

**DECENTRALIZATION IN NAMIBIA: A CASE STUDY**

**OF THE HARDAP REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Public Administration (MPA) at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape. I further testify that it has not been submitted for any other degree or other equivalent qualification at any other university or institution of higher learning.

.....  
**Clemensius Tsamareb**



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## **ABSTRACT**

The Government of Namibia inherited a centralized government structure from the apartheid government of South Africa when it achieved its independence on 21 March 1990. A major problem with this system was the fact that it did not allow for participation by citizens at the grass root level. In addition, the service delivery process took place from the capital city, which meant that it was difficult to reach all people in different parts of the country. The new Government therefore decided to decentralize a range of its functions to the regions to assist in bringing about development and democracy. The Constitution of 1990, in Chapter 12, makes provision for regional and local governments as instruments to realize the Government's goals. The main objectives of the decentralization policy of the Namibian Government were to extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy and to safeguard rapid sustainable development.

The main objective of this study is to examine how the process of decentralization has affected the rendering of essential services in Namibia, through a case study of the Hardap Region. The main aim of this research is to determine the extent to which the objectives of the decentralization policy have been achieved by the Hardap Regional Council.

A qualitative study was conducted by means of interviews with key stakeholders, (including elected and appointed officials at the national, regional and local levels, and selected community representatives), as well as through a review of legislation and policy

papers and other documentary information. The survey relies on both primary (official documents) and secondary sources (books, journal articles and electronic media).

The fact that less has been achieved so far can be marked by the fact that Namibia is still a young nation. The country is currently in the process of overcoming the obstacles which hinders the smooth implementation of the decentralization policy. The movement of human capital for greener pasture and instability of the financial market also have an influence on the implementation process.

The main aim of this research is to determine the extent to which the objectives of the decentralization policy have been achieved by the Hardap Regional Council.

The research report is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study and sets out the objectives, problem statement, research methodology, literature review and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an historical overview of decentralization in general, as well as background on the decentralization process in Namibia. It also provides details on regional development planning and the National Planning Commission of Namibia.

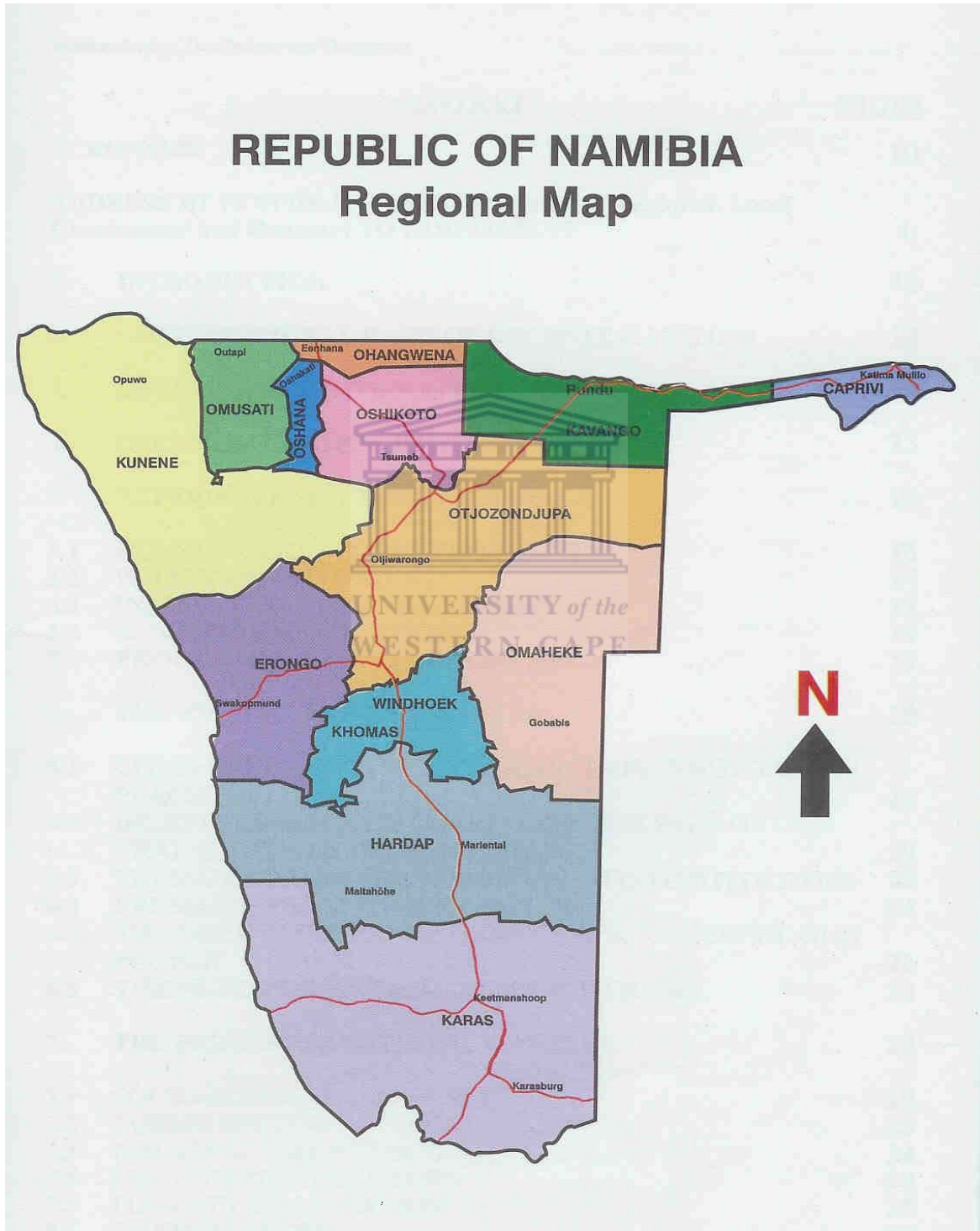
Chapter 3 provides a profile of the Hardap Region, as well as background on the implementation of the decentralization process in the Hardap Region.

Chapter 4 presents the main research findings, focusing in particular on the achievements, limitations, challenges and constraints of the decentralization process in the Hardap Region.

Chapter 5 provides conclusions and recommendations.



## REGIONAL MAP OF NAMIBIA



Source: Iiyambo 1997: Decentralization in Namibia

## ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBO	: Community Based Organization
CDC	: Constituency Development Committee
CEO	: Chief Executive Officer
DDC	: Directorate of Decentralization Coordination
DIP	: Decentralization Implementation Plan
DPIC	: Decentralization Policy Implementation Committee
HIV	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LA	: Local Authority
MRLGH	: Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
NDP	: National Development Plan
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	: National Planning Commission
NPCS	: National Planning Commission Secretariat
RC	: Regional Council
RDCC	: Regional Development Coordination Committee
SADC	: Southern African Development Committee
SC	: Settlement Committee
UNCDF	: United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	: United Nations Development Project
VDC	: Village Development Committee
WDC	: Ward Development Committee

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### INTRODUCTION

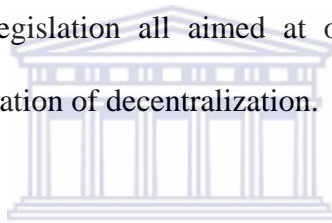
Prior to the attainment of independence in 1990, Namibia was effectively 'colonised' (as a protectorate) by the South African Apartheid Government, which used a centralized system of governance. Immediately after independence, the new Government continued with centralized system inherited from the Apartheid Government. Over time, however, the Government increasingly came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to decentralize some of its powers and functions to regional and local government. According to *The Namibian* of 20 May 2002, the political leadership in Namibia has chosen the path of decentralization to enhance and guarantee democratic participation of the people at the lower/grass-root level in order to achieve sustainable democratic development. According to (Iyambo, 1997), "the Namibian government aims for the devolution of all public services/functions to the regional councils and local authorities in all thirteen (13) regions."

The Constitution of 1990, in Chapter 12, makes provision for regional and local governments.

The enactment by Parliament of the following legislation has helped to put into effect the constitutional provisions under Chapter 12 of the Constitution of 1990.

- **The Regional Councils Act, 22 of 1992.** The main objective of this Act was to initiate, supervise, manage and evaluate development in the regions.

- **The Local Authorities Act, 23 of 1992.** The main objective of this Act was to establish Local councils that would be responsible for administrative and developmental activities within specified boundaries of each local authority.
- **The Traditional Authorities Act, 17 of 1995.** The main objective of this Act was to recognize the role of traditional leaders in the government, and empower them to effectively contribute towards national development.
- **Decentralization enabling Act, 33 of 2000.** The main objective of this Act was to provide a legal framework for the implementation and regulation of the decentralization of functions, to both the RC & LA councils under delegation and devolution. The enactment of the above legislation all aimed at one thing, namely, instituting the introduction and implementation of decentralization.



As in other countries, the decentralization process in Namibia has been characterized by achievements but also by a number of problems and constraints. This research paper sets out to provide an evaluation of the achievements, limitations and constraints of the decentralization process in Namibia. In carrying out this study, the researcher decided to make an in-depth study of Hardap Regional Council. The Hardap Region was chosen because it is one of the central regions which is situated between the two deserts, the Namib and Kalahari and has a poor mineral base to sustain itself. Another reason for choosing Hardap as the basis for the study was because of the accessibility of information. The towns of the region are closer to each other, and public transport is more readily available than in many other parts of the country.

## **STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The Namibian Government, as noted above, inherited a centralized government structure from the apartheid government of South Africa. In a centralized government system, the main functions and services are operated from the national ministries in the capital. The problem with this system was that the entire country was served from one central point, making it difficult for services to reach all communities and citizens. The fact that people had to travel long distances to get services from the centralized government made it difficult to promote effective development and alleviate poverty amongst the local communities. The failure of the National Government to deliver services efficient and effectively to its people on the grassroots levels led the Government to take the path of decentralizing its functions to the regions to bring development and democracy to the previously disadvantaged groups. With decentralization, it was anticipated that services would be provided more efficiently and effectively to the whole population. As in many other cases of decentralization in Africa and elsewhere, this policy has proved to be good in principle, more difficult to execute in practice. This discontinuity between policy and implementation forms the main research problem for this study.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What was the rationale for decentralization?
- Will regional and local government be more efficient and effective than the national government?

- Does the Hardap regional council possesses the necessary skilled staff to commence and sustain decentralization?
- Is the current infrastructure adequate enough to meet the needs of decentralization?
- What will be the benefits of decentralization for the regional government and the communities it serves?
- How will the Hardap Regional Council achieve the implementation of the decentralization policy of the government?

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which the objectives of the Namibian Government's decentralization policy have been achieved by the Hardap Regional Council. More specifically, the objectives of the research paper are:

- To describe and assess the decentralization policy in Namibia.
- To determine the progress made by national line ministries as well as their coordination with the Hardap Regional Council.
- To determine the progress made by the implementation process so far, particularly with respect to the rendering of essential services.
- To analyze the achievements and limitations of implementation of the decentralization process in the Hardap region.
- To identify key constraints and challenges of decentralization faced by the Hardap Regional Council.
- To make recommendations which will help Regional and Local councils to ensure and safeguard rapid sustainable development.

