



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

11 APRIL 2023

**CONTRIBUTION BY HONOURABLE DIEDERIEK VRIES ON THE NEED TO PUT
FLOOD CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES THAT ARE SUFFICIENT, AND
TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID TO THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,

Floods are the most frequent type of natural disaster and occur when an overflow of water submerges land that is usually dry. Floods are often caused by heavy rainfall, a storm surge from a tropical cyclone or tsunami in coastal areas. Floods can cause widespread devastation, resulting in loss of life and damages to personal property and critical public health infrastructure. Between the years 1998-2017, floods affected more than 2 billion people worldwide. People who live in floodplains or non-resistant buildings, or lack warning systems and awareness of flooding hazard, are most vulnerable to floods.

The occurrence of floods brings about negative experiences. In 2019, an estimated 236 000 people died from drowning, making drowning a major public health problem worldwide. In 2019, injuries accounted for almost 8% of total global mortality. Drowning is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional ~~injury~~ death, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths.

**Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,**

Long-term heavy rainfall has caused flooding in areas of southern Angola and across the border in Namibia. Water flowing along rivers including the Cuvelai River in Angola flooding areas in the south of the province of Cunene from early January. Angola has seen bouts of heavy rainfall since early December 2022 and into January 2023. Waters reached the Cuvelai-Etosha Basin around the second week in January. The Cuvelai-Etosha Basin is a wetland area shared by Angola and Namibia and covers almost 160,000 km². In Namibia, water flowing from bordering areas of southern Angola caused flooding in the northern Ohangwena Region from mid-January 2023. As of 17 January 2023, local media reported dozens of homes were flooded in several villages including Engela and Ouhongo.

**Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,**

We need to implement flood control and management measures in Ohangwena, Omusati and Oshana Regions where floods occur. Flood control measures refers to all methods used to reduce or prevent the damaging effects of flood waters. Some of the common techniques used for flood control are the installation of rock beams, sand bags, and maintenance of normal slopes with vegetation or application of soil cements on steeper slopes and construction or expansion of drainage. Other methods include, dams, retention basins or detention. Flood control structures are designed to protect flood prone areas, including urban and agricultural communities, homes, and other economically valuable areas, and the people located within them. These structures are used to divert flows of water, by re-directing rivers, slowing natural changes in embankments and coastlines, or preventing inundation of vulnerable coastlines or floodplains. **Honourable Speaker**, flood control structures do not completely eliminate risk but will greatly reduce the impact of the floods. Flooding may occur if the design water levels are exceeded. If poorly designed, constructed, operated or maintained, these structures can increase risk by providing a false sense of security and encouraging settlements or economic activity in hazard-prone areas.

**Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,**

Although natural disasters are not common phenomena in Namibia, we need to seriously consider the contingency plan for disasters and calamities such as floods. We therefore need to implement flood control and management measures in the Oshana, Erongo, Kunene, and Oshana Regions to eliminate the dangers of the floods. The measures will aim to prevent the loss of lives in these regions, minimise human suffering of the locals, minimise property damage and economic loss, and speed up recovery and rehabilitation after the occurrence the floods in the regions. There is also a need to introduce contingency plans for floods. These plans can be attained through identifying the flood hot spots in the regions, locating their sites and the possible sites of occurrence, and recommending remedial and/or mitigating measures to minimise destruction.

Honourable Speaker,

When people endure disasters such as floods without financial aid, they may face a lifetime of diminished hope for prosperity. Providing financial aid to flood affected communities quickly not only restores lost assets, but also maintains their aspirations. Providing financial aid to flood affected communities during and after the occurrence of the floods not only sustains life, but it also maintains hope for the future and the potential for full economic recovery. It is therefore very important that Namibia develops a financial package in the National Budget for emergency disasters like floods. Having an already dedicated fund for flood emergencies will better our response towards the floods.

**Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,**

During floods, hospitals and other health care services in these regions can face damage to infrastructure (for example, power and water supply interruptions, damage to vital equipment, disruption of internal and external communication systems, blocked transport systems and flooded ambulance stations) that disrupts normal activities.

They may also experience an increased influx of patients; this may include patients that require particular specialized care. Flooding may require health care services to expand beyond normal capacity to meet community demand.

Honourable Speaker, it is therefore important that we properly plan to prevent some of these impacts that may arise when flooding occurs. We need to strive to be proactive and not reactive. Regional Councils in the Omusati, Oshana and Oshana Regions should spearhead the process of preparedness and also identify the flood prone areas or flood hotspots in the regions.

**Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,**

The occurrence of the floods in the northern regions of Namibia is nothing new as similar incidents have taken place in the past. It is a usual practice for government to wait for a disaster like floods to strike and then only react. Once again, I urge the Namibian Government to be proactive rather than reactive.

In conclusion, the Namibian Government's first duty is to protect and support the people, and not cast hopelessness upon their lives. The Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are the trustees. And both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people. This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Therefore the people of Namibia should be the first priority.

I so move Honourable Speaker.