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**THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECENTRALIZATION
OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION
FOR CHILDREN IN NAMIBIA**

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This paper forms part of the background documentation for a UNICEF-ICDC study on "The Decentralization of the National Programmes of Action", under the direction of Carlos Castillo.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

The implementation of the Namibia National Programme of Action for Children has been guided by an interministerial Standing Committee which is chaired by a representative of the National Planning Commission and includes representatives from the Ministries of Health and Social Services, Education and Culture, Regional and Local Government and Housing, Youth and Sports, Finance, and Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, as well as the Council of Churches in Namibia and the UN Development Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Regional Governors Mukwiilongo and Boltman and Regional Executive Officers Ipinge and Basson, of Omusati and Hardap Regions, have provided strong leadership in the definition of decentralized government in Namibia and have been joined by former Mayor Matthew Shikongo of Windhoek and his personal assistant Marina Jarret in the effort to establish development planning in their constituencies within the framework of programmes of action for children.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Namibia is the first African country to complete a National Programme of Action for Children (NPA) and the only country on the continent to meet the December 1991 deadline established at the World Summit for Children in 1990.

Namibia launched its NPA development process just six months after achieving independence from the Republic of South Africa. The challenges at Independence to create a new state which focused on the needs of the entire population were compounded by the limited training and experience of the many newcomers to national Government and the lack of practical experience in national-level programming even among the most experienced personnel from the former administration. Despite great willingness on the part of Government officials to complete an NPA, this situation led to considerable reliance on external agents, like UNICEF, to develop the programme. In addition, the process of building capacity among Government staff to conceive, design and implement the NPA properly was also constrained by the effort to produce a plan by the deadline established at the World Summit.

The reliance on outside assistance and the short deadline to create the NPA led to a restricted understanding and commitment within the Government to implement the NPA as a unified programme. Several projects and programmes which grew out of the NPA development process are in place, though they are not widely associated with it.

Consistent with national policy, Namibia's NPA has strongly supported decentralization to the regional and local levels. However, because permanent regional structures were not established until late 1992, a year after the NPA was completed, the NPA document is silent on the degree of decentralization intended and the process to create subnational programmes of action.

Within this context, the creation of local programmes of action for children has nonetheless gone forward. In 1993 the municipality of Windhoek passed a motion to create a municipal programme of action, and in 1994 elected regional authorities in four of the 13 regions agreed to explore ways to develop regional programmes of action. Of the four, two have established new regional structures to support the process. These local and regional initiatives have benefited from the lessons of NPA development; primary among them is the need to adhere to the principles of capacity-building and participation over time to insure long-term ownership and sustainability. They have also highlighted several outstanding issues on the roles and relationships among ministry and elected officials and the different levels of government, as well as on the need for strengthening existing legislation.

The creation and management of the NPA in Namibia have offered valuable lessons on the role of NPAs in the government decentralization process that may be instructive for other countries at a similar stage of NPA development and the decentralization of Government structures.

I. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Establishment of an Independent Namibia

The Republic of Namibia stretches south from Angola across the Tropic of Capricorn to the Orange River, which forms the border with South Africa. To the west along the Atlantic coast are the diamond fields and sand dunes of the Namib Desert, and to the east is the Kalahari Desert and the Republic of Botswana. The city of Windhoek is the capital of Namibia. In the northeast corner of the country lies the Caprivi Strip, which became part of Namibia after a 19th-century agreement between the British and German colonial powers.

The first European missionaries arrived in Namibia in 1804. This was followed by German colonial administration from 1834 to 1915. During the German colonial period the first confiscations of indigenous African land took place, and ethnic reserves were established. German control of what was then known as "South West Africa" ended at the close of the First World War, when the League of Nations entrusted the Union of South Africa with a mandate to administer Namibia.

From 1919 to 1989 Namibia was governed by a regional administration appointed from Pretoria. In 1948, with the advent of the National Party regime in South Africa, Namibia became subject to the laws and policies of what became known as "apartheid". The country was eventually divided into 11 ethnically-based regions, each with its own administration for the provision of services such as health care, education and water. Funding for the ethnic administrations, known as "second-tier authorities", varied according to race. White "commercial" areas received the most public investment and expenditure, followed by the Coloured and the Black "communal" areas. Schools, residential areas and public facilities were all segregated by race, and intracountry travel was restricted for people of colour. This varying treatment according to race extended all the way to the provision of Government pensions: the pensions received by elderly Whites were four times the pensions of elderly Blacks. In 1981/2 educational expenditure per Black pupil was only 20 percent of that per White pupil (Kandetu, Totenmeyer and Werner 1987).

In 1989 the South African Government ended three decades of war against the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and agreed to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435, which recognized the independence of the people of Namibia. This was followed by multiparty elections, which brought the first independent Government to power.

The Socioeconomic and Political Situation since Independence

Namibia is a multiparty democracy, with government authority vested in a tripartite system of executive, legislative and judicial branches. The former ethnic administrations have been consolidated into a unified civil administration, headed by a prime minister and composed of 17 sectoral ministries, the National Planning Commission and the Offices of the Attorney General and Auditor General. Legislative power is divided between the National Assembly (consisting of Government ministers and delegates elected through party lists) and the National Council (comprising two regional councillors from each of the country's 13 regions).

As mandated by the Constitution, local and regional elections were held for the first time in November 1992. All political parties were invited to post candidate lists in each of the 13 regions. Regional councils were elected, each with six to ten councillors, depending on regional population. Strong local authorities (villages and municipalities) exist for the most part in those places where they had been established prior to Independence; these are almost exclusively in the former White commercial areas.

The 1991 census estimated the total population at 1.4 million, with an annual growth rate of 3 percent and rural inhabitants accounting for nearly 68 percent. Namibia remains a politically stable country, with a good record of press freedom and respect for human rights in the five years since Independence. There is considerable infrastructure in much of the country, including paved roads, rail lines and private and state-owned air services. However, remote rural areas continue to lack significant infrastructure, particularly in health care, education and environmental sanitation.

"Namibia's per capita income of \$1,760 (1992 current prices) ranks it relatively high among countries in sub-Saharan Africa", according to the UN Development Programme's 1993 external assistance report on Namibia (UNDP 1993, page 10). UNDP's human development index, which combines a range of social, educational and economic indicators, has ranked Namibia 127th among 173 nations in 1994 and listed it among those countries with incomes well above their human development index rank (UNDP 1994). However, income distribution is highly skewed. This is symptomatic of a major socioeconomic problem facing the independence Government: the severe inequality in living standards, employment opportunities and income among the various groups in society. Estimates for 1990 showed that 5 percent of the population received more than 70 percent of GDP; 40 percent received 25 percent, and the remaining 55 percent received less than 5 percent (UNDP 1993).

The labour force is growing at 3.3 percent per annum. Rising unemployment constitutes another major socioeconomic problem confronting Namibia, with an estimated 10,000 new entrants to the labour force each year. Unemployment in urban areas has been estimated to be as high as 35 percent, compared to 10 percent and 40 percent for rural commercial and rural communal areas, respectively.

Government budgetary allocations continue to reflect the attention paid to the implementation of the four priority development sectors declared at Independence: agriculture and rural development, education, health care, and housing (see the Table). As a share of total Government expenditure, the four priority sectors command over 43 percent of the total national budget: a pattern which has been maintained since Independence. The budgetary allocation for basic education increased in real terms by 4 percent during the 1993/4 fiscal year, though current expenditures for clinics and public health care services fell by 14 percent.

Reported development assistance amounted to 4.9 percent of GDP and 13.7 percent of Government revenue in 1991. In 1992 the levels were 5.8 percent and 15.2 percent for GDP and Government revenue, respectively. Per capita external assistance rose from \$47 in 1990 to nearly \$100 in 1992, which is significantly higher than the average of less than \$35 for most sub-Saharan countries.