- To make recommendations to improve the implementation of the decentralization process.
- To make recommendations on how to improve capacity of the Hardap regional and local councils to plan, manage and monitor service delivery to their constituents.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Decentralization is globally not a new phenomenon. This literature review will try to give different views of how different stakeholders perceive decentralization. According to Iyambo, (1998:3) “Decentralization is a government policy through which central government devolves, delegates or deconcentrated its functions to the regional councils and local authorities.” According to Mutahaba (1989:74) “studies of decentralization in post independence Africa have generally been theoretical, with little case material presented.” They have, as a result, been of little help in explaining current problems faced by African decentralized systems. He further argues that theoretical concerns are raised in a form of sporadic arguments rather than in a form of coherent and systematic inquiries. The main reasons for the failure of the African decentralized systems are administrative and managerial. According to de Villiers & Sindane (1998:76) “the fact that regional government might be given exclusive jurisdiction over some policy function does not preclude central government involvement for national purpose.” The central or national government should monitor and guide the regional government in the early phases of decentralization. It will not be practical for the national government to distance itself from the regions, as the main responsibility of governing the country is still theirs. According to de Villiers & Sindane (1998:77) “it is an important fact that while some regions might be less well-equipped than the others, or less willing to take on functions which, in principle,

appropriately belong to regional governments in more mature political, economic and constitutional settings, this need not preclude these functions being devolved to some regions in advance of others.” This is known as asymmetrical decentralization. According to Walsh, the Executive Director, South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, “in Spain where regional devolution is being actively promoted, the speed and extent of devolution is allowed to vary between regions.” ([www.dfat.gov.au/ini/annexe.html.12k\\_1](http://www.dfat.gov.au/ini/annexe.html.12k_1)).

In Namibia’s case there are some regions, especially the northern regions, where government functions of a number of regions are mostly administered from one region. According to Mutahaba (1989:75) “Kenya’s efforts to provide for increased decentralization in its administrative system have floundered on several occasions because the Centre found itself unwilling to cede requisite power and authority to lower level institutions.” The case in Namibia is that the traditional leaders feel that the regional government takes their powers. According to Mutahaba (1989:82) “Politically, Tanzania was in a better position to try decentralized forms of administration than many African countries, including Kenya, since the country lacked, and still lacks, the marked ethnic and regional differences that might otherwise have posed a threat to the center under a decentralized system of government.” Namibia is in some ways similar to Tanzania, and sees a positive way forward for decentralization. We are not experiencing inter regional politics or war like other countries that might influence decentralization. According to Iyambo (1998:36) “capacity building is viewed as central to the success of the decentralization implementation process, it is recommended that deliberate and systematic effort should be taken in the area of capacity building using both local and donor funding. Capacity building initiatives should include both human resources development and equipping, retooling and tooling.” The fact that the



Namibian government did not rush to decentralize or devolve the powers and authority immediately after the attainment of independence gives them enough time to iron out problem experience in the first phases. The National Government still monitors the operations of the regional government with decentralized functions to assist the regions which are not fully prepared for decentralization. In Namibia, the National Government assisted the regions by providing training in areas such as financial management, administrative skills and leadership. Namibia has sent officials to countries like Uganda and Tanzania to study the challenges face by a decentralized government.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The field work relies primarily on primary (official documents) and secondary (books) published material, together with a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. These included politicians and officials at the national, regional and local levels, as well as leading members of the community. As decentralization is a burning issue in developing countries, newspapers reports were also a valuable source of information. Comparisons will be made with other countries where different forms of decentralization have taken place. Representatives of business and the unions were also interviewed to see how they perceive decentralization. Four politicians from the Hardap Regional Council were interviewed and given questionnaires, of whom three responded. The questionnaire was also given to an administrator who responded. The administrator was chosen because he is the development planner of the Regional Council and is conversant with all the development projects within the region. The politicians are the regional councilors who are also the decision makers of the council. Two other officials were interviewed, one from the Lands

Ministry and one from the local Municipality, with regard to the resettlement and Build Together Programmes. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Annexure 1 of this report.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is anticipated that the study will assist policy makers in Namibia in speeding up and improving the process of decentralization in Namibia. In particular, it will recommend policy changes to be affected and to give policy makers guidelines to rely on. It will also provide guidelines to the National Government and politicians as to which functions are the most important to be decentralized. The study will also help to determine the capacity of the Hardap Region to accept decentralized functions, as well as to determine alternative ways to bring services closer to the people. Guidance will also be provided to the regional council on how to provide more effective services to the people. It will also help the Council to establish what resources it will need to render the essential services, as well as to determine the manner in which the council will implement its capacity building programmes. Finally, the study will serve as an overall guideline to the Council during the implementation of the decentralization policy.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It proved difficult at times to gain access to the information required for the study. Regional and Local Councilors were hesitant to participate in the study because of the sensitive nature of the information requested. The Councilors did not want to be identified in a public document. Stakeholders were worried that the information may be damaging to the image and credibility of the regional council and municipality, even where the responses given were more positive than negative. Another limitation resulted from the fact that there is only

one municipality in the Hardap Region, the Mariental municipality. This meant that it was not possible to carry out a comparative analysis with other municipalities.

## **DEFINITIONS OF MAJOR TERMS**

**Decentralization:** For the purpose of this study decentralization will be perceived as the devolution, delegation or deconcentration of public service/functions to regional councils and local authorities. It is any act in which a national or central government formally cedes power to actors and institutions at lower levels.

**Delegation:** This is when public functions and authority are transferred to regional and local governments and public corporations or any other authorities outside of the regular political-administrative structure to implement programs on behalf of a government agency. Authority still remains with national government.

**Devolution:** This is where functions/services, authority and responsibility are handed over from the national government to elected regional councils and local authorities. Such regional and local bodies have the power to determine policies and make their own decisions within their regions of competency.

**Deconcentration:** This is where functions are decentralized within a line ministry from the centre to the operational level, but where the national or central authorities still retain overall authority and responsibility.

**Local government/governance:** Is the sphere of the government where people are directly involve in decision making on matters that effect them

**Regional Council:** Is the body or organ of the government which is responsible for the overall administration and development of the region headed by the Regional Governor.

**Regional Development Planning:** Regional development planning is an effort organized to establish overall regional economic development objectives, collect and analyze information, and generate and evaluate project proposal within a strategic framework for regional development.

## **ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study and sets out the objectives, statement problem, research methodology, literature review and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an historical overview of decentralization in general, as well as background on the decentralization process in Namibia. It also provides details on regional development planning and the National Planning Commission of Namibia.

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Chapter 5 provides conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF DECENTRALIZATION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

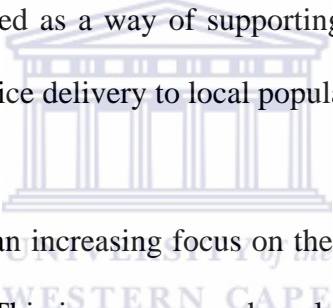
This chapter deals with decentralization in general and the reasons why the Namibian Government decided to decentralize in particular. The author will also look at the structures put in place to implement and monitor the Namibian decentralization process. Finally the author will discuss the machinery put in place in Namibia for national and regional development planning, with a particular focus on the National Planning Commission of Namibia.

#### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF DECENTRALIZATION**

Decentralization is any act in which a national or central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower tiers, spheres or levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (Mawhood 1983; Smith 1985). Decentralization reforms are designed to strengthen both local and national governance through national unification, democratization and greater efficiency in the use of public resources and service delivery. Decentralization is claimed as the centerpiece of major policy reforms underway across Africa and in other parts of the developing world (United Nations Capital Development Fund 2000:5-11). Decentralization is not a new phenomenon in Africa as many African countries have decentralized their powers to local forms of governance. The primary aim of devolved forms of decentralization is to give local people at grassroots level the opportunity to elect their leadership. At independence all African governments inherited systems in which local governments were tools used by national governments for administrative management. The colonial powers had little legitimacy and therefore relied on a highly centralized form of

administration. In the 1980's and 90's, the introduction of structural adjustment programs often required the cutting down of national governments, and forced many governments to develop decentralization reforms. According to the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF, 2002:3):

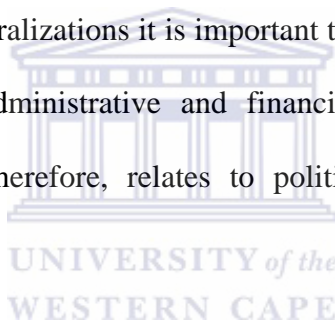
Political decentralization has assumed a new meaning, away from the imposition of centralized monolithic values, towards a much more rights-based culture. Decentralization is now being promoted in a context of pluralist discourse emphasizing greater representation of citizens, an emphasis on state reforms toward market-based development with structural adjustment programs, and in this context, decentralization is viewed as a way of supporting local governance and improving the effectiveness of service delivery to local populations.



In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the need to develop local governance rather than local government. This is a process where local people are required to govern themselves through their own initiatives. In addition to the transfer of powers and responsibilities from national to regional government or local authorities, decentralization also advocates the development of horizontal networks between local governments and other local non-state actors like civil society, private business and international organizations. This helps to mobilize additional resources for local level development as well as to enhance accountability of local level political and management officials. The development of synergies between these institutions can also lead to innovations and higher levels of productivity.

However, there are still countries on the African continent that follow older approaches to decentralization where national governments still exercise a high level of control over local activities, for example, through delegation or deconcentration rather than devolution. National government still exercises significant forms of control because of the fear of local corruption or weak local capacity or because it wants to control things itself. Quite often, the transfer of authority is given to an institution to perform specific functional tasks. Authorities created to deal with functions such as highway constructions, power supply and health care, are some of the popular forms of functional decentralization.

With devolved forms of decentralizations it is important that the decentralization of political power is accompanied by administrative and financial decentralization. One way of classifying decentralization, therefore, relates to political, administrative and financial decentralization.



### **Political Decentralization**

Political decentralization is the transfer of political power and authority to sub-national levels of government such as regional councils, elected village councils and other governmental bodies. Political decentralization is seen as the devolution of powers to and the empowerment of regional and local councils. Political decentralization includes the integration of the previously centralized or de-concentrated service sectors into a holistic regional and local government system installing councils as the most important regional or local political body within its jurisdiction. Political decentralization implies the creation of real, multi-functional governments at the regional and local level within the framework of the national legislation. Political leaders for both regional and local authority councils gain

office through direct and democratic elections held on a regular basis. The development and coordinating committees are formed with representatives from relevant stakeholders including the representatives from CBOs and NGOs.

### **Administrative Decentralization**

Administrative decentralization involves the transfer of decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of selected public services from the national government to lower levels government, agencies. Administrative decentralization occurs when sub-national levels of government require more revenue to support the broader array of responsibilities they have been given. This principle involves de-linking local authority staff from their respective ministries and procedures for establishment of a local payroll. Local governments will thus have to recruit their own personnel, organized in a way decided by the respective councils in order to improve service delivery. Local governments must have sufficient capacity to carry out their new functions. Administrative decentralization makes local government staff accountable to local councils.

