *NGOs* within rural development. However, the policy does provide a useful analysis of development challenges faced by rural areas and a broad coordination framework and objectives targeting these issues.

Furthermore, the policy places emphasis on participation by all stakeholders, including rural communities, *CSOs* and private businesses to among others "express themselves and to interact with government and participate in guiding rural development."

Indeed, the *RDCCs* and *CDCs* are seen by the policy as platforms where people can participate directly or indirectly in rural development efforts.

Recommendations: How can CSOs make best use of the policy?

Given the dated nature of the *NRDP*, it currently is of only limited use to *CSOs*. Nevertheless, the *NRDP* and the *NRDS* should serve as starting points for a detailed, inclusive and multi-stakeholder review process for rural development. This review would enable the drafting of an updated and improved policy on rural development and should also inform the review process of the decentralisation policy. *CSOs*, should use the *NRDP's* explicit support of public participation mechanisms to

ensure that all stakeholders including rural communities, civic organisations, *NGOs* and *CSOs* are consulted during the policy's eventual review process.

Link to policy:

<https://www.npc.gov.na/publicpolicy/national-rural-development-policy/>

Link to the Comprehensive report on the implementation of the National Rural Development Policy 2012 – 2019

MURD_Policy-review-report.pdf

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