



DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP NAMIBIA

Development Workshop Namibia (DWN) is a recently registered Namibian NGO with a focus on sustainable urban development, informal settlements and the disadvantaged communities that reside in them.

DWN is part of a world-wide network of Development Workshop (DW) organisations with centres in Canada, Angola and France, and offices in Vietnam and Burkino Faso. It is funded by non-governmental organisations, private citizens, and national and international development organisations.

DW was founded in 1975 by three Canadian architect students with the objective to improve the livelihoods of poor and disadvantaged communities, with a specific focus on human settlements. Over the last 40 years, DW has implemented many award winning and successful programs in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. DW's biggest operation is currently in Angola, where it started working in 1981 (www.dw.angonet.org). Active in the sectors of peacebuilding & reconciliation, water & sanitation, urban infrastructure, urban planning, research & advocacy, microfinance and climate change & environment, DW Angola at peak times had more than 150 employees. It founded a micro finance institution that today has more than 50,000 clients and runs a successful and sustainable social housing program.

With the rapid expansion of informal settlements, urban land and housing is becoming an increasingly important development issue in Namibia. The 2011 census recorded 72,234 shacks and traditional dwellings in urban areas. At an estimated growth rate of 9.6% per year – which was the growth from 2001 to 2011 – there are today an estimated 114,000 informal houses in urban Namibia. That number is likely to double over the next 10-15 years. Like most African countries, Namibia is undergoing a rapid transition from a rural to an urbanized society, putting cities under immense pressure to deal with the growing demand for affordable urban land, housing and services. The growth of informal housing is manifested in ever larger informal settlements that cement social and economic inequality, are poverty traps for those who live there, and create an immense burden for future generations and governments.

In Namibia, urban land and development issues have commanded relatively little attention in recent decades, especially compared to sectors such as land reform, education and rural development. While planning and policy documents such as National Development Plans (NDPs) and HARAMBEE mention urban development and housing as important development goals, much implementation work is needed to effectively address the rapidly growing demand of low cost land, housing and services. As international experience shows, governments often find it difficult to address these pressing issues alone, and as a result enter Public Private Partnerships and other forms of collaborative action to profit from shared knowledge and resources. While often small in scale, NGO's can equally make an important contribution by providing sector specific knowledge and by testing innovative urban development approaches with the potential to inform national policy and practice.

As an NGO that specialises on urban development, DWN draws on significant institutional capacity and knowledge acquired over 40 years of experience and strengthened by its integration into regional and international networks. In Namibia, DWN's main objective is therefore to contribute to debate, knowledge and practice of sustainable urban development, urban poverty reduction, planning, tenure and housing. The main areas of ongoing and planned interventions are:

Research & information

In January 2017 DWN started a comprehensive study of informal settlements and related planning issues in Namibia, with the results to be published in a book in mid-2017. Topics for further in-depth research that will contribute to national policy and program development will be identified and funding sought for their implementation. DWN intends to develop a web portal that will provide a one-stop-shop for information on urban issues for institutions and individuals that work in the urban context.

Testing of innovative urban planning & housing approaches for addressing rapid growth of informal settlements

Rapid urbanization is a world-wide phenomenon, and many countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa have found innovative and effective approaches to deal with challenges associated with urban growth. With its international and regional experience, DWN is well positioned to pilot and test innovative planning and housing approaches relevant to local contexts, and with a potential to influence local urban development, planning and housing practice.

Training & support

Research and the piloting of effective and inclusive planning approaches will feed into DWN's training and support program, aimed at institutions and individuals involved in urban management and planning.

Sanitation

The challenges of informal settlement structures call for innovative approaches for the provision of sanitation. Much experience has been gained worldwide over the last decades, especially in cities in other developing regions. DWN aims to build on international experience and implement local pilot projects to provide decent sanitation in informal settlements that can be expanded with the participation of other institutions.

Youth support programs

Through its program Youth Hope, DWN plans to set up a mobile unit for implementing 'career starter' seminars for Grade 12 pupils in informal settlements. The seminars will provide essential skills to be used by these young people to compete effectively in the national training, education and employment market.

Community participation, constructive engagement with government initiatives and networking with like-minded institutions are key pillars of all the DWN interventions described above, as well as respecting the local institutional, legal and cultural environment.

For any further information about our current and planned activities, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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