### **Financial Decentralization**

Through financial decentralization, some level of resource reallocation is made to allow local government to function properly, with arrangements for resource allocation usually negotiated between local and national authorities. The regional councils depend on the national government for their finances. One of the guiding principles under decentralization is that of allocation of necessary funds. Financing authority must always follow functions; i.e. there should be no un-funded mandates or assigning functions/responsibilities to sub-national governments without matching resources for effecting implementation. The principle also allows local councils to pass their own budgets reflecting their own priorities,



as well as mandatory expenditure required for the attainment of national standards. Internal governmental fiscal arrangements of decentralization can be considered under the following headings:

- Assignment of expenditure responsibilities
- Tax responsibilities of both national and sub-national governments
- Grants availability to local governments to run decentralized services as well as for addressing fiscal imbalances.

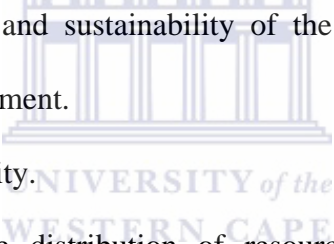
### **THE RATIONALE FOR DECENTRALIZATION**

Decentralization has been undertaken for varied reasons and goals. In many countries, decentralization was pursued as a means of securing development and was accepted by the stakeholders without any question. The ideal is finding the correct balances between centralization and decentralization. This balance will not be found unless satisfactory vertical coordination between national and local levels can be achieved, and unless a political climate is created in which decision-making can take place at the local level.

The aim of the decentralization policy is to ensure economic, cultural and socio-economic development or political stability by providing people at the grass roots level the opportunity to participate in their own decision-making and extend democracy to them as a right based on national ideals and values. The main reason why governments take the path of decentralization is to increase administrative efficiency. National government is often inefficient in carrying out its mandate due to high levels of centralized planning. The Namibian leadership argued that corruption was not easy to detect because of centralized

planning. At local level, all the stakeholders are in reach and corruption can be more easily Sub-national governments are closer to the people, and have good access to local information and also understand the local context well. The fact that decisions taken at local level are often more relevant and effective to the local needs can be seen as good for pursuing the implementation of decentralization. The fact that decisions are made locally can ensure that coordination is facilitated and transaction costs are reduced. Decentralized planning and participation can achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency by improving the implementation of rural development planning.

Decentralization can also help to:

- 
- Increase the relevance and sustainability of the region and to increase self-help contributions to development.
  - Improve procedural equity.
  - Provide more equitable distribution of resources, thereby helping to alleviate problems associated with poverty.
  - Improve service delivery.

Decentralization is seen as the means by which the state can be more responsive and adaptable to regional and local needs than is the case with a more centralized concentration of administrative powers by the National leadership of Namibia. People believed that better matching of services to needs and preferences follows from decentralized providers being closer to their clients, and therefore having better access to local information. In today's local governments, service delivery can be improved through public-private-partnerships and the presence of non-governmental organizations (NGO) as service providers.

## **ADVANTAGES OF DECENTRALIZATION**

Decentralization can become an effective way of overcoming the serious limitations of centrally controlled national planning. The most important factor in this regard is to decentralize control and authority to officials and councilors on the ground, who are closer to the developmental problems. Decentralization can eliminate an enormous amount of the bureaucratic red tape usually associated with strictly centralized planning and management in the developing countries. Decentralization can have a stimulating effect on the development of more effective administrative resources among local government and private institutions. Decentralization makes it possible to achieve better political and administrative penetration in applying the policy of the national government in remote areas. Decentralization can give rise to greater representation of a diversity of political, religious, ethnic and tribal groups in development decision-making that, in turn, can promote the principles of equality in the allocation and utilization of government resources. Decentralization can also increase the efficiency level of the national government, since it will be relieved from routine tasks that can be effectively performed by local officials. Decentralization can also provide valuable structures whereby the activities of a variety of national government ministries can more effectively tie up and reach an accommodation with one another, as well as with the activities of local officials and non-governmental organizations in the various regions. Decentralization can give rise to a more flexible, innovative and creative administrative system. Decentralization can also promote political stability and national unity, in that group in different areas of a single national state are afforded the opportunity to participate more directly in development decision-making.

## **DISADVANTAGES OF THE DECENTRALIZATION**

Despite the obvious advantages of decentralization, many scholars have pointed out that decentralization can also sometimes have disadvantages. Decentralization cannot be seen as an answer for all governmental/developmental problems. According to Allen (1990:10-12) the most often highlighted disadvantages include the following:

### ***Cost***

Local authorities compete with other public institutions for scarce financial and human resources. National ministries of finance are often apprehensive that local bodies will be extravagant or wasteful with funds.

### ***Inefficiency***

Regional and Local authorities cannot command sufficient resources to provide adequate services. Their revenues are too small and too precarious to make them creditworthy, and qualified personnel are attracted to more lucrative and secure positions in national government, parastatal institutions and the private sector.

### ***Inertia***

Members of small rural communities and middle-class suburbs tend to be highly conservative, apprehensive that change will inevitably damage their traditional interests.

### ***Inequalities***

Decentralization can increase social and regional disparities as the affluent groups and areas are in a better position to utilize their devolved powers. In developing countries this often accentuates urban predominance over rural society.

### ***Selfishness***

Local government, even in countries with long traditions of democracy, can easily become dominated by unrepresentative oligarchies. Privilege and exploitation can easily be reinforced, not diminished, by local autonomy.

### ***Weakness***

Small local authorities tend to be reluctant to enforce their legal powers against recalcitrant local strongmen or supporters of eminent national politicians. Disadvantaged citizens may then be obliged to turn to national institutions for protection.

### ***Possessiveness***

People with political power tend to maintain prevailing patterns. Any changes in the distribution of power can be problematic both for politicians and for the bureaucracy.

### ***Corruption***

Local authorities are often in the news for alleged corruption and graft since they are more conspicuous than faceless national ministries and public corporations and because they are less protected by powerful national politicians.

### ***Separation***

Devolution of powers can encourage separatist tendencies particularly when minority groups have suffered serious repression in the past, which can strengthen the people's desire for complete sovereignty.

## **DECENTRALIZATION IN NAMIBIA**

Before the attainment of independence in 1990, the people of Namibia were engaged in a liberation struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid, all of which denied the majority of people democracy and development. At first, the post-1990 Government used a

centralized system, which they inherited from the Apartheid government. Government functions were administered from the National Government which was based in the Capital City (Windhoek), and which was responsible for service delivery. However, according to Iyambo (1998:1), “the Swapo party identified this as a problem and Swapo’s vision on decentralization was reflected way back in its election manifesto of 1989.” Chapter 12 of the manifesto on Local Government and Housing (1989) provided that, “under a Swapo Government, independent Namibia will have democratically elected local authorities in both rural and urban areas, in order to give powers to the people at the grass root level to make decisions on matters affecting their lives.” In the Namibian Constitution Act 1 of 1990, provision was made, under Chapter 12, for the establishment of sub-national governments, with a view to empower regional and local forms of governance. According to Iyambo (1998:2), “the constitutional provision under Chapter 12 on Regional and Local governments therefore marked an important step in the development of democracy in the country.” Decentralization is an issue that has continuously drawn interest and demanded attention in Namibia. The Ministry of Regional Local Government and Housing was tasked with the implementation of the decentralization process. The main aim is the devolution of government services to all thirteen (13) regional councils and local authorities of the country. The decentralization policy was approved by Cabinet in 1996 and adopted by the National Assembly during 1997 as a national policy. Its implementation was approved during March 1998 and the implementation date was set for 1<sup>st</sup> April 1998. It was envisaged that the implementation and the bulk of activities currently undertaken by government would be decentralized by the year 2002. According to Iyambo (1997:36) “community development and early childhood development; primary health care; primary education; administration of settlement areas; rural water development and management; management

and control of communal lands and resettlement, rehabilitation and housing would first be decentralized.” There were some national services like the security units (Namibian Police and Defence Force), which would not be decentralized. All the above-proposed decentralized functions have already been transferred to the Hardap Region and are in place.

The decentralization policy of the government has not been without controversy. Traditional leaders, for example, have not welcomed decentralization whole heartedly, because it has been perceived as taking some of their previous powers away from them, such as the authority over the communal land distribution. Some national government ministries have also been reluctant to facilitate the decentralization process as fast as expected because they were afraid of losing their previous powers and influence, as well as jobs. They were protecting themselves by delaying the process. The size of the national government will be cut down while the regional government will grow in size. Other problems in decentralization include the serious lack of housing, office facilities and transport in the region and local area, as there are very few building structures to be utilized as houses or offices. The building of such structures will delay the process of decentralization in the region. It will also reduce funds, which could have been used for other developmental purposes. There is also a fear that regional and local councils will not have the capacity to manage their affairs and finances effectively and transparently.

The development in 1996 of a decentralization policy, with clear objectives and implementation strategies, marked the beginning of a new chapter in the decentralization process of Namibia. The decentralization policy is a tool that provides an opportunity for

people to have access to relevant participative decision-making and extending democracy to people as a right based on national dreams and morals.

According to Iyambo (1998:5), “Decentralization in Namibia is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy.
- To ensure and safeguard rapid sustainable development.
- To transfer power to the regional councils and local authorities based on national ideas and values.
- To improve capacity of regional and local government councils to plan, implement, manage and monitor delivery of services for their constituents.”

The decentralization policy also outlines which ministerial functions should be decentralized to the regional councils and the local authorities in the immediate future, as well as in the longer run. This policy provided the basis for the Government’s programme of action that provides the basis and a framework to devolve functions, power, responsibility and resources to the lower levels of government namely regional and local authorities. To ensure the effective implementation of decentralization process, the Namibian government has established a Directorate of Decentralization Coordination (DDC) in the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH).

Key functions of the DDC include:

- Legal reviews and harmonization of laws and regulations with the decentralization principles



- Guidance on council and committee work introducing good governance principles, political and administrative roles
- Finance management procedures and training for regional councils and local authorities
- Human resource development at regional and local levels
- Organization and restructuring assistance to RCs and LAs
- Co-ordination of sector ministry input to decentralized services with the decentralization principles
- Information, sensitization and training
- Mobile units are used to serves for urgencies, facilitations and training

To facilitate the implementation of the decentralization process in Namibia, a Decentralization Implementation Plan, detailing the implementation strategy and work-plan, was presented to Cabinet and approved in March 1998.