Table: SELECTED GOVERNMENT BUDGET ALLOCATIONS
(In Dollars And Percentages, 1993/4 Fiscal Year)

	Per Capita (\$)*	% of Total	Real Change from 1992/3 (%)
<i>Ministries or Sectors</i>			
Health	74	9	-8
Education	181	21	+1
Agriculture	51	6	-22
Housing/community development	56	7	-18
Defence	42	5	-5
Police & security	43	5	+3
<i>Basic Services</i>			
Primary health care	34	4	-14
Basic education	96	11	+4

Source: GORN (1994a).

* At an exchange rate of \$1 = N\$3.3 (Namibian dollars).

The Legal Environment and Support for Child Rights and Protection

At Independence careful attention was paid to issues affecting children. This has resulted in a strong legislative and legal environment for child rights and protection. Article 15, Chapter Three of the Constitution is devoted to the rights of children. In August 1990 the Government drafted and adopted the *Policy Statement on Children*, which outlines broad principles of support for child survival, protection and development.

Legal protections for children are spelled out in the Child Act. The current Act, which was adapted from existing South African statutes, provides a basic level of protection to children against neglect and exploitation. It also protects children within the legal system, allowing for alternative forms of punishment, as well as provisions for the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. The Act is considered sound but outdated. A new Act which draws on recent legislation in other countries is being formulated. However, the completion of this process has required twice the time originally anticipated. The present draft, which has been under discussion since 1991, is not expected to be finalized until early 1995.

Namibia became the 45th country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the National Assembly endorsed on 30 September 1990, the same day that President Sam Nujoma was in New York to attend the World Summit for Children. In accordance with the statutes of the Convention, Namibia presented and explained the national report on the actions taken to fulfil the articles of the Convention before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 1994.

In their observations in response to the presentation of the Namibian delegation, the Committee welcomed "the political commitment within the country to improve the situation of children." The Committee went on to "express its appreciation as regards the Government's willingness to be self-critical and to search for creative and innovative approaches to address the problems facing children in society" (UNCRC 1994, page 1).

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The Steps in the Creation of the NPA

In all countries NPA development has demanded tradeoffs between the meeting of politically

declared deadlines and the achievement of an understanding and an effective "ownership" of the NPA process. Countries have had to make choices about the relative value and expediency of these competing objectives and lay plans to address the shortcomings of their chosen strategy. For Namibia, the World Summit was held only six months after Independence. It was a time of radical, even revolutionary, development of new roles, responsibilities and implementation strategies. Namibia's newly established Government was just beginning to articulate and implement its social sector priorities, most of which were—and are—consistent with the global goals established at the World Summit.

Most ministries have required not just restructuring, but actual creation from a colonial legacy which paid little attention to the identification of the specific needs of *all* Namibian children and mothers. The challenges at Independence to create a new state which focused on the needs of the entire population were compounded by the limited training and experience of many of the newcomers to national Government and the lack of practical experience in national level programming even among the most experienced "holdover" elements from the former administration.

Within this context and the considerable constraints of time and personnel within which many priority actions had to be taken, the approach adopted for the development of the NPA in Namibia was to focus on the rapid creation of a programme. Emphasis was put on initiating a process of interministerial collaboration and coordination in analysis and planning for sectoral goals and strategies. Stress was placed on meeting the deadline set at the World Summit: a completed NPA by the end of 1991.

The development of the NPA in Namibia was coordinated by an interministerial Policy Committee consisting of the permanent secretaries of all relevant ministries. Chaired by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the committee was ultimately responsible for ratifying the draft of the NPA and any policies which arose from it. The Policy Committee also formed a Technical Committee to review the goals established at the Summit and come up with the programmes and budgets needed for implementation.

To complete the work of the Technical Committee, six subcommittees were formed which reflected the following priority areas identified at the World Summit.

- Primary health care.
- Nutrition and household food security.
- Water and sanitation.

- Early childhood development, basic education and literacy.
- Children in especially difficult circumstances.
- The advancement of women.

The Technical Committee adopted the major and supporting goals of the Summit and added others on the advancement of women, malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis that were specific to Namibia.

Namibia was the only African nation to achieve the goal of finalizing an NPA by the end of 1991. However, in the four years since the Namibian NPA was prepared, it has appeared that the emphasis on achieving deadlines and the existence of the predefined goals agreed to at the Summit constrained creative thinking and boxed participants into limited approaches to problem solving and programme development. These factors, combined with the relative inexperience of many officials on the technical subcommittees and the demands on their time to address other priority issues within the new Government, led in several cases to a marked reliance on the technical assistance of external consultants to draft and develop the NPA chapters. This dilemma between the relative value of developmental processes and capacity-building, on the one hand, and the need for producing results under tight deadlines, on the other, restricted the positive effect the NPA development process could have had on strengthening planning processes in Government.

While very definite guidance was provided by a core group of Government officials, particularly in the Ministry of Health and Social Services, three consultants devoted wideranging input to all phases of NPA development. Despite a formally defined role of "facilitation" and capacity-building, the actual function and involvement of the consultants in the development of the NPA varied based on the capability and interest of the subcommittee members and the personalities and inclinations of the consultants. Reports differ on the cohesiveness and strength of the technical subcommittees. However, among those members expressing an opinion three years later, the process seemed largely driven by the consultants. This was perhaps the only realistic approach to adopt for the creation of the programme, given the limited experience and considerable work demands on the subcommittee members. However, the approach led to shortcomings in institutional awareness, understanding and ownership of the NPA within Government: problems which continue to affect the NPA today.

The Contents of the NPA: An Overview

The NPA document is organized into two parts. The first, introductory section describes in broad terms the way the NPA should be "operationalized". There are brief, general recommendations on key issues such as monitoring, staffing and budgets, training and orientation and overseeing the implementation of the plan.

The section on decentralization calls for the establishment of "a high level interministerial committee", under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister, to coordinate "effective, integrated administration which will facilitate an interministerial team approach at the community, district and regional levels", once delimitation of the new regions has taken place (GORN 1991, page vii).

In addition to the overall goals and objectives of the NPA adopted from the World Summit "model", the NPA spells out a set of operating principles according to which all agencies charged with implementation of the programme are expected to operate. This includes the following.

- A community-based *participatory approach*, with an emphasis on household and community involvement and empowerment of the poor leading to increased self-reliance.
- A *problem-centred* (rather than sectoral) approach, whereby all relevant parties contribute to solutions.
- *Decentralization* to regional, district and community levels.
- A focus on coverage of all communities with *affordable and appropriate* programmes.
- Convergence and integration of services through *intersectoral cooperation* at all levels.
- *Building adequate capacity* to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate key programmes.
- Special attention to the situation of *girls and women*.

These principles are valuable paradigms which have become widely accepted as necessary for public sector development efforts to succeed. Some of them, such as intersectoral cooperation, were applied during the development phase of the NPA. However, with the emphasis on achieving the Summit deadline, the principles of participation and capacity-building were often disregarded. Had they been applied during the development of the NPA, perhaps the sense of ownership and the desire to see the NPA successfully implemented to the local and regional levels might have been greater among the Government

officials involved in the creation of the NPA. The absence of these principles during NPA development, in light of World Summit deadlines, has provided valuable lessons for the decentralization of the NPA at the municipal and regional levels.

The second section of the NPA document consists of more detailed plans of action developed by the technical subcommittees for each of the six programme areas. Each subcommittee developed a plan according to the following "guidelines".

