



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**NATIONAL POLICY
ON
DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The Republic of Botswana is prone to a number of disasters, principally drought; but on a local basis, floods, veld fires, epidemics, pest infestations, transport and industrial accidents, chemical spills etc. do occur. The possibility of refugee influxes also exists. Events of this nature can seriously disrupt the process of development. Since 1981, Botswana has experienced recurrent drought, the periods 1981 to 1987 and 1991 to 1992 being particularly severe. In response to this, Government has developed, over time, an integrated series of activities aimed at providing effective early warning and response when drought occurs. This strategy has gone a long way towards ensuring that vulnerable populations are able to sustain themselves during periods of food shortage without falling into destitution. However, until now, little action has been taken structure a response to other disasters that might occur and there has been little or no emphasis on disaster mitigation within the National Development Plan and associated programmes.

However, it is a development objectives of Government to re-invest the proceeds from non-replenishable resources to promote sustainable development which can only be ensured through, inter alia, the country's ability to cope with whatever contingencies arise, including natural and other calamities.

2. Drought management is structured under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and coordinated by the Rural Development Council under which technical and operational committees are constituted, principally the Inter-Ministerial Drought Committee which receives technical inputs from the National Food Security Monitoring Group, the Grain Reserve Monitoring Group and the Early Warning Technical Committee, as well as District Drought Committees and District Development Committees. For other disasters, no integrated institutional framework has existed. However, Government formed the National Committee on Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) in 1993, partly to address this need and partly to provide a channel for the active participation of Botswana in the UN's International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). The NCDP first met in February 1993 with brief to:

- (a) increase coordination and improve effectiveness in the management of disasters, and

- (b) ensure cost effectiveness in the utilisation of human and material resources in the management of disasters.

Multi-sectoral disaster preparedness committees have also been established within some district councils, town councils and Gaborone City. Disaster management structures exist in some sectoral Ministries even if they are not yet formalised. The Ministry of Health, for example, has mechanisms for dealing with epidemics.

3. Botswana has recently emerged from a period of severe drought. The drought coordination programme was a valuable learning experience. This experience should now be extended to encompass all potential disasters other than drought. With many of these disasters occurring on a local scale, such a programme should be cost effective and use, wherever possible, existing resources and capacity. There is also a need to ensure that the disaster management programme is consistent with the development objectives of Government. A comprehensive disaster management programme will focus on a series of activities aimed, firstly, at reducing the impact from future disasters and the vulnerability of the population (mitigation);

secondly, at ensuring that effective disaster preparedness measures are in place to cope with disasters when they occur and thirdly, at effective emergency response and recovery when disasters strike. These activities are interrelated and are implemented in the context of local, district and national development.

OBJECTIVES

4. The objectives of the National Policy on Disaster Management are as follows:
 - (a) To establish and maintain optimum systems for dealing with disasters other than drought/famine in Botswana and to integrate these systems into normal ongoing development activities at national, district and local levels, achieving these, as far as possible, within national resource capacity.
 - (b) To create a framework which facilitates the preparation of plans and legislation for the effective implementation of disaster management in Botswana and its legitimacy.

- (c) To outline the responsibilities of different personnel at different levels in the implementation of the disaster management programme.
- (d) To establish a set of working definitions for the disaster management programme in Botswana.
- (e) To ensure that the disaster management policy is consistent with policies from other sectors and the objectives of the National Development Plan.

TYPES OF DISASTERS

5. The policy shall relate to the following actual or potential disasters prevalent in Botswana: floods, veld fires, pest infestations, epidemics, animal diseases, severe weather (including hailstorms and lightning strikes), refugee influxes, transport accidents, industrial explosions, urban fires, industrial pollution and chemical spillages. The list can be augmented at any time by the National Committee on Disaster Preparedness.

DEFINITIONS

6. For the purposes of disaster management in Botswana, disaster refers to an event that seriously disrupts the normal pattern of activities in a given area as a result of interaction between a hazard and a human population, that results in loss of life and property, injury and economic and social hardships, as well as the possible destruction and damage to government systems, buildings, communications and essential services, that requires exceptional measures to be taken both from within the affected community and outside.

7. Disaster management policy in Botswana relates to the following elements of disaster management:
 - mitigation (prevention)
 - preparedness
 - response and recovery
 - development

Disaster management: is an integrated series of activities and strategies involving disaster mitigation (and/or prevention), disaster preparedness and emergency response (including recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction), implemented within the national development context.