### **The Decentralization Implementation Plan (DIP)**

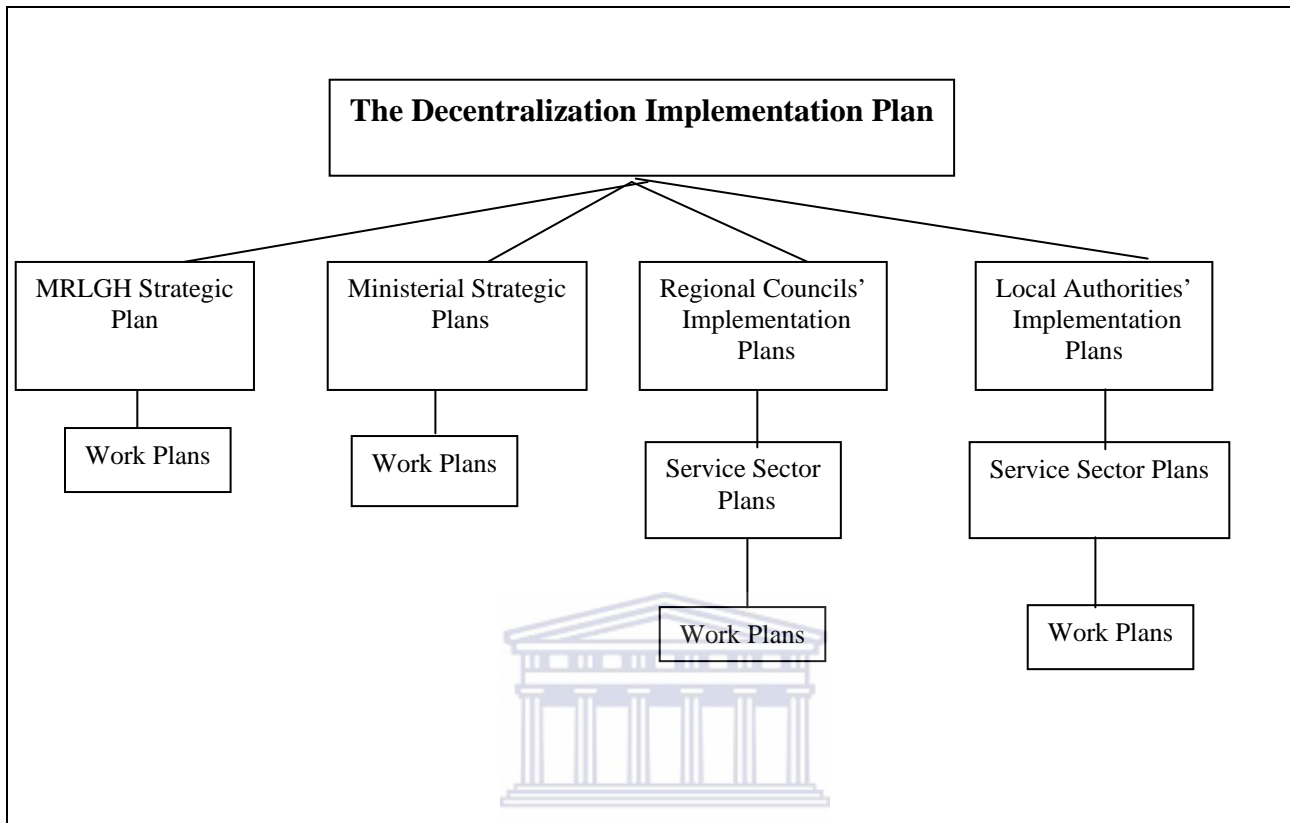
The Government of Namibia has now moved into the stage of implementation of the decentralization reforms. The decentralization policy has been clearly defined as a key policy objective and much of the legal frameworks are in place. In order to assist the process of decentralization several initiatives have been taken by the Government to support the implementation process. However, other key issues are still unresolved and are currently under preparation by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) and other key players (Line Ministries, National Planning Commission). One of the documents completed is the Decentralization Implementation Plan (DIP) to guide the whole process. The Decentralization Implementation Plan (DIP) is accompanied by the

Strategic Plan of the MRLGH, which provides a further management tool for the ministry to monitor overall performance regarding both the decentralization process as well as general support to the Regional Councils and Local Authorities. Ministerial strategic plans were also introduced with work plans. The Line Ministerial Strategic Plans are intended to guide the line ministries with restructuring and transfer of functions, resources and capacity to the lower levels. Line Ministerial Work Plans are detailed plans serving as a working tool for the ministries in their management of support to the decentralized service provision. Regional Service Sector Plans are a regional management tool. Local Service Sector Plans are a local management tool.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction of the decentralization implementation plan with the plans of the other stakeholders.



**Figure: 1. Decentralization Implementation Plan (DIP)**



**Source: Decentralization Implementation Plan 2001**

The aim of the DIP is to provide all stakeholders (Ministries, Regional Councils and Local Authorities) involved in the decentralization implementation process with an instrument to guide them through the various phases of the implementation process. This includes preparation of procedures to ensure proper and efficient administrative management within all areas of public management; preparation of handing-over procedures; the actual handing-over of staff and resources; follow-up and support to be provided by the centre both during and after the implementation process. (Decentralization Implementation Plan, Final draft 2001).

The DIP provides details on the stages and steps to be followed according to the Decentralization Enabling Act, 2000, and assigns responsibilities for the execution of these

stages and steps. The overall methodology of the DIP is to follow the decentralization process of any activity from the national level to the final management destination at the regional or at the local authority level. The DIP must be supplemented with operational work plans and follow-up procedures that will provide the Director Decentralization Coordination (DDC) and the Decentralization Policy Implementing Committee (DPIC) with regular information on the implementation progress, and will also serve as a working tool to assist the implementing officers in the translation of the DIP into concrete action. The Decentralization Policy Implementation Committee (DPIC), which comprises a number of Permanent Secretaries chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet (based in the Office of the Prime Minister), is tasked with providing policy directives and guidance to the whole process of decentralization.



### **Strategic Frameworks**

In 2000, two more important legal instruments for the decentralization process were enacted. These were the Decentralization Enabling Act and the Trust Fund for Regional Development and Equity Provisions Act. ***The Decentralization Enabling Act***, which was enacted in December 2000, provides for and regulates the delegation and decentralization to regional councils and local authority councils of functions presently vested with line ministries and also deal with incidental matters.

The main purpose of the ***Trust Fund for Regional Development and Equity Provisions Act***, December 2000, is to provide regions and local authorities with technical and financial assistance for development projects and the implementation of decentralization, as well as to set the framework for negotiations between the Board of Trustees and the regions and local

authorities. The Board will offer training and guidance in planning, appraisal, monitoring, evaluation, financing and implementation of development projects. The process is intended to involve the participation of the local people in accordance with the Decentralization Enabling Act.

In addition, the MRLGH's Five Year Strategic Plan (2001/2 – 2005/6) aims to provide a further management tool for monitoring overall performance regarding both the decentralization process as well as general support to the Regional Council and Local Authorities.

### **Cross-Ministerial Taskforces**

Five Cross-Ministerial Taskforces were established in December 2001 to ensure that all necessary preparatory work is completed to effect the gradual delegation of functions, staff and funds and to prepare for devolution. They are as follows:

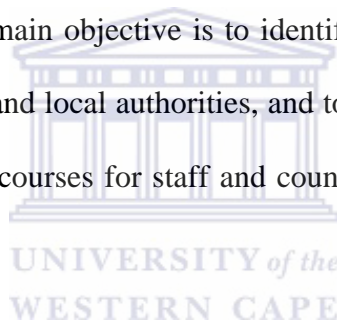
- Personnel Taskforce
- Financial Management & Intergovernmental Transfers Taskforce
- Legislation Harmonization Taskforce
- Training Taskforce
- Development Planning & Budgeting Taskforce

The objectives of the cross-Ministerial Taskforces can be summarized as follows (UNDP, 2002). With respect to Personnel, the main objective of the taskforce is to develop modalities to ensure the smooth transfer of staff from national government to the regional councils and local authorities, with specific attention given to the delegation phase.

With respect to finance, the main objective is to develop modalities for the transfer of funds under decentralization, including the development of guidelines on budgeting and financial accounting policies and practices.

With respect to Legislation Harmonization, the main objective is to review all sector legislation, which is inconsistent with the Decentralization Policy, and to recommend related amendments.

With respect to Training, the main objective is to identify the training needs of staff to be seconded to regional councils and local authorities, and to design training programmes, pre-service training and induction courses for staff and councilors of the regional councils and local authorities.

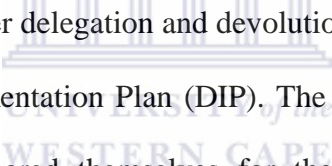


With respect to Development Planning and Budgeting, the main objective is prepare guidelines for the development planning process, in consultation with line ministries, regional councils and local authorities and to propose participatory methods for Regional Councils and Local Authorities in developmental planning and small-scale management issues.

The Taskforces report directly to the Director of Decentralization Co-ordination, who in turn reports to the Decentralization Policy Implementation Committee (DPIC).

## **Line Ministerial Decentralization Action Plans**

Line Ministerial Action Plans for functions under decentralization as outlined in the Government's Decentralization Policy Documents were supposed to be developed for each ministry in order to clearly define which functions are to be decentralized and when, as well as the staffing and budgetary implications and the overall facilitation of practical issues relating to delegation and eventual devolution. The first action plans were drawn up in 2001. However, most of them did not provide the MRLGH with the required information related to issues such as staffing and budgetary implications. The action plans were therefore reviewed and revised in 2003/04, with assistance from the Directorate of Decentralization Co-ordination (DDC).



The role of line ministries under delegation and devolution was given considerable attention in the Decentralization Implementation Plan (DIP). The DIP points to the fact that only a few line ministries have prepared themselves for the transfer of functions, staff and budgetary provisions as stipulated in the decentralization policy documents. In the DIP, it is also questioned whether the line ministries currently have the technical capacity to draw up the necessary action plans for decentralization, let alone the capacity to play their new role under delegation / devolution. Strong support to the line ministries during the process of transforming them into policy formulating and monitoring agencies instead of service delivering institutions is necessary. The DIP recommends a training cross-ministerial task force, chaired by the MRLGH, to address this issue. The task force will be charged with the responsibility of identifying training needs within the line ministries relating to their new roles under decentralization, as well as to design a training programme for staff affected by the decentralization reforms.

## **Coordination with Other Ministries**

An important pre-condition for successful decentralization was effective coordination, both vertical (between the line ministries and regional and local councils) and horizontal (between the line ministries themselves). According to the interview with the Regional Development Planner of the Hardap Regional Council, “in the past coordination, as one of the major requirement of the decentralization policy, was not satisfactory and sufficient. It can be observed that with capacity training and continuous deliberation that the situation has improved drastically”.