- Problems and underlying causes.
- Goals.
- Operational strategy.
- Monitoring.
- Analysis of feasibility.
- Plan of action.
- Resources, both personnel and financial.
- A chart of responsible and supporting agencies for programme activities.

The NPA document concludes by reiterating and elaborating on the general recommendations made in Section One, with particular emphasis on the legislative and bureaucratic reforms needed to support the implementation of the NPA.

The Effect of the NPA on Programmes of the State

Launched shortly after Independence, the NPA acted as a galvanizing force, which secured broad-based collaboration among Government officials, some members of the nascent NGO community, and several international organizations in the definition and design of several key national programmes. As NPA development took place almost simultaneously with Government programming in the social sector, it is rare to find major social programmes within Government that cannot be associated with the NPA. Participation in the exercise also provided individuals an opportunity to establish linkages with representatives of other agencies for the achievement of their own mandated assignment within Government. Likewise, it helped many civil servants better to determine their assignments in relation to other institutions and to join in a skill-development endeavour which associated actions to specific goals and objectives.

Another major effect of NPA development on state programmes has been to bring different Government and public sector institutions together to cooperate on an intersectoral basis. The importance of promoting such cooperation in Namibia cannot be overemphasized. During the colonial period, a spirit of consultation, discussion and coordination among colleagues was effectively suppressed from the community to the national levels. The creation of the NPA was one of the first opportunities for representatives of institutions to reach beyond the management of their own programmes and look innovatively at the potential for coordination and shared responsibility for problem solving with related organizations.

The NPA process has also helped Government officials realize the challenges of intersectoral collaboration. As the NPA document points out:

"The work of the committees was characterized by certain difficulties and unforeseen benefits. Difficulties included the many other demands on senior officials, lack of adequate information about budgets which made it difficult to complete the costing exercise, and the initial feeling on the part of some members that the NPA work was a separate exercise with little bearing on their regular duties" (GORN 1991, page ii).

The development of the NPA in conjunction with Government policy statements on primary health care also helped define the range of essential services and desired changes in health status that had remained unstated in the Government's general pledge to improve health care for all Namibians. In other sectors, such as water and sanitation and early child development, the NPA broke new ground. Prior to the NPA, it was difficult to establish a footing within Government for these programme areas. For the first time goals for universal access to safe water and effective sanitation were established; progress continues to be made in reorganizing water delivery in rural areas. Though policy and implementation issues remain unclear, the NPA has generated vital discussion and planning on issues in early child development and protection in Namibia.

The Resource Mobilization Strategies of the NPA

The premium placed on the completion of the NPA by the end-1991 deadline and the competing demands on time for other priorities that officials experienced during the radical restructuring of Government led to compromises in the level of detail of the NPA. This is reflected in the consideration of the financial requirements for the programme. Though some efforts were made to price the cost of implementing the NPA, only an outline of the financial

requirements was completed.

Even before the development of the "20/20 vision" funding proposal advocated by UNICEF to support basic social services in countries through national and international sources, Namibia had recorded very respectable levels of investment in this area, devoting 43 percent of the overall budget to social services and 15 percent to basic services in 1993. There is no corresponding breakdown for current donor support. Today, the challenge in Namibia is not so much to increase the overall allocations for social services, but rather to improve the targeting of expenditures for essential services and raise the efficiency and efficacy of programme implementation.

Participation in the Creation of the NPA

The development of the NPA was largely an "official" process, with representation focusing on Government officials and key supporting UN agencies. The NPA document lists the participation of over 100 individuals in the creation of the programme. Of this number, only 16 were from institutions outside Government. Of the 16, seven were from UNICEF, and five were from other UN agencies. Four nongovernment organizations were represented, with three of the four focusing on early childhood development, basic education and literacy. This record reflects both the limited scope of the NGO community in Namibia at the time of Independence and the "Government-centric" approach to the creation of the NPA, a result of the strong enthusiasm for state responsibility for human development.

While the NPA recognizes the constraints on the Government in the achievement of the established goals and stresses the need for partnership, this partnership is limited to direct community involvement. State agents are viewed as the conduit for the mobilization of communities. In the major recommendations on addressing priority issues not covered by the NPA, the document says little about fostering the involvement of NGOs in order to promote efficiency and broaden the reach of services. It is also silent on the mobilization and involvement of the private sector and donor institutions as sources of funding and personnel.

With the evolution of the NPA process, increasing attention has been paid to the active participation of nongovernment institutions in the management and implementation of the programme. In 1993 the NPA Standing Committee expanded its membership to include the UNDP, the World Health Organization and three NGOs (the Child Survival, Protection and Development Foundation, the Council of Churches in Namibia and the

Michelle McLean Children's Trust), as well as the University of Namibia and the Association of Municipalities (in recognition of the increased attention to NPA decentralization). However, the expansion has not been matched by enthusiasm among the new members. At the first NPA Standing Committee meeting for 1994, the invited NGOs failed to appear. Additional work on mobilization and the spread of awareness must obviously still be undertaken to increase participation in NPA management.

III. THE DECENTRALIZATION OF THE NPA PROCESS

Forms of Decentralized Government in Namibia

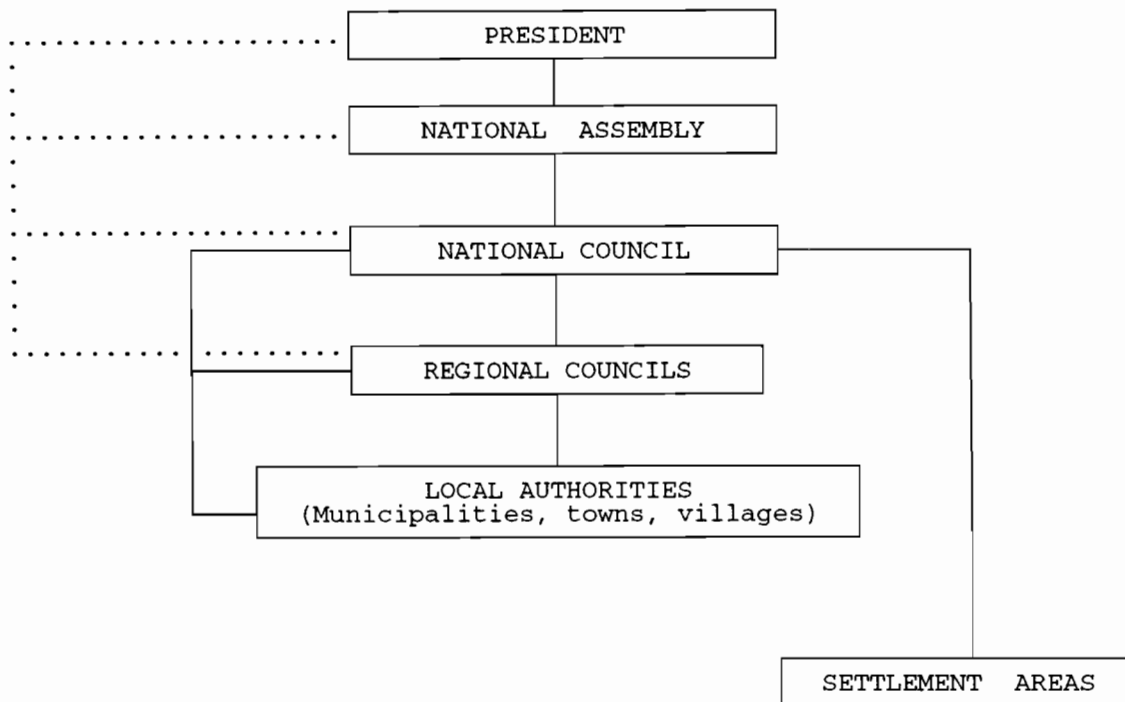
Decentralized Government takes two forms in Namibia: regional authorities and local authorities. The structures, functions and powers of both are spelled out in general terms in the Constitution. This reflects a desire to assure the accountability of state institutions before the public by broadening democratic representation from the central level to regional and local levels and placing real decisionmaking power in the hands of locally elected officials. More detail came with the first report of the Delimitation Commission (particularly for the regional authorities), which was established at Independence, and the promulgation in 1992 of the Regional Councils Act and the Local Authorities Act.