Disaster mitigation: refers to plans, strategies and actions taken to reduce a population's vulnerability to a future disaster threat. Disaster mitigation can be directed towards affecting the disaster agent (hazard) of the vulnerable population or both.

Disaster Preparedness: refers to plans, procedures and actions taken to ensure an effective response to a future disaster strike.

Emergency response: refers to actual operations and actions taken immediately after a disaster has struck to provide assistance and support to the stricken population and area.

Recovery: refers to actions taken immediately following the provision of life sustaining assistance firstly, to return the stricken area and population to normal, and secondly, to phase in mitigation activity to allow for better protection for the future.

Development: relates to the overall objectives of poverty alleviation, economic growth, the establishment of social justice and economic independence, and the sustainability of these over time, that are central to the development process in Botswana.

Disaster management is a development activity and aims to protect the development process itself and to ensure that a reduction in vulnerability is central to that process.

8. Disaster management applied to the needs of Botswana is integrated into development, implying that no one element should be considered as more important than the others.

A major prerequisite, however, should be to ensure that development projects and programmes are assessed for disaster impact and that, where necessary, strategies aimed at reducing the vulnerability of populations to various disasters, are built into the development process over time. Because such strategies are necessarily long term and because disaster will still occur, an equal ongoing focus should be on disaster preparedness to ensure that structures and mechanisms are in place to allow emergency response and recovery, when disasters do take place, to be effected swiftly and efficiently. Disaster preparedness is assumed to be an ongoing activity associated with the systematic identification of the hazards of concern in Botswana, the geographical areas at risk from these hazards, and the vulnerable populations within the high risk areas.

Disaster preparedness also requires the systematic collection of data to build an effective information base, the institutionalisation of training in disaster management and related themes, the instigation of a systematic programme of public awareness, and the regular testing of disaster plans.

9. Disaster management policy in Botswana is underpinned by the following issues which are also central to the implementation of disaster management programmes:

- it is recognised that effective and efficient disaster management is concerned with the optimum coordination and utilisation of available resources;
- the programme must utilise, as far as possible, existing resources and capacity;
- the principal victims of disasters in Botswana are communities whose involvement in, and awareness of, programme development and implementation is crucial to the success of the programme, which is seeking to build self-reliance and sustainability;

- there is a strong relationship between disasters and development which indicates that where development is negative, the vulnerability of populations to disasters increases, but where it is positive, vulnerability can decrease, provided that the disaster threat is recognised and dealt with in a development context.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

10. A National Disaster Plan: guides all levels of society in disaster management and mitigation. The plan indicates the mechanisms by which disaster mitigation activity can be incorporated into development planning and defines the management structures by which mitigation activity is to be implemented, coordinated and facilitated. This particular planning element will eventually form part of the regular development planning cycle. For the implementation of effective disaster preparedness and response, the plan, which has legislative authority, includes the following main elements:

- (a) Authorisation
- (b) Objectives and definitions
- (c) The overall disaster threat, policy statement and concepts for action in disaster response and preparedness

- (d) Relationship with other plans
- (e) Emergency powers
- (f) Resources inventory
- (g) Organisational structure
- (h) Preparedness measures
- (i) Communication, operational direction and coordination
- (j) Warning arrangements
- (k) Operational implementation of plan
- (l) Emergency response operations (see below)
- (m) Recovery
- (n) Post disaster operations evaluation
- (o) Support measures (training and public awareness)

11. The definition of the principal elements of the National Disaster Plan, is followed by the development of district, town and city disaster plans in harmony with the National Disaster Plan, which reflect specific implementation requirements at different levels. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) provide standards for the optimum use of resources in disaster preparedness and emergency response.
12. Each Agency (Government and Non-Governmental) is responsible for developing its own internal disaster plan detailing internal mechanisms necessary for the definition of Ministerial responsibilities within the national, district,

town and city disaster plans. Operational Non-Governmental organisations are required to plan their involvement in national, district and local disaster management, by agreement with the Government and consistent with the National Disaster Plan. Mechanisms for regular contact with the United Nations agencies represented in Botswana and the donor community have been established within the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to enhance cooperation and coordination and to develop channels of joint involvement in disaster management activity as is deemed appropriate.