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

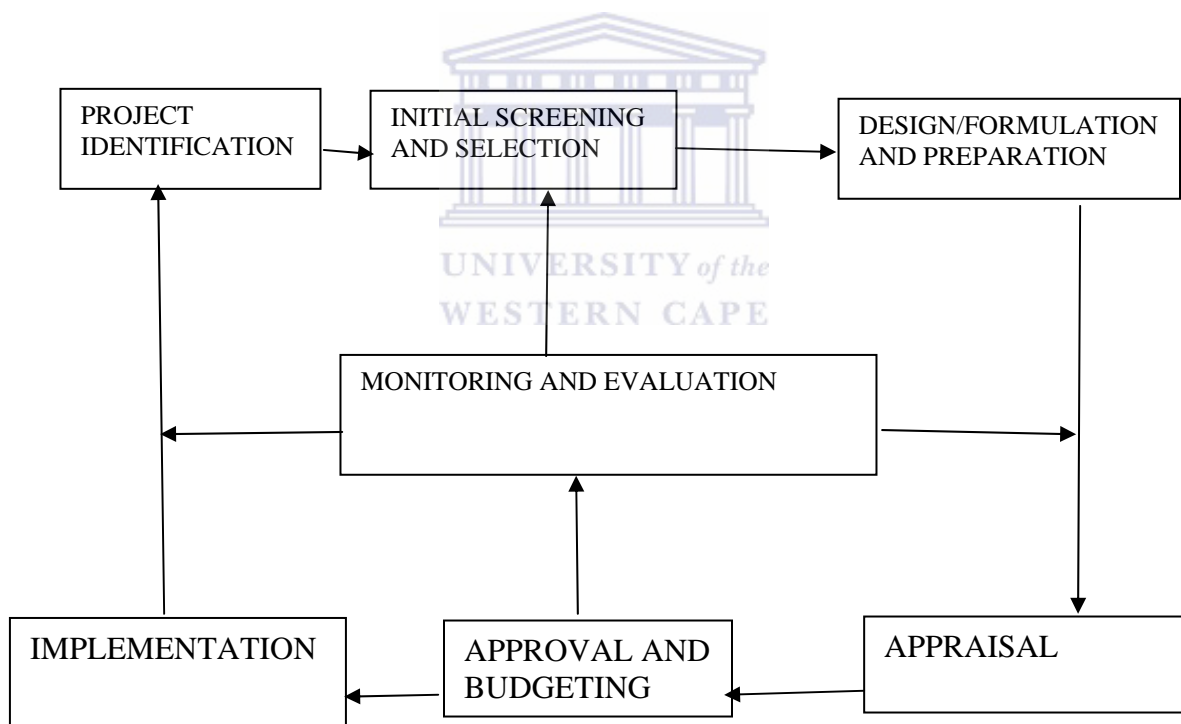
The more planning, programming and budgeting take place at sub-national levels, the more decentralization will have been successfully implemented. According to Bendavid-val (1991:7) “Realistic regional planning requires an understanding of the relationship of the region to the national environment of which it is part, the principal linkages through which the two interact, and the ultimate consequences these interactions could and do have on the region”. This means that in regional development planning, national realities must be taken into account. Regional development planning is an effort organized to establish overall regional economic development objectives, collect and analyze information, and generate and evaluate project proposal within a strategic framework for regional development. According to Bendavid-val (1991:7), “effective regional planning requires keeping very clear the distinction between what should be done, making the best use of development resources that really can be accessed, and taking advantage of the superior information available at the regional level because of the closeness of planners to the object of their planning.” According to Iyambo (2000:3) “the most important function of the regional



councils in the public administration of the country, is related to socio-economic planning of the region over which they exercise jurisdiction”. The regional councils should play a vital role in these processes, in liaison with the relevant line ministries.

Figure 2 indicates the project development cycle. It further explains all the phases that are followed before implementation of the project.

**Figure: 2 Project Development Cycle**



### ***Project Identification***

This stage deals with developing the project concept, including defining objectives and a rough idea of the various options for achieving them.

### ***Screening and Prioritization***

This can only take place once the project concept exists, to see if the project fits in with development objectives and strategies. All projects identified by the various development committees at regional level should be thoroughly scrutinized by the Regional Council and the Regional Council Coordination Committee.

### ***Design and Formulation***

This is undertaken if the project passes the initial screening test. Effective project design should consider different ways of achieving the objectives.

### ***Appraisal***

This stage involves the decision-making whether resources should be allocated for the implementation of the projects or not. Resources put into appraisal reflect the size, complexity and importance of the project.

### ***Budget Allocation***

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) in consultation with line ministries will determine the budget allocations/ceiling to line ministries, which will be approved by Cabinet. Line Ministries in consultation with the regions will determine the regional budget allocation for their respective votes.

### ***Implementation***

The respective institutions should set up project teams consisting of all stakeholders. The team members should then identify suitable contractor for the implementation of this projects.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

The Regional Councils must monitor the projects they implement, together with the relevant line ministries. All project monitoring reports must be forwarded to the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPCS) for onward reporting to Cabinet and Parliament. The NPCS monitors a representative sample of the projects to inform Cabinet appropriately on the status of development in Namibia. (Draft guidelines for development planning and budgeting under delegation phase, March 2003)

### **National Planning Commission (NPC)**

The National Planning Commission (NPC) was established for planning the priorities and determining the direction of national development. The NPC Secretariat consists of three main blocks of functionally interrelated activities as follows:

- Development Planning and Cooperation
- Central Statistics office and
- Administration, documentation and staff development services.

The NPC is the national body responsible for planning the overall development of Namibia. It is responsible for providing policy guidelines and strategies, as well as for the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at improving the living standards of all Namibians. The NPC plays a vital role in planning and mobilizing resources for national development programmes. Iyambo argues that regional councils should consider the national planning strategies and targets drafted by the NPC as well as the existing legislations when planning for development of regions (2000:3). The regional councils should liaise with the National Planning Commission (NPC), which has the final authority

in planning national development. The regional councils are also advised to consult the local authorities in drafting regional development plans.

## **SUMMARY**

The objectives of decentralizing reforms are to empower people as part of the process of democratizing state institutions and initiating local self-governing structures. In addition to reviewing the rationale and potential advantages and disadvantages of decentralization in general, this chapter has provided a detailed background on the overall legislative and policy framework and key structures that have been put in place in Namibia to decentralize powers and functions to sub-national spheres of government. It also provides details on the machinery that has been put in place to facilitate development planning at the regional level. The following chapter provides background descriptive detail on the specific ways in which these decentralized structures and planning frameworks have been established in the Hardap region. It also contextualizes the decentralized reforms in the Hardap region within a socio-economic profile of the region.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **BACKGROUND ON DECENTRALIZATION IN HARDAP REGION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

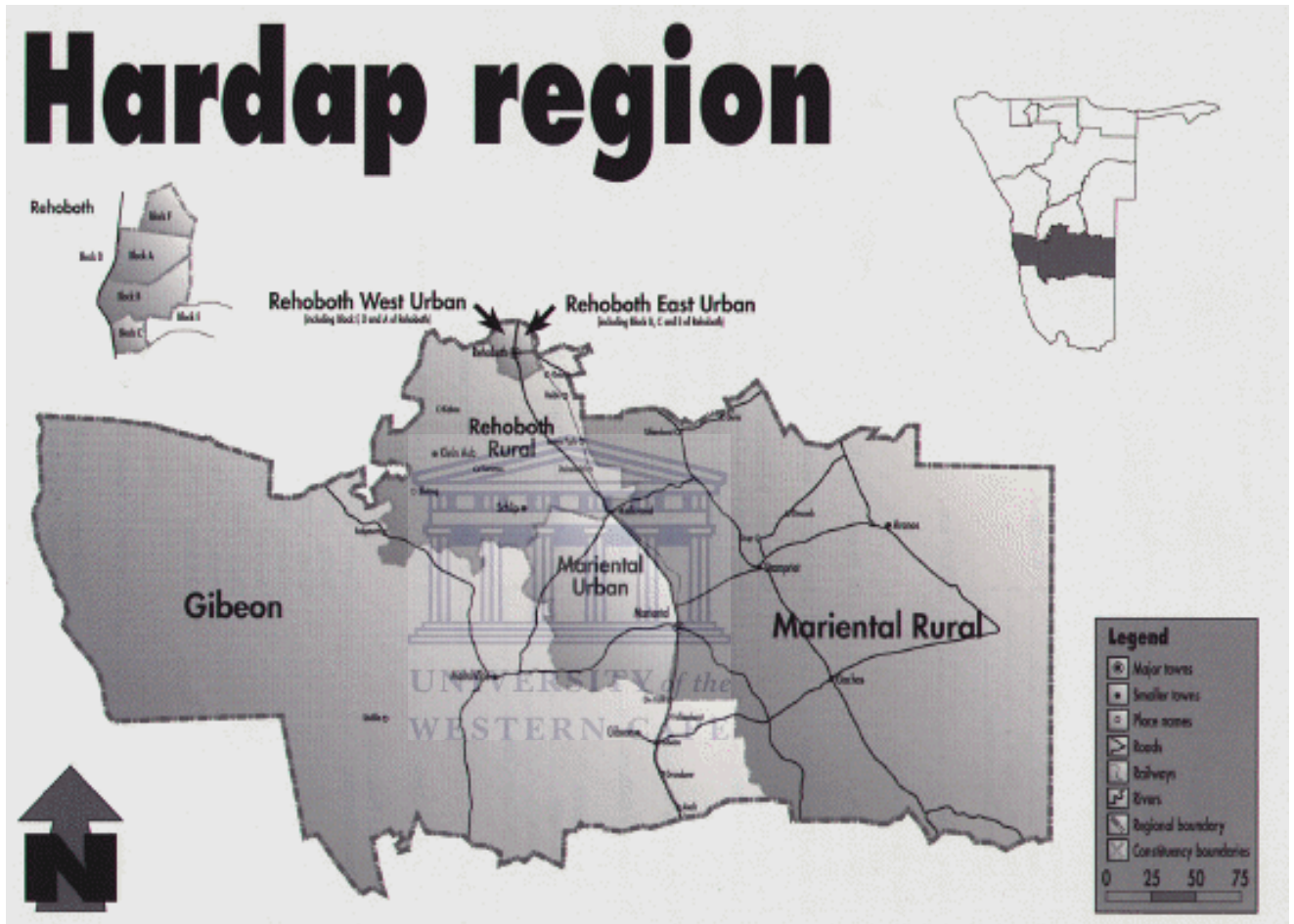
In this chapter the researcher provides a profile of the Hardap Region to see how social issues have affected the implementation of government policy and development in the region. It also provides background details on the structure and functions of regional and local government under Namibia's decentralized government framework, outlines the planning framework for regional development, and presents a brief overview of the current status of the implementation of the decentralization policy in the Hardap region.

#### **PROFILE OF THE REGION**

Hardap Region is one of the central regions of Namibia. It is bordered in the north by Erongo, Khomas and the Omaheke regions, and in the south by Karas region. The region shares a common border with Botswana and South Africa and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2000) the region has an estimated population of 68000 with a population density of 0.6 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The main languages are Nama, Damara, Afrikaans, Setswana, Otjiherero and Oshiwambo. The region is characterized by a variety of landscapes, which are the prominent Naukluft Mountains, the Namib and the Kalahari dunes and the sea. A well-defined escarpment in the west, which is formed by the Naukluft and the Schwartz rand, is a major tourist attraction of the Mariental area. The Namib Naukluft Park makes up 15%, commercial farming 75%, and communal farmland 10%. Although the region doesn't have a harbour at its coastal line, the Holloms

Birds Island that lies within Namibia's territorial waters off the Diamond area No.2 coastline is incorporated within the region.

**Figure 3: Hardap Regional Map**



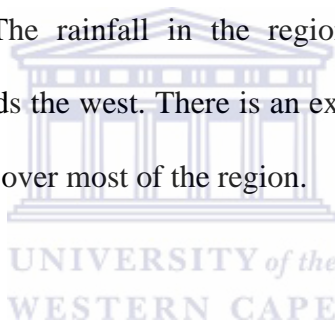
**Source:** [www.arc.org.na/hardap\\_map.html](http://www.arc.org.na/hardap_map.html)

The name “Hardap” reflects the significance of the Hardap Dam to the region because of its economic value through Agriculture and Tourism. Mariental is the regional capital and therefore the seat of the Hardap Regional Council. After 1990, the region was divided into six constituencies namely, Rehoboth Rural, Rehoboth West Urban, Rehoboth East Urban, Mariental Rural, Mariental Urban and Gibeon. The main urban centres of the region are Mariental, Aranos, Gochas, Maltahohe, Gibeon, Stampriet, Rehoboth and Kalkrand while

there are also informal settlements in the region. The region has a well-developed infrastructure with the main railway line and the main trunk road of Namibia crossing the region and linking it to all the other countries within SADC. Prior to colonization the Oorlams, Nama and the Baster communities inhabited the area.