Regional authorities exist in each of Namibia's 13 regions. Local authorities represent a collection of 15 municipalities, 8 towns and 22 villages, most of which existed prior to Independence. The relationship among the different levels of government is not linear, and there is considerable official and unofficial communication among various government institutions (Figure 1).

1. *Regional authorities.* Regional governments were created two years after Independence. They are radically new institutions compared to the previous administrations, which provided services to the population according to ethnic and racial criteria.

The 13 political regions were formed in 1992 based on the recommendations of the First Delimitation Commission. The commission had been charged with creating regions which would furnish a degree of subnational government for all areas of the country. The regional system was also established to provide for the popular election of the members of the National Council. To this end, in keeping with the Constitution, the commission had to

Figure 1: MAJOR GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES



create the new regions with constituencies of approximately equal populations, thus providing for balanced representation on the National Council.

Regional and local elections in 1992 were part of the attempt to make decentralization a reality. However, due to major Government restructuring with too few personnel, many with limited qualifications and experience, the efforts to establish regional authorities in 1992 concentrated on the technical aspects of the elections. Set aside for consideration afterward were detailed plans on administration and the roles and responsibilities of the new structures.

The powers and functions of the regional governments are spelled out in the Regional Councils Act of 1992, which states that, among other tasks, regional authorities must "undertake, with due regard to the powers, duties and functions of the National Planning Commission and any other law relating to planning, the planning of the development of the region" (GORE 1992, page 36).

The regional authorities have limited financial resources. Beyond the staff and supplies provided by the central Government, they receive a small percentage of municipal revenues, if municipalities exist in the region. Provision is made for regional authorities to raise or borrow their own funds, but this usually requires central level approval.

Each regional authority is composed of constituent councillors elected by the residents of the region. Together, the councillors form the *regional council*. A governor of the region is elected by the council from among its membership. As an indirectly elected official, the governor has only limited powers beyond those of the other councillors. For most purposes, the governor can be considered as the "chairperson" of the regional council—a description used more frequently than "governor" in the Regional Councils Act.

The selection of the first 13 chairpersons was based on a wide variety of criteria applied in each region, reflecting the various expectations and understandings of the role of the regional council among the newly elected representatives. In some regions selection appears to have been grounded on the traditional affinities and associations of pre-Independence authority related to seniority and standing in the community. In others selection was determined according to political party affiliation.

The members of the council are each elected for a six-year term. With the exception of the governor, membership on the council is not stipulated as full-time employment. Councillors do not maintain offices at the regional headquarters, and only the governor is provided with an office and a vehicle.

The councils also choose two council members to serve as the regional representatives to the National Council, on which they represent their region, as well as their party. When the National Council is in session, these members spend considerable time shuttling between their two positions.

A civil service staff has been established in each region to support the regional councils in their duties. Each region has a regional executive officer, who is assisted by one or two regional control officers (depending on the size of the regional council), two clerks, a secretary and driver. The REO is responsible to and considered an employee of the regional council. Selection of the REOs is made by the regional councils, in consultation with the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, an indication of the dominant role the ministry enjoys in the regions.

There has been some uncertainty between the councillors and REOs vis-à-vis their precise roles and responsibilities within the new structures. One instance of this occurred early on in the Drought Emergency Relief Programme 1992/4. Regional councils were elected to office midway through the relief programme, followed shortly afterward by the selection of the REOs. Questions soon developed over who was responsible for identifying drought-affected communities and devising the plans for the provision of support. Without policy

instructions and a lack of clear definition of duties or responsibilities in the Regional Councils Act, these decisions and the oversight of the relief programme were determined region-by-region based on the interests and respective strength of the councillors and REOs.

The new regional authorities exist alongside a system of government authority that emanates from the centre. Some *ministries*, especially in the social sector, have personnel structures through which staff are deployed throughout the country. Again, due to the lack of definition in the Regional Councils Act, there is no clearly established relationship between line ministry staff and regional authorities. While in most regions it is agreed informally that there should be interaction, the range of authority and the duty to cooperate remain unspecified and are ultimately determined by the individuals present in a region.

In this context, regional extension staff take their instructions from ministerial supervisors and have no formal obligation to consult or work with the regional councils and REOs. As a recent Government study reports:

"Despite the often close proximity of regional council offices and regional representatives of the line ministries (sometimes within the same building), the pathway for official communication between the two is often through Windhoek. ...regional representatives are often not required to communicate directly with regional councillors or governors. This lack of communication and the apparent confusion about appropriate or permitted channels of communication between regional councils and ministries are seen as major obstacles to regional planning" (GORE 1994b, page 16).

Some ministries, particularly the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Education and Culture, have developed ministerial plans with input from regional staff, but none has agreed to include regional councils formally in the process of the identification of sectoral priorities and strategies of implementation.

Moreover, there is confusion concerning the very definition of the administrative regions among various ministries. Since the ministries were created at Independence through the consolidation of the ethnically based administrations, with limited staff and no defined political regions, each ministry took its own approach to organizing administrative boundaries. Thus, Health and Social Services has established an administrative structure based on four health regions; Education and Culture relies on a configuration of seven regions, and Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, four. Several ministries, Health and Social Services in particular, have recognized this problem and taken steps to redeploy staff and resources to improve service to all 13 regions.

The differences in administrative and political boundaries also constrain planning. The

"political" regions must plan in some sense without the support of the sectoral ministries, which design their information systems and data to serve their own needs. For example, health data present disease patterns by health district, instead of by region. It is a challenge to establish a true and comprehensive regional profile for use in planning potential intersectoral actions which are grounded on regional (political) priorities identified and endorsed by elected officials on behalf of their constituents. The Ministry of Education and Culture has taken steps to reorganize its information on a regional basis.

These situations are understandable given the need for hasty government restructuring at Independence. However, the confusion has now become a major impediment to decentralized political representation and governance, with the responsibilities and capacities for regional planning and the implementation of programmes left undefined.

Efforts have been made to address and clarify many of the key issues of decentralized administration and governance. According to a recent decision of the Cabinet, line ministries must cooperate with regional councils (GORE 1994b). Two Government initiatives have also brought these issues to the fore. The first is the launch of a joint working group of the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, and the second is the start of regional programmes of action for children (RPAs). Beyond this, however, key decentralization issues remain. These have been on the agenda of senior Government officials for several years, but resolution is unlikely in the near future.

Overall, this situation has had the effect of divorcing national ministries from local responsibility and accountability, without turning these latter over to the new regional authorities. The only true link between the electorate and Government services is through representatives on the National Council.

The lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities has also affected the development of the RPAs wherever the articulation and definition of problems and priorities require the sustained alliance of the political and executive elements of the regional administration, in collaboration with the technical staff of the line ministries.

2. *Municipal authorities.* The laws and relationships between the central Government and municipalities have a long history in Namibia. Windhoek municipality and several other White-dominated municipalities have been in existence for over 100 years. These urban centres have collectively looked after their interests since the 1940s, when they formed the Association of Municipalities. This long history has provided considerable time for the definition of the relationships between local governments and the central Government.