13. The establishment of emergency powers and the declaration that disaster has occurred and thereby the process of response has been activated, are enshrined in special legislation which also gives authority to the National Disaster Plan. Such legislation sets down the requirements for disaster management in Botswana and cements the structures, mechanisms and relationships that are essential to make it function effectively. The disaster management legislation takes cognizance of aspects of disaster management contained in other legal instruments in order to avoid confusion and duplication.

14. The overall national responsibility for disaster management rests with the Office of the President. The overall coordinator of disaster management in Botswana is the Deputy Permanent Secretary within the Office of the President. The Deputy Permanent Secretary shall be responsible for convening and chairing at regular intervals the National Committee on Disaster Preparedness responsible for developing a disaster management strategy for Botswana and for overseeing the implementation of disaster plans and activities. The Committee consists of Deputy Permanent Secretaries from Ministries, together with representation from the Botswana Police, the Botswana Defence Force, the Botswana Red Cross Society and representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations and United Nations agencies as appropriate.

15. At the local level, the overall responsibility for disaster management rests with the District Commissioner, working in partnership with the Council Secretary/Town Clerk. Each Local Authority/District Administration has a multi-sectoral disaster management committee with the responsibility for overseeing implementation.

16. At village level, the overall responsibility for disaster management rests with traditional leaders and organised groups identified by each district disaster management committee,

in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations where these are perceived to have a strong presence on the ground. The village focus may change district by district depending on the disaster profile and relative organisational strengths.

Disaster management committees are also formed by each city and town council to oversee the implementation of disaster plans and activities in urban areas. The operations and activities of structures at each level remain under the overall coordination of the Office of the President but with an operational responsibility devolved to each level.

17. The policy gives due recognition to the need to utilise existing resources and institutions wherever possible in the implementation of disaster management in Botswana. It is also recognised that disaster management is, to a great extent, the responsibility of everyone.

Thus, the entire structure of Government is involved in disaster management, be it national, district or local.

Organisations external to Government are also involved. This implies not only the United Nations agencies and the relief and development oriented Non-Governmental Organisations, but also the commercial private sector whose expertise and resources are a valuable contribution to national assets.

Every opportunity is made to involve the private sector in disaster management in Botswana.

18. Each Ministry has an appointed disaster management focal point who is responsible for ensuring that Ministries are aware of their role in disaster management and are competent and capable of acting when required. The responsibility for the implementation of disaster management projects and programmes rests chiefly with line Ministries at national and district levels because the necessary sectoral skills and expertise are housed within these Ministries.
19. Raising the awareness of the citizens of Botswana and those in Government and other organisations who have, or may have, disaster management responsibilities, is a crucial, ongoing process which will ensure the more effective implementation of a disaster management programme. Disaster management awareness-raising programmes are focused on the public (radio, television and print) and civil servants. Special emphasis is placed on district officials and village and community leaders who are at the cutting edge of disaster management.

Training in disaster management for the civil service, and staff of non-governmental organisations, is offered through the existing curricula of established training and educational institutions, with special emphasis on the acquisition of specific skills, particularly for those with sectoral responsibilities.

20. Disaster management in Botswana is implemented in a cost effective way using existing resources and capacity as much as possible. The establishment of a national disaster contingency fund makes resources available at short notice to deal with specific disaster requirements, augmented by similar funds at district level. The commercial sector and the general public are encouraged to participate in this process.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

21. This policy is consistent with other policy and strategy documents formulated and agreed by the Government of Botswana. Specifically, the policy conforms to the National Development Plan 7 1991-1997, and subsequent development plans.

The policy is supportive of the National Development Plan's objective of reinvesting the proceeds from non-replenishable resources "in other forms of renewable wealth that will continue to diversify the economy and generate income well into the future", to develop future prosperity by, inter alia, ensuring:

"The country's ability to cope with whatever contingencies may arise e.g. natural calamities such as drought, outbreaks of human and livestock epidemics or unfavourable developments in the international markets in which Botswana operates;" (National Development Plan 7 1991 - 1997, p.25, para 2.24)".

Botswana's disaster management programme is also reviewed against other sectoral policy documents to ensure harmony and consistency.

POLICY REVIEW AND MONITORING

22. The review and monitoring of this policy on an agreed regular basis is entrusted to the Office of the President and specifically the National Committee on Disaster Preparedness.