### **Climate and Rainfall**

The annual mean temperature of Mariental is 21 °C, with a mean maximum temperature of 35 °C and a mean minimum temperature of 5 °C. Temperatures frequently drop below freezing point in the winter months throughout the region, but they can also go up to over 40 °C in the summer months. The rainfall in the region varies from 50mm to 300mm decreasing from the east towards the west. There is an extremely high evaporation potential of more than 3000mm per year over most of the region.



### **The Regional Economy**

The region has a strong economic base as the major tourist attraction areas are situated in the region. The agriculture sector (small stock, ostriches and game) can be regarded as the mainstay of the regional economy. The Hardap Region can be classified as a comparatively affluent commercial region. It is also supported by reasonably well-developed government services, banking, insurances and finance institutions, and a small manufacturing and construction sector. Tourism has developed into a strong sustainable economic sector. According to Accommodation Statistics 1998 of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, by the end of 1998 there were 12 Guest Farms, 11 Hotels and 6 Rest Camps registered in this region, providing 401 rooms and 938 beds to visiting tourists.

## **Social Profile**

Access to quality employment is an essential way of achieving sustainable livelihoods, which in turn is a crucial means of reducing poverty and inequality. High levels of poverty prevail in rural areas, and agricultural workers are among the poorest households. Average wages in agriculture are well below the minimum living level. Workers' educational qualification is low, they have few resources, and they demonstrate little mobility on the labour markets. Although the region has a literacy rate of approximately 79%, many of the rural poor cannot afford to send their children to school as they do not have the means to financially support the children. Unemployment, poverty and related social problems such as drugs and alcohol abuse are increasing in the region. The high rate of alcoholism amongst the poor communities and youth contributes to an increasing number of children growing up without proper education or health care. Therefore the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS in this region is high. (Hardap Regional Development Plan, 2001/2-2005/6). Despite the launch of the National Gender Policy in 1997, as the official legal instrument aimed at achieving gender equality, it is noticeable that women in the Hardap region are not yet well represented in local and regional administration.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNMENT**

The Hardap Regional Council has a duty to co-ordinate and spearheads regional development. The members of the Regional Council are politicians elected after every five years through a democratic election. The last regional council elections were held on 29 November 2004. There are six regional councilors for the Hardap region. Mariental is the capital town of the region and therefore the seat of the Hardap Regional Council. The Hardap Regional Council is involved in the planning, financing, administrating and

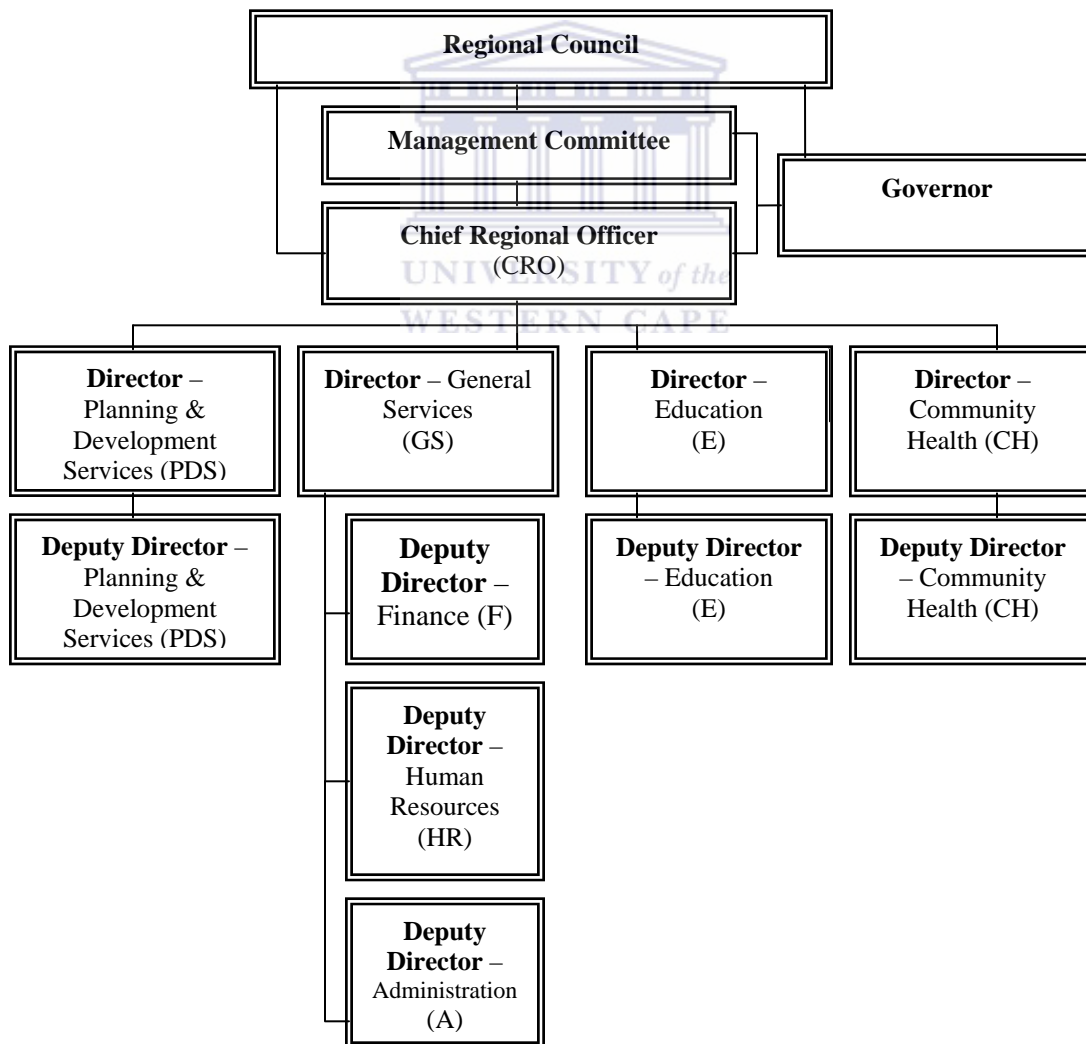


maintenance and service provision of the other towns and villages of the region. The Governor is the political head of the region and represents the National Government in the region. Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) provide a linkage between the regional councils and the settlements and village councils. Constituency Development Committees are established in all the constituencies for the effective coordination of planning and development of the region at constituency level. The main functions of the CDCs are to identify and assess community needs/problems to be considered for both constituency development proposals/plans and capital projects. They also serve as the communication channel between the Regional Council and people in the constituency. A Regional Development Coordination Committee (RDCC) has also been established to play a key role in regional development planning. The main function of the RDCC is to prepare and evaluate development proposals/plans for the region for approval by the Regional Council, and to coordinate development planning of the region and integrate all the development proposals/plans from the CDCs for presentation to the Regional Council. Village Development Committees (VDCs) have been established in all the villages for the purpose of effective coordination of the planning and development of the villages. The main functions of the VDCs are to identify and assess community needs/problems to be considered for development proposals/plans by the village council and CDC. Settlement Committees (SCs) have also been established for the effective coordination of the administration and development of settlements. The main functions of the SCs are to draw the attention of the constituency councilor and the Chief Regional Officer to any matters of concern or interest relating to the management and administration of the settlement. Ward Development Committees (WDCs) have been established to take responsibility for the effective coordination of the planning and development of the local authority at ward level.

The main functions of the WDCs are to identify and assess community needs/problems to be considered for development proposals/plans by the local authority.

Figure 4 provides details on the management structure of the Hardap Regional Council. This is in line with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) for all regional councils.

**Figure 4: Management Structure of the Hardap Regional Council (Source: Hardap Regional Development Plan, 2001/2-2005/6)**



## ***Vision***

The vision of the Hardap Regional Council is as follows:

The socio-economic enlistment of the people with health for all; equal employment opportunities in a crime-free and harmonious society; ensuring adequate infrastructure; affordable housing and portable water for all whilst protecting the natural environment. (Hardap Regional Development Plan, 2001/2-2005/6).

## ***Objectives***

The objectives of the Hardap Region Council are to create a suitable framework for:

- The sustainable development of the region's agriculture, mining, tourism, trade and industry;
  - The sustainable management of the region's natural resources;
  - The provision of adequate infrastructure;
  - The development of the human resource potential of peoples of all ages and backgrounds;
  - The provision of leadership, support and coordination for regional development
- (Hardap Regional Development Plan, 2001/2-2005/6).

## **Responsibility and Tasks of the Hardap Regional Council**

The Hardap Regional Council, like other regional councils, has certain responsibilities and task to perform as set out in the National Development Plan. It is expected that the regional councils such the Hardap Regional Council will not only spearhead the

decentralization process in the regions but also monitor and evaluate the progress of the line ministries and assist in drawing up development plans for such ministries.

The practical duties of a regional council in the regional planning process include the following major functions:

- The collection of data, including statistics relating to planning activities;
- The identification of development projects, socio-economic potential and problems of the region;
- The preparation of medium-and long-term development plans;
- The co-ordination of development projects in the region and the monitoring of ongoing projects and their evaluation (Iyambo, 2000:4).

### **Areas of responsibility**

The areas covered by regional planning include:

- The distribution, increase and movement of people in the region;
- The provision of economic infrastructures and utilities such as water, electricity, transport and communication;
- Land use management; and
- Environmental planning and management.

### **Functions of the Hardap Regional Council**

Hardap Regional Council, like other councils, has the following functions:

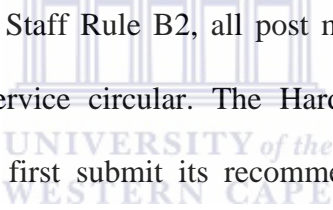
- To be consulted and may make recommendations in relation to legislative proposals or submissions to Cabinet where the matters involved may have an effect in the region.
- To establish, manage and control some areas that are declared to be settlement areas by notice in the Gazette;
- To assist local authorities in its area in the carrying out of their functions;
- To advise the President on any matter referred to it;
- To make appropriate recommendations to the Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing with regard to the exercise of his/her statutory powers over a local authority in a regional council area;
- To play a role in the preparation of the national budget by making appropriate recommendations concerning the region to the Minister of Finance;
- To establish functional committees to advise it on the carrying out of its functions;
- To open bank accounts in its own juristic name;
- With specific approval of the Minister, to accept donations in kind or in cash and to make donations;
- To pay for costs of its administration and management; and
- To exercise any powers regarding communal land that may be assigned to it.

(Iyambo, 2000:5, 6).

## **Human Resources**

The Hardap Regional Council has a current establishment of 51 appointed posts, of which 41 have been filled. Quite a number of the unfilled positions are at the senior managerial level. One of the reasons for the relatively high vacancy rate is that all posts were initially

frozen by National Government until the position of Chief Regional Officer was filled. This latter appointment was delayed by about a year because of a disagreement between the National Government and the Hardap Regional Council with regard to the most suitable candidate for this top position (*The Namibian*, 2 August 2004). As more functions are devolved to the Council, it is expected that the establishment will increase over the next few years. According the researcher's interview with one of the senior officials of the Council: "There is no fixed number to the establishment of the council as it is amended almost every month due to the changes brought about by decentralized functions. New blueprint structures for staffing are currently being discussed to meet with the requirements of decentralization."