The Local Authorities Act of 1992 has not changed many of the powers and duties municipalities held prior to Independence. These are mainly limited to the provision of public utilities such as water, rubbish collection and electricity within municipal boundaries. What has changed are the municipal boundaries themselves, which have been expanded to embrace the Coloured and Black townships excluded prior to Independence. With this expansion has come a corresponding increase in the size of the electorate that in turn has resulted in an increase in the scale of requisite services provided by municipalities.

Municipal affairs, as stipulated in the Local Authorities Act, are governed by a municipal council of between seven and 12 members each elected to serve for five years. Similar to their regional counterparts, municipal councillors are elected indirectly. Voters cast ballots for party lists, not for candidates. Municipal mayors, like regional governors, are elected by the other councillors and are accorded little executive power, acting as chairpersons of their councils. Each mayor serves a one-year term, at the end of which his or her tenure is reconsidered by the council. The authority to carry out the decisions of the municipal councils is vested with town clerks, who correspond to the REOs in regional government. As in the regional structure, municipal councillors serve in a part-time capacity, and some extra provisions are made for the Office of Mayor.

Political Determination and Support for NPA Decentralization

The strong commitment to decentralization voiced by the central Government is reflected in the plans for NPA implementation. The NPA document highlights the need for decentralized approaches to the management of the programme. Since regional government did not exist when the NPA was completed, the programme lacks specifics, leaving open the potential for future definition and the evolution of the role of local and regional programmes.

The efforts to refine the role of the NPA and define and implement actions to realize the principles of decentralization and public awareness have been more evident beginning in 1993. In accordance with the 1993 NPA management workplan, a special workshop on the NPA was held in November of that year. The workshop drew up strategies for taking the NPA process to the subnational level. Among the workshop resolutions was one dealing with the need to broaden awareness of the NPA. Even within implementing ministries, very few individuals—outside of those who developed the programme and the three individuals presently managing and reporting on the NPA—are well informed about it 30 months after

the programme was officially approved by the Cabinet.

This general lack of awareness of the NPA has also hampered efforts at decentralization. Line ministry officials are not familiar with the role their ministries play in the NPA, nor are they aware of what is expected of them in developing local and regional programmes. The exercise in the development of local and regional programmes is, however, resulting in discussions and, more uniquely, decisionmaking concerning the role of the central Government in subnational planning endeavours.

Following the initiation of an RPA development process in one region, a mid-level bureaucratic "crisis" developed within the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing and among some elements in the National Planning Commission in relation to the acceptability of regions undertaking such a process in the absence of central Government guidance and direction (read "control"). The ensuing discussion, which reached senior levels in the National Planning Commission, revealed considerable variability in the interpretation of the relations between the central Government and regional authorities. Control, or facilitation? Direction, or assistance? These terms remain unwritten in the laws, and the concepts they express are therefore largely affected by personal interpretations of the appropriate role for various levels of government, the intentions of the Constitution and the leanings of the Cabinet.

At the subnational level the creation of programmes of action has also been seen as an important opportunity for the regions and Windhoek municipality to take the initiative in defining local priorities and clarifying the relationships in planning, supervision and resource control with central authorities.

The Development of Local Programmes of Action

Without detailed guidance from the NPA on the ways the development of local and regional programmes should occur, the Windhoek municipal programme and the four regional initiatives have followed different processes. The Windhoek effort is largely driven by political forces in the municipal council. At the regional level, the interest in strengthening the regional development and planning structures which are coordinated and overseen by the regional councils and the desire "to get something done" have been the driving forces.

1. *The Windhoek municipal programme of action for children.* The creation of the programme of action within Windhoek municipality was initiated by the mayor. In doing so, the mayor

sought to increase the pace of change within a municipality which is still divided among economic groups largely defined by race. He also hoped that the MPA would bring together municipal authorities, ministry officials, NGOs and the private sector to foster a vision and a plan for future social development in the municipality and establish direct links with potential donors.

To strengthen and support the mayor's efforts, UNICEF provided financing for his attendance at the Second International Colloquium of Mayors in Mexico City. His trip strengthened the mayor's resolve, and that of his personal assistant, to press forward with the development of an MPA, and upon his return he made a public speech pledging the development of the Windhoek programme.

However, given the Mayor's weak executive authority, his capacity to initiate the MPA was limited to encouraging discussions about the issue within the council. Talks were also held within the municipal administration, which provides advice and direction to the powerful management committee, made up of a minority of councillors who review and propose the agenda for council meetings.

On initial consideration, the administration and management committee recommended against the creation of an MPA because of the municipality's limited role as a provider of public services. It was felt that many of the aspects of the structure of the programme of action remained the responsibility of the national Government.

Those promoting the creation of the MPA were seeking to transform the role of municipal government and assure that all the services available through government (local and central) are provided effectively. The role of the council and the municipal administration would thus become "facilitative", in that they would supply leadership, seek consensus on the priorities of the municipality and develop partnerships with ministries, NGOs and the private sector to guarantee that the priorities are fully addressed. In this partnership, roles and responsibilities would be shared, while individual institutions would remain faithful to their mandated tasks. In a municipality of which the motto is "suum cuique", popularly translated as "to each his own", this job has not been easy.

Fortunately, the council agreed to reconsider the question of MPA development. Key councillors were briefed privately in order to explain more thoroughly to them the process and scope of work required to create an MPA and point out the advantages of having a programme which would provide a clear vision of development for the municipality. At a special council meeting, a multimedia presentation on the NPA-MPA process preceded a

discussion, which resulted in a commitment from the council to direct the administration to initiate the development of an MPA, with the special instruction that the development and implementation of the programme are to have no financial implications for the municipality.

The expansion of the municipality's role in addressing the priorities of its electorate beyond the provision of basic services is now happening within the context of the MPA. Municipal staff are sitting down with ministries to plan efforts in education and health care. From the initial view of the municipal administration that these were sectors to be addressed solely by the central Government, a partnership has evolved. The municipality will assume responsibility for mobilizing the demand for and the use of services and the creation of mechanisms for enhancing dialogue between service providers and constituents. Meanwhile, the ministries will maintain and, hopefully, expand their direct provision of services.

The MPA development process in Windhoek has been straightforward. A steering committee, which is comprised of municipal officials who oversee technical subcommittees in education, environment, health and shelter, transport, and public relations, is charged with the analysis of sectoral problems and the drafting of a plan to address these problems. Membership on the subcommittees includes representatives from national ministries and locally based NGO and private sector representatives. UNICEF is providing support through the participation of staff on each of the subcommittees. Secretariat support to keep the process moving is also provided by UNICEF to the municipality through a part-time advisor. It has taken just over one year for the subcommittees to complete their work, which will be consolidated into a plan sometime in 1995.