In terms of the Public Service Staff Rule B2, all post must be advertised either in the local newspapers or public service circular. The Hardap Regional Council has the mandate to appoint, but must first submit its recommendation to the Public Service Commission to check whether all the legal requirements have been met.

In addition to staff appointed directly by the Regional Council, line ministries with responsibilities at the regional and local levels will also appoint officials to regional and local authorities to perform decentralized functions on their behalf. Such officials performing the delegated functions will be placed under the overall charge and supervision of regional officers.

## **Finance**

The recurrent budget of the regional councils is funded in part from inter-governmental fiscal transfers from the National Government and in part from locally raised revenue. As the Hardap Regional Council was reluctant to make the budgetary information available to the researcher, it was difficult to obtain the actual figures. According to interviews with regional and local officials, the locally raised revenue of the Regional Council has three components: firstly a 5% share of revenue raised by local authorities from property taxes and service charges for water and sanitation, refuse removal and electricity; secondly, income raised directly by the Regional Council from service charges for water and electricity in settlement areas, as well as from the rental of council houses; and thirdly income from the interest received from the banking institutions when they place large amount of money in the call accounts. However, in general we can agree with Iyambo's comment (1998: 20) that "In the context of decentralization in Namibia there is no agreed definitive position as yet regarding financial arrangements and transfers under decentralization." A Financial Management and Intergovernmental Transfer Committee have recently been established. However, with the core objective to develop modalities for the transfer of funds under decentralization including the development of guidelines on budgeting and financial accounting policies and procedures.

## Capital Projects

**Figure: 5: Capital projects for the year 2004/2005 for Hardap Regional Council**

Project	Specific location	Ongoing/New	Located ceiling amount for 2004/2005 (Namibian Dollars)
Construction of Constituency office	Mariental	Ongoing	1 500 000
Construction of Services	Hoachanas	Ongoing	900 000
Construction of Services, Sewerage	Klein Aub	Ongoing	900 000
Construction and upgrading of sewerage networks	Stampriet, Gibeon, Rehoboth	Ongoing	1 080 000
<b>Total for ongoing projects</b>			<b>4 380 000</b>

Source: Hardap Regional Development Plan (2001/2002-2005/2006)

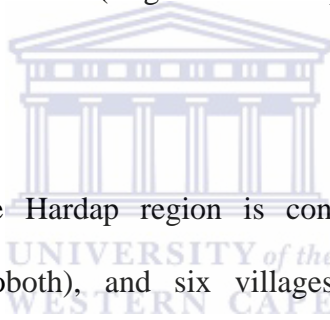
All the thirteen regions are funded by the National Government for their capital projects after they submitted their budget proposals. Figure 5 above illustrates the capital projects for 2004-05 that were approved by the Ministry of Regional Local Government and Housing for developmental purposes in the Hardap Region. These projects focus on the provision of effective and sustainable infrastructure for the inhabitants of the Hardap Region.

Every region is entitled to amount upon submission of their project proposal which the Ministry will approve based on the figures received from the National Planning Commission (NPC).



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Mariental Municipality is the only municipality in the region and therefore Mariental is the capital of the region. The most recent local government elections were held on 14-15 November 2004, and the Municipal Council comprises seven elected members. The seven councilors elect a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor. These hold office for one year and may be re-elected. The Mayor is usually a ceremonial head and his/her functions do not overlap with the functions of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the municipality. Local authorities are expected to identify and finance their own development projects. The Mariental municipality is in a position to support itself with regard to finance, administration and service provision. (Regional Development Plan, 2001/2002-2005/6: 80).



The urban population of the Hardap region is concentrated in one municipality (Mariental), one town (Rehoboth), and six villages (Aranos, Gochas, Kalkrand, Maltahohe, Stampriet and Gibeon). It is anticipated that Rehoboth and the six villages will have their own elected councils in future. Five settlement areas have been identified for future development by the Hardap Regional Council. These are Duineveld, Hoachanas, Klein Aub, Rietooog and Schlip. (Regional Development Plan, 2001/2002-2005/6: 80).

Figure 6 below indicates the proclaimed municipalities, towns, villages and settlement areas within the region as well as the secondary growth points as identified by the community.

**Figure 6: Primary and secondary growth regional growth points:**

Primary Growth Points(ministerial identified)				Secondary Growth Points (Community identified)
Municipalities	Towns	Villages	Settlement Areas	
Mariental	Rehoboth	Aranos	Duineveld	Asab
		Gochas	Hoachanas	Amperbo
		Kalkrand	Klein Aub	Kries
		Maltahohe	Rietoog	Uibis
		Stampriet	Schlip	Kransplatz
		Gibeon #		Sossusvlei
				Tsumis

**(Source: Regional Development Plan: Hardap Region: 2001/2002-2005/6)**

In line with the decentralization policy, the MRLGH is currently planning and proclaiming the growth point settlements within the region. The growth points identified by the local communities are listed as secondary growth points and should received development assistance from the National Government.

The Municipality of Mariental is responsible for the following functions: housing, electricity distribution, water and refuse collection fees, collection of rates and taxes, traffic control, primary health care, community development, sport and recreational facilities, libraries, liquor licensing, business registration and control over aerodromes.

Once established, the Rehoboth town council will be responsible for the following functions: Traffic control and licensing, distribution of water and electricity, collection of rates and taxes, refuse collection fees, control over aerodromes, sport and recreational

facilities and budgeting responsibilities. The village councils will be responsible for the collection of grazing fees, recreational facilities, control of aerodromes and the collection of water services fees.

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

The Directorate of Development Planning of the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPCS) is the national umbrella body for regional planning at the national level. Its main functions are:

- To establish strategic regional development policies, plans and programmes.
- To oversee the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of these policies, plans and programmes.
- To oversee the regional planning activities of the planning units of the line ministries and regional councils.
- To receive progress reports from the regional councils and line ministries on realized regional development activities.

In carrying out these functions, the Directorate of Development Planning is mandated to work closely with the Regional Planning Division of the Ministry of Regional Local Government and Housing which has the following functions:

- To oversee the political and socio-economic development of regional and local authorities.
- To oversee the planning and implementation of regional programmes and projects.

- To receive progress reports from the regional councils and make reports to the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPCS).

Under the overall framework established by the Government's National Development Plan, and under guidance from national planning directorates and divisions, regional councils, local authorities and local communities are responsible for planning the development of their regions and localities. In the process they are expected to work closely with civil society organizations (NGOs and CBOs) and the private sector. This places a high premium on effective coordination and collaboration.

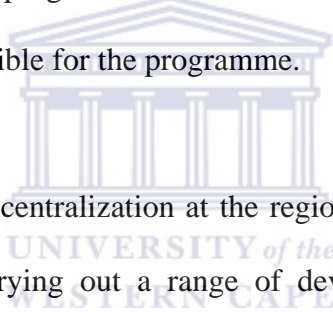
## **IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALIZATION POLICY IN THE HARDAP REGION**

In line with the National Government's policy of the gradual or asymmetrical decentralization of powers and functions in line with regional and local capacity, by no means all the anticipated functions and powers have so far been devolved. The functions of the National Directorates of Education, Tourism and Planning, for example, have not been completely handed over to the Hardap Regional Council. However, significant progress has been made and the following functions have now been decentralized to the Hardap Regional Council:

- Early childhood development
- Rural water supply
- Basic education
- Regional resettlement and land board
- Appointment of personnel

- Community based health and social pensions
- The 'Build Together' programme

The Build Together programme is a National Housing Programme formulated with the assistance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and United Development Programme. The programme aims to establish revolving funds at both regional and local level in order to sustain the programme over the long term, and to reduce the dependency on the National Government for housing finance. The programme caters for people earning less than two thousand five hundred Namibian dollars a month. The Regional Council is responsible for the programme in all areas apart from Mariental where the municipality is directly responsible for the programme.



In addition to progress with decentralization at the regional council level, the Mariental municipal council is now carrying out a range of devolved functions in relation to housing, electricity distribution, water and refuse collection fees, traffic control, primary health care, community development, sport and recreational facilities, libraries, liquor licensing, and business registration. It has also established machinery for the collection of local rates and service charges.

Other elements of the developmental or institutional framework for decentralization have also been put in place in the Hardap region. These include the Regional Development Coordination Committee (RDCC), Constituency Development Committees (CDCs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), Settlement Committees (SCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The members of the CDC's, VDC's, SC's and the

WDC's together form the RDCC of the Hardap region. The RDCC and the CDC are fully operational in the Hardap Region. However, the operations of VDCs, SCs and WDCs have been less visible and relevant stakeholders have been recently urged by the Regional Council to revive these structures.

At the national level, The Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) and the line ministries have strengthen their managerial and technical capacity in preparation for the full handing over of functions, staff and budgetary control to regional councils and local authorities. As the decentralization process heavily depends on effective communication among stakeholders and different levels of government, the MRLGH is planning to set up Decentralization Information Centers in different parts of the country. Such centers will provide a focal point for obtaining information in relation to decentralization, and will be the vehicle through which information is effectively distributed to all levels of government. At the same time, line ministries have been requested to compile decentralization action plans, in which the staffing and financial resources related to the functions to be delegated must be identified.

## **Summary**

Following a brief socio-economic and demographic profile of the Hardap region, this chapter has provided details on the key structures and processes that have so far been put in place to facilitate decentralization in the Hardap region. The role, responsibilities and functions of the Regional Council and the one local government council in the region (Mariental) were described in detail, together with the Regional Council's role in regional development planning. Although a number of key functions have been decentralized to

sub-national levels, there is still some way to go before all the functions specified in the legal and policy frameworks for decentralization are devolved to lower spheres of government. The chapter also provides details on some of the grass roots committees that have been established to facilitate community participation in the regional and local structures and in particular in the planning processes. Based on the research findings, the following chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the main achievements, limitations and constraints of the decentralization process in the region.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an outline and analysis of the main research findings with regard, in particular, to the achievements, limitations and constraints of the decentralization process in the Hardap region.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS OF DECENTRALIZATION POLICY**

As noted earlier in this report Namibia's decentralization policy was approved by Cabinet in 1996 and adopted by the National Assembly during 1997. Given the relatively short time period since the policy framework for decentralization has been put in place, it is clear from the research that significant progress has been made towards realizing its objectives of extending participatory democracy and ensuring sustainable development through the transfer of power to the regional councils and local authorities and the development of their capacity to plan, implement, and manage the delivery of services for their constituents. A number of the key achievements are discussed below.

##### **Legal and Policy Achievements**

A major achievement of the Government has been the introduction of an enforceable and authoritative policy for decentralization, together with related legislation such as the Regional Councils Act, 22 of 1992, the Local Authorities Act, 23 of 1992, and the Traditional Authorities Act, 17 of 1995. In addition, a report has now been concluded on



the rationalization and harmonization of sector laws and regulations that are in conflict with national policy towards decentralization. Guidelines on regional development planning have also been produced. Through policy and legislative instruments such as these, a rational overall framework for decentralization has been put in place.

### **Capacity Building and Human Resource Development**

A number of positive measures have been put in place at both the national and regional levels which have assisted the processes of capacity building and human resources in the Hardap region. In the first place, regional officers have been appointed by the Government in all the regions to advise and assist the elected regional and municipal councilors and appointed officials in carrying out their new mandates. One of the functions of such regional officers has been to design and hold induction-training workshops for new councilors and senior council officials. In the second place, manuals and guidelines have been produced for councilors, locally appointed officials and staff seconded to the regional councils by national line ministries. These include budget guidelines, financial accounting policies and procedures, and guidelines on devolved and delegated functions. In the third place, a variety of workshops and short-course training programmes have been delivered at both the regional and national level for officials and staff from the regional and municipal councils. Amongst other things, these have focused on such areas as computer and IT training, e-governance, finance and budgeting, development planning, proposal writing. A number of staff from the Hardap Regional Council has been sent abroad for training. One official was recently in Egypt for six months, attending a management training programme. In the fourth place, the Hardap

Regional Council is currently in the process of designing a human resources development and training policy to build the capacity of its staff.

In terms of gender equity, the Namibian Constitution makes provision for gender equality and affirmative action, which guarantees women full and equal participation. In the case of Hardap Regional Council, the current Governor is a female and women are fairly well represented in senior posts within the Council.

### **Communication and Information**

In order to raise awareness and communicate information with regard to the decentralization policy, the National Government has introduced a number of measures. The Directorate of Decentralization Coordination (DDC) in the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) has set up exhibitions and organized awareness campaigns at various trade fairs and agricultural shows, for example. The MRLGH produces regular newsletters featuring decentralization which are available at regional and local government offices. The Ministry has also on occasion used the electronic media (TV and radio in particular) to provide regular information updates on progress with regard to decentralization.

### **Socio-Economic Development and Regional Planning**

Decentralization has also had a positive impact on regional planning and socio-economic development. Development planning at the regional level has been assisted by the secondment by the National Government of regional development planners to be deployed at the thirteen regional councils, including Hardap. These regional planners

have helped to draft the Regional Development Plans for their respective regions in collaboration with the National Planning Commission and officials employed directly by the regional councils, and with inputs from the Regional Development Coordination Committee (RDCC) which is made up of members from grass roots community organizations at the ward, settlement, village and constituency levels. A Regional Development Plan for the region has now been developed.

At the socio-economic development level, a number of achievements can be noted. The Government, through the Ministry of Lands Resettlement and Rehabilitation, has purchased twenty-nine farms for resettlement purposes in the Hardap region. According to one of the researcher's interviews, 149 families have already been resettled on these farms. With support from the Regional Council, Early Childhood Centres (Pre-primary schools) have been established and are now are fully operational throughout the region. Rural electrification projects are well on track in the region. Water upgrading in Duineveld and Schlip settlements and the water pre-payment program in Hoachanas, Gochas, Kalkrand, Stampriet and Gibeon are progressing well. The planning of the upgrading of settlements namely Kries, Uibes and Amperbo are in an advanced stage. The Build Together Housing Programme, which was previously run from the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, has been decentralized to the Regional Councils and Local Authorities. The Hardap Regional Council has also undertaken a number of initiatives in the field of community-based natural resource management, enabling rural communities to benefit economically from nature conservancy, community-based tourism and eco-tourism activities.

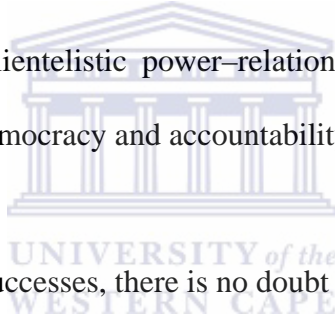
## **Democratization and Participation**

There is no doubt that the decentralization is helping to extend democratization in Namibia, not only through the opportunity to elect by regional and municipal councils, but also through increased opportunities for citizen participation on the various regional and local governance structures that have been established as part of the decentralization process. As noted earlier in this report, the establishment of Constituency Development Committees (CDCs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), Settlement Committees (SCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) has helped to ensure greater participation of local communities in their own development planning. The members of the CDC's, VDC's, SC's and the WDC's together form the Regional Development Coordination Committee (RDCC) of the Hardap region which plays a key role in regional development planning. The CDCs and the RDCC are fully operational in the Hardap region. Whilst VDCs, SCs and WDCs have been established in most parts of the region, many of them could be more active than they currently are.

## **LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF DECENTRALIZATION POLICY**

Decentralization should not be regarded, of course, as a panacea for promoting local democracy and solving social and economic disparities. In his study of the Latin American experience, Naim, for example, highlights the fact that "paradoxically, the trend towards regional decentralisation, which has been accelerated by the political dynamics of democratisation, has worsened the organisational crisis of the public sector, at least in the short term" (Naim, 1994:34). If not properly designed and implemented carefully, decentralization could well:

- Increase the ineffectiveness of the Hardap Regional Council by simply further adding to the existing bureaucracy and increasing public expenditure.
- Weaken administrative performance by handing over responsibilities to staff that lack the capacity to discharge them effectively.
- Deepen existing regional inequalities and promote the disintegration of the regions, thereby contradicting nation-building efforts in ethnically heterogeneous countries such as Namibia.
- Create additional opportunity for corruption at the regional and local levels.
- Encourage separatist tendencies by providing separatist political movements with the resources and arena to realize their interests.
- Reinforce traditional clientelistic power–relationships in the rural areas, rather than promoting local democracy and accountability.



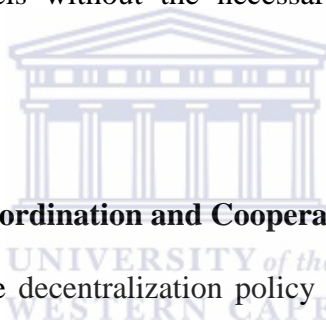
Despite its achievements and successes, there is no doubt that the decentralization process in Namibia has experienced some of these limitations and constraints, the details of which are outlined below, based on the author's research on the Hardap region.

### **Policy and Legal Constraints**

The policy and legal framework for the decentralization process and for the new regional and local government system is complex and has proved difficult to grasp in its totality by the various stakeholders involved (line ministry officials, regional and local government councilors and officials, community organizations and other stakeholders). This has contributed in some cases to role confusion amongst the various stakeholders and a lack of effective coordination and collaboration, as will be seen in more detail

below. The relationship between regional governors and local authority mayors, on the one hand, and their chief executive officers, on the other, needs to be clarified, in particular, to avoid conflicts with respect to their roles and responsibilities.

Another limitation has surrounded the lack of effective harmonization of the decentralization legislation, policy and regulations, on the one hand, and existing legislation and regulations, on the other. Conflicting requirements between these two sets of instruments have yet to be fully harmonized and resolved. In addition, there have also been problems of ‘unfunded mandates,’ with powers and responsibilities being delegated to sub-national levels without the necessary resources to carry them out effectively.

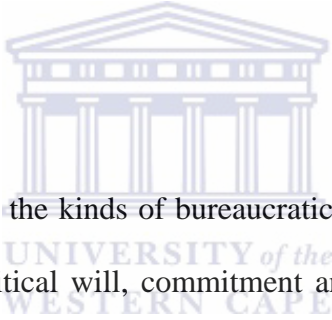


### **Bureaucratic Constraints: Coordination and Cooperation**

As noted earlier, as part of the decentralization policy all relevant line ministries have been requested by the MRLGH to compile decentralization action plans, where staff and other resources as well as required budgets related to the functions to be devolved and delegated have to be identified. However, with the notable exception of Basic Education and Agriculture, very few line ministries have so far fully prepared themselves for the implementation process. Some ministries seem not to have internalized, understood or accepted the decentralization policy, whilst others have been resistant to handing over their powers and functions and have so far ignored the MRLGH’s request for co-operation. From the author’s interviews at the national level, it seems clear that the idea of decentralization and a bottom-up approach to planning has not been received with a lot of enthusiasm at ministerial and sectoral levels.

In addition, the author's research had identified that insufficient communication and co-operation between the National Government, on the one hand, and regional councils and local municipalities, on the other, has also been an impediment to the effective implementation of decentralization process. Line ministries often do not coordinate effectively with the Regional Council with respect to development projects in the region. One example is the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has recently embarked on the construction of new police stations in the Hardap region without any consultation with the regional or local councils to ensure that such stations are situated in line with local needs.

### **Political Constraints**



One of the possible reasons for the kinds of bureaucratic delays and lack of cooperation noted above is the lack of political will, commitment and/or capacity on behalf of the leaders of the ruling SWAPO party to drive the decentralization process according to the established legal framework and agreed deadlines for implementation. Delays have been particularly noticeable in areas such as the Hardap region where the ruling party does not have an overall majority on the regional and local government councils.

As noted earlier in this report, one of the main objectives of the Traditional Authorities Act, of 1995 was to recognize the role of traditional leaders in the government, and empower them to effectively contribute towards national development. Despite this, however, another political problem has been the fact that many traditional leaders have not welcomed decentralization whole heartedly, because it has been perceived as taking

some of their previous powers away from them, such as the authority over the communal land distribution. The necessary cooperation between regional and local government structures, on the one hand, and traditional structures, on the other, has therefore not been forthcoming in the majority of cases.

### **Communication and Information**

There is no doubt that the lack of sufficient communication and information with regard to decentralization has had an adverse impact on a number of the problems and delays identified above. Despite the efforts of the MRLGH to publicize the decentralization process through a variety of information and media campaigns, it is clear that many stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels, as well as the general public, do not as yet have a clear understanding of the policy and legislative framework. There is clearly a need for more workshops and events to take place, and for these to be more inclusive. There has been a tendency to date for workshops to be held for top officials, leaving more junior officials and grassroots community organizations behind.

### **Human Resources Constraints**

To carry out their devolved functions and responsibilities effectively, it is obvious that the regional and local councils require well-qualified staff at all levels with the requisite competencies and capacity. As already noted in this report, the Hardap Regional Council and the Mariental Municipal Council are facing quite serious staff shortages. Of the 51 posts within the establishment of the Regional Council, for example, only 41 are currently filled. The staff turnover rate has also been quite high, due in part to the



tendency for staff to move to greener pastures, especially once their skills and capacity have been increased.

One of the reasons for the relatively high vacancy rate, as already noted, is that all posts were initially frozen by the National Government until the position of Chief Regional Officer was filled. This latter appointment was delayed by about a year because of a disagreement between the National Government and the Hardap Regional Council with regard to the most suitable candidate for this top position.

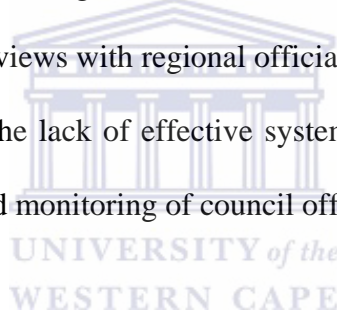
Another important challenge facing all levels of government, including those at the sub-national level, is that of HIV/AIDs. The increasing spread of the pandemic is not only leading to the death of some staff but also to high levels of absenteeism.



### **Financial and Other Resource Constraints**