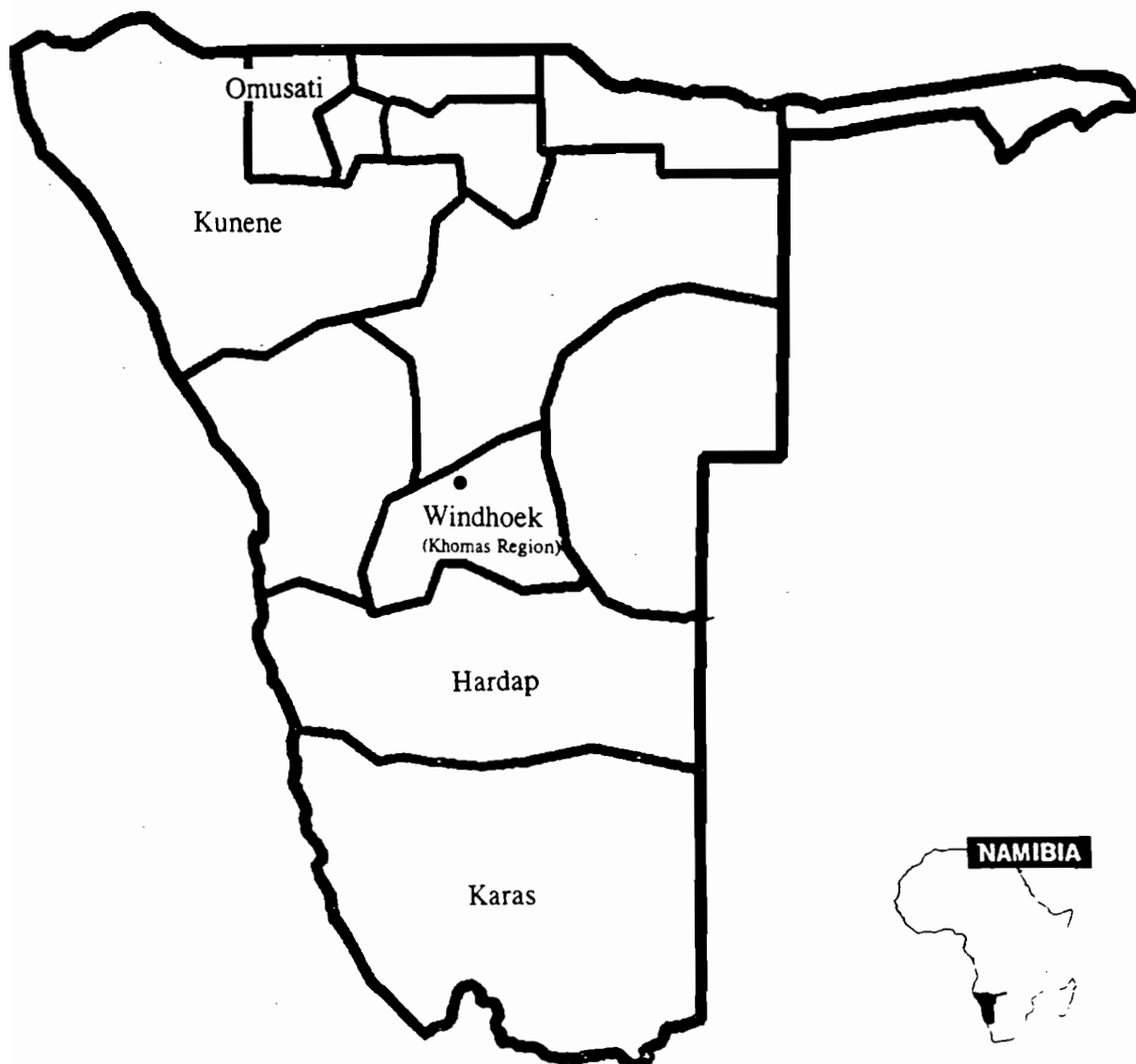
2. *The regional programmes of action for children.* While the NPA document stipulated that the programme is to be decentralized to the regional level, a need which was reaffirmed by the NPA Steering Committee in 1993 and is included in the 1994 NPA management workplan, UNICEF initiated the RPA process in four of the 13 regions beginning in February 1994 (Figure 2). This decision by UNICEF resulted from the continued impasse over the roles and responsibilities in regional development, though some regions have shown the desire, willingness and spirit "to get something done".

RPA development followed work undertaken by UNICEF in the regions during the Drought Emergency Relief Programme 1992/4. To implement that programme, regional committees for drought relief and food-for-work management were established. These committees were the first attempts at intersectoral coordination at the regional level that brought together extension services, NGOs and regional councillors. UNICEF supported the

relief programme in 1993 by posting regional advisors to assist in the seven regions considered the worst hit by the drought.

With the drought effectively over by December 1993, the regional advisors were reassigned to initiate RPAs in four regions. With the lessons of the NPA in view, these efforts were launched based on the operational principles spelled out—but largely ignored—during the development of the NPA. It was agreed that, with these efforts, the focus would be on "process". Sufficient time would be allowed for elected officials and line ministry staff to take ownership of the effort. Priority was put on developing the capacity of regional officials to

Figure 2: THE LOCATION OF THE NAMIBIAN RPAs AND THE WINDHOEK MPA



organize democratic structures to support the RPAs, while gradually providing the necessary skills in planning, programming and evaluation to design, implement and monitor the programme as it developed.

Beginning with the governors and regional councils, regional officials from line ministries, NGOs and community groups were approached individually and interviewed on their roles and activities in the region. They were briefed on the background of the NPA and the provisions made for the decentralization of the programme and asked for their thoughts on the feasibility of such an effort. The constraints on the NPA, most of which were very familiar to regional officials, were also addressed during these initial briefings.

An introductory workshop was then organized in each region through the respective regional councils and facilitated by the assistance of UNICEF technical staff. The following workshop objectives were generally the same in each region.

- Identify the problems affecting children in the region.
- Identify programmes for children already in place in the region.
- Identify the way these programmes had been planned.
- Determine steps to develop a regional programme of action.

In all four regions the workshop participants agreed on the value of an RPA and decided on the initial steps necessary to create programmes. However, following the workshops, the level of enthusiasm for the effort and the paths taken to develop the RPA were very different.

One region, Kunene, concluded that the newly created political region—formed from two isolated ethnic "reserves" and a White-dominated commercial farming area—did not represent the most promising entity for the creation of an effective development plan. Ministry officials and regional councillors therefore resolved that the best approach was to develop three "district" programmes, centred on the region's three largest towns and the surrounding rural areas. This was largely due to the logistical problem of coordination, given the immense size of the region, coupled with the lack of a "regional" consciousness.

In Karas Region, two follow-up meetings after the initial workshop resulted in the creation of a regional committee to support the development of an RPA. However, several officials were dubious about the prospects of this third attempt at forming an intersectoral committee on development issues. The first attempt had originated from a central level

directive which instructed line ministries in the region to form an interministerial development coordinating committee along with NGOs and community groups. The second attempt had been similar to the first, except that the impetus had come mostly from within the region, supported by officials at the national level. A lack of vision, clear objectives and commitment was cited at the RPA workshop as the reason the first two efforts had failed.

By the end of 1994 the development of RPAs in both these regions has come to a halt, largely as a result of the great distances between population centres in these regions, the two largest in Namibia, along with the lack of commitment from a sufficient number of officials to carry the process forward.

In the third region, Hardap, the governor's office established a temporary RPA committee, with membership open to all interested public and NGO officials and private individuals. The committee formed subcommittees in six sectors: health care, economics, social issues, education, environment and information dissemination. The full committee has met three times, and the subcommittees have begun collecting information and statistics on the priority problems identified in each sector and suggesting possible actions to address these problems. However, of late there has been some reluctance on the part of the REO and members of the regional council to continue the process. It is felt among these members of the RPA committee that the representatives of the central Government need to clarify the state's commitment and financial support for the RPA, if the programme is to succeed. The regional council remains committed, however, and the RPA process is expected to continue in 1995.

In the fourth region, Omusati, RPA development was initially guided by a taskforce led by the REO, who, with the regional council, moved to broaden the scope of the effort. A regional development committee has been formed comprised of the councillors, relevant line ministry staff and NGO officials. The committee has in turn formed sectoral subcommittees, each of which is chaired by a regional councillor. The subcommittee chairs are responsible for seeing that sectoral plans are developed. The outcome of this work will be combined into a unified regional development plan with a focus on the needs of children and mothers.

The success of the RPA process in Omusati Region is the result of several factors. The region is the only one of the four where the entire regional council is formed from the same political party. Moreover, the councillors and their constituents, as well as many of the civil servants and other NGO and community group representatives involved in the process, share the same racial and ethnic background. Omusati is the smallest of the four regions where

RPA activities have been launched, though it has one of the highest population densities of any region in Namibia. There is also a strong interest in intersectoral planning among Government officials and NGOs in the region. Part of the reason for this is the fact that, in two districts within Omusati, UNICEF has been supporting integrated area-based programmes, and officials are therefore familiar with the benefits of the intersectoral approach to planning and implementation. Finally, solid leadership provided by the regional council to sustain the initiative, complemented by a strong and effective REO, has underpinned the RPA effort in Omusati.

It was originally thought that a reasonably well-defined programme could be developed by the regionally based personnel, with technical assistance from UNICEF, within three months. However, logistical problems and physical and political distances have made it clear, since the introductory workshops, that considerably more time is required to develop effective programmes.

This requirement for more time, voiced most strongly by the UNICEF-supported regional advisors, has brought to the fore once again the conflict between process and product, ownership and deadlines. At the national level the dilemma was settled in favour of meeting the deadline. This choice was probably the right one, given the considerable demands which were being put on central Government officials to participate not only in the NPA, but numerous other programmes as well. However, the programme which has resulted is not well known and is even less understood, with considerable gaps in the management process to address these shortcomings.

Once the development objectives were clarified within the regions, it became obvious that, for the regions in their present state of development, the real advantage of the RPA creation processes will not be just in the definition of goals. It will be in the basic "facilitation" of discussion between the agents of the state and the agents of the people who are striving to define a working relationship among themselves. This will take considerable time. The RPA development horizon has been pushed into the future.

Two of the four regions (Hardap and Omusati) have established an extended schedule of discussion and planning in 1995. This extended schedule is now anticipated to lead to more effective regional planning and cooperation and real long-term benefits for children in these regions. It should also facilitate the clarification of the roles created under the new regional authorities.

Extra time is necessary, but not sufficient, for regional authorities to craft meaningful

plans. The constraints of limited training and experience faced at the central level are compounded at the regional level. Many posts are unfilled, and applicants with minimum educational qualifications are being allowed to assume roles requiring more advanced skills. Significant and sustained support will be needed to foster the development of the RPAs.

General administrative support is also necessary to keep the processes moving. This includes assistance in doublechecking that invited individuals are aware of and committed to attend meetings, completing and circulating the minutes of meetings and preparing materials and assembling data as requested by RPA development committees.

It is essential to assure that the external technical assistance and support provided by UNICEF and officials from participating ministries do not result in inappropriate control over the RPAs. If this happens, it is likely that the RPAs will not be successful. This must be clear from the start, because the "repair" of oversights in the development of the ownership and management of the programmes will not be possible in the regions to the same extent that it can be accomplished at the national level.

The members of the committees in Hardap and Omusati have expressed their desire for technical support not only from UNICEF, but also from national ministries, particularly Health and Social Services, Education and Culture, and Agriculture, Water and Rural Development. The participation of representatives of these ministries was greatly appreciated at the first regional workshops, and their assistance is expected to continue. However, it is likely that the support will be ad hoc, rather than sustained.

The creation of these programmes is a slow process. Individuals with limited planning experience have been asked to come together and assemble sectoral plans in an environment in which intrasectoral collaboration is not customary. This collaboration is both the challenge and the objective of the development of the municipal and regional programmes. To build this cooperation requires time to develop relationships, understand issues and define and accept responsibilities for the implementation of various aspects of coordinated programme strategies. To rush the process will be to kill it, but to let it go on without a sense of progress will be to watch it die. The balance is delicate.

Subcommittees have a reasonable record of holding regular meetings to date, though some meetings have been cancelled due to lack of participation. For the Windhoek MPA, the members of most subcommittees have agreed to devote to the programme approximately two hours twice each month.

To guarantee that in the short time devoted to development, relationships can be built

which will be sustained in the future is another challenge. Based on the lessons of the NPA, it will be critical to address the issues of programme management, public visibility and continued coordination as part of the development process; these cannot be left until the documents are completed and the programmes initiated.

Social Mobilization, Social Communication and the LPAs

The potential for public mobilization around the local programmes of action differs greatly between the municipal programme in Windhoek and the efforts in the regions.

In Windhoek the force behind the establishment of the municipal programme is the mayor's personal assistant, who is open to the political benefits of the MPA for the people of Windhoek and for its mayor.

Public awareness of the MPA is very much at the forefront of the discussions and has resulted in the creation of a public relations subcommittee. Opportunities for social mobilization are extensive in Windhoek. The media is well represented, and access to print, television and radio is very good. Even the avenues into the poorest areas are reasonably open. The municipality has a number of publications that can be used to stimulate and maintain public awareness and promote mobilization around the issues associated with the MPA. Monthly utility bills are accompanied by a municipal newsletter which reaches over 30,000 households; other materials include an annual diary composed and sold by the municipality and a variety of annual promotional and informational mailings.

The personnel available for the promotion of the MPA include six community liaison officers. Assigned to the lowest income areas of the municipality, these officers are expected to make contact with community members and serve as the conduit for channelling concerns and information between the municipality and residents. The liaison officers report to the municipal public relations officer, indicating the role anticipated for field staff.

Beyond basic public awareness of the MPA and the development of political "good will" for the mayor and the administration, there is hope that the public relations subcommittee will stretch its efforts to the development and implementation of a communications strategy for the MPA that will promote both public awareness of the development issues associated with the MPA and the changes in behaviour, including increased demand for available services, necessary for achieving many of the goals.

Conditions are profoundly different at the regional level. Media contacts can be made

in some regions through the local-language services of Namibia Broadcasting Corporation, but print and television are not widely available. The potential for interpersonal contact is also limited in many regions, constraining public mobilization strategies, as well as the delivery of services. With the vast distances among small population clusters, particularly in the southern part of the country, interpersonal contacts between community members and elected officials, extension officers and even teachers and religious leaders are limited. Traditional leadership structures exist in some areas of the country and have some potential for RPA-related mobilization. The formation of an information distribution subcommittee as part of one RPA indicates the existence of a concern about the spread of awareness. At the first workshop on the development of the RPA in Omusati, there was a definite recommendation that religious leaders become involved in the development and implementation of the RPA due to their authoritative position and regular access to assembled and individual community members.

Financing Regional and Municipal Programmes of Action

The newly established regional governments are severely constrained in their autonomy to develop and administer discretionary budgets. Actual budgetary control is exercised by the line ministries for the implementation of centrally defined programmes. Few ministries have allocated funding for their regional staffs to utilize according to regionally defined priorities. One exception is the Directorate of Community Development of the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, which, in the spirit of decentralization, allocated N\$10,000 (\$3,000) for the 1993/4 fiscal year to each region for regionally defined programmes.

Thus, there are practically no funds available to the regions to be used for programmes they define. The RPAs will require the effective planning and presentation of regional priorities to ministries in order to secure funding through the line ministry budgets. This is an attractive potential channel for securing regionally based funds for health care and education, as the ministries in these areas are well funded and maintain mechanisms for considering and reviewing regional priorities. However, in other areas, such as household food security and children in especially difficult circumstances, which are not as well funded and generally do not have a bureaucratic "home", there will be considerable difficulty in securing additional resources for the implementation of RPA activities.

Lobbying could also generate additional resources for local and regional authorities

which present programmes. Resources for regions with RPAs could be provided by diverting funds from less organized areas. It is a specific strategy of the NPA Standing Committee to use RPA development to motivate other regions to improve their analysis and presentation of priorities so as to maintain and compete for a larger share of the national resource "pie".

The relationship between central and regional financial capacities is demonstrated in the careful control over expenditures maintained by parent ministries. Regional council budgets must be reviewed and approved by the National Assembly, and all expenditures require the review of the parent ministry to ensure compliance with ministerial regulations and conditions. This control exists over the entire budget, whether the funds are allocated through the provision of centrally funded grants or locally generated resources.

Strategies for securing resources for the implementation of the Windhoek MPA include manoeuvring within established budgets to discover opportunities for intrasectoral reallocations rather than overall budgetary increases. Within the municipal structure and in relation to the responsibilities of ministries for health and education service delivery, the responsibilities for the implementation of the MPA are directed more toward awareness and the creation of demand for available services. The intention is also to increase pressure for the improvement of the services already provided. These issues are being addressed by the public relations subcommittee, which has close ties to the Office of the Mayor and which is expected to have the capacity to carry out its responsibilities for public mobilization with existing personnel and financial resources. As with the RPAs, the key to additional resource mobilization for the municipality will be found in the effective lobbying (with well-presented analyses) of implementing ministries.

Given the desire of several donors to promote decentralization, the development of relationships with these donors also represents a sound strategy for the generation of funds to supplement ministerial budgets for the realization of municipal and regional programmes.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND THE LESSONS LEARNED

Namibia can justifiably take pride in being the first country in Africa to complete a National Programme of Action for Children. The achievement had a positive impact on the development environment at a time when the Government was just beginning to define and implement a completely new service and support structure. Consistent with the national

policy of decentralized government, the NPA process was designed to include approaches for working with subnational social and political organizations. Following the establishment of the regional authorities at the end of 1992, efforts were undertaken to implement the policy of NPA decentralization, and endeavours are currently under way within two regions and one municipality to create local programmes of action.

Through the development and implementation of the NPA, a number of successes has been registered and lessons learned about issues which affect the quality and impact of the NPA process at the local and national levels. The structures adopted at the national level have had considerable effect on the development of the subnational programmes.

The local and regional programmes of action appear to have initiated important discussions on some unsettled national issues regarding the role of municipal and regional governments and the relationships between the locally elected agents of the people and the nationally appointed agents of the state.

The Lessons Learned from NPA Development and Management

1. *The effects of meeting artificial deadlines: positive and negative.* Meeting the internationally declared deadline of end-December 1991 for a completed NPA was a considerable achievement, especially since it was accomplished in a context in which officials were faced with numerous and competing priorities and did not have adequate time to meet all the pressing demands of a newly independent country. With the development process heavily supported by external consultants, great emphasis was placed on meeting the World Summit deadline. It is therefore perhaps not so surprising that, after the fanfare at its adoption, the NPA went largely unnoticed.

This is not to say that the elements of the NPA are not being implemented. Specific programmes and projects are under way, several of which grew out of the NPA process. However, in general, little association is made between these programmes and the NPA.

Effective ownership and understanding of the NPA process require considerable time to develop. The shortcuts taken in order to secure a published NPA have clearly undermined the potential impact of the NPA in Namibia. Had more attention been paid to careful preparations for the NPA, there would likely be more ownership and a stronger desire for successful decentralization within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture and among service providers at the local and regional levels.

2. *NPA implementation requires considerable and continued assistance.* With limited commitment by the Government to the overall NPA process, as opposed to the component programmes and projects, keeping the NPA alive has needed considerable support from UNICEF. Following 18 months of limited activity within the Government bodies responsible for the management of the NPA process, full-time technical assistance was required to revive the awareness and commitment to the programme. This requirement is not only a function of the way the NPA preparation process was undertaken, but is also related to the lack of capacity within an understaffed and overburdened public service.

Full-time support has been provided to the National Planning Commission for the oversight of the NPA process since early 1993, and, with this support, the spirit of the NPA has remained alive, but it is still fragile and largely donor driven.

3. *Communications: Basis for awareness of and commitment to the NPA.* With almost no attention to sustained communications within the NPA process, awareness of the NPA among political leaders and the public is virtually nonexistent. Most people working on individual programmes and projects are not aware of the NPA, let alone their role within it. In this context, the NPA is still largely a programme at the "top" with little penetration among the ranks of implementing institutions.

This lack of awareness has had direct implications for the development of subnational programmes of action, as the field staff of implementing ministries are unaware of the NPA and their role within it and are at a loss about how to facilitate the process of programme development within regions.

Because of the lack of communications during the development stage, it is essential that broader awareness of the process be established and sustained. There is a wide variety of channels through which this can be achieved. However, effective communications requires a commitment of personnel and financial resources that has to date not been evident for the programme. Without this investment, it is likely the NPA will remain a programme apart, revived each year for reports issued on the Day of the African Child.

The Creation of LPAs in Namibia

1. *The value of MPAs and RPAs in developing an intersectoral team approach.* The local programmes of action (MPA and RPAs) have been most valuable in Namibia because they have brought together representatives from a wide range of institutions operating at the

municipal and regional levels. In this context, the most effective approach has been to provide adequate time to allow the cooperative process to develop. This has required an approach which is "facilitative" and which puts the process ahead of the product. From a central viewpoint this has been a challenge for those who have set objectives for the achievement of their own quantitative targets (such as "50 percent of the regions will have regional programmes of action by the Day of the African Child, 1994": they didn't). At the same time, it is fully expected that the longer term development process demanded by the regions as their condition for participation will have a long-lasting impact on the effectiveness of their efforts well after the 1994 Day of the African Child celebrations are completed.

Support for this long-term approach also needs to be long term. For many of the participants within the regions, RPA development is one of the first planning exercises in which they have been involved. Because of this and the legacy of the way affairs were conducted prior to Independence, the RPA development process is not yet self-sustaining. Even if adequate time is provided to create the programme, assistance is also clearly needed to implement it. The role is supportive and facilitative and needs to be sustained by ministry officials and external agencies such as UNICEF.

2. *Defining more clearly the roles among the local, regional and central governments.* The RPA and MPA processes have been effective in encouraging discussion and securing some decisions on several issues of responsibility that have been outstanding since the establishment of the regional governments at the end of 1992. The MPA and RPA development processes have brought together four main groups:

- Locally elected officials and their public service support staffs.
- Locally based representatives of national ministries.
- Headquarters-based ministry officials.
- Regionally based NGOs.

The creation of MPAs and RPAs has fostered discussion on the relationships between these groups in a way which is strengthening the position of the regional authorities and creating "regional" consciousness. Hopefully, this will supersede the institutional loyalties of representatives from participating institutions, thus reinforcing the decentralization process and contributing to real empowerment at the local and regional levels.

3. *Beyond service delivery to governance in the municipality.* The MPA development process

has been valuable in Windhoek municipality because it has broadened the views of senior public servants concerning the definition of the role of municipal government. From a restrictive view of the municipality as a provider of some essential services, a wider view has evolved. Traditionalists within the municipality are beginning to see that the municipality can deliver its services *and* assure that complementary services are provided by other institutions—including ministries and NGOs—and the private sector. There is also growing support for the concept of partnerships with other institutions, with each institution providing support in the sector where it holds a comparative advantage. For instance, in the health sector, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs would provide personnel and materials, and the municipality would support health education and community mobilization to make families aware of services and the way to utilize them and practise home health care.

The experience gained and lessons learned during the development of programmes of action for children in Namibia need to be used by the Government and NGOs to improve the process and guarantee its effectiveness. Within the Government, there is a need to strengthen the process of decentralization through clearly stated policies and legislative reform. For those agencies providing material and technical assistance, it is crucial to develop the desire and capacity of Namibians to plan, implement and monitor programmes efficiently. Short of this, achieving the World Summit goals and meeting the basic needs of Namibia's most vulnerable children and families will continue to require external institutions.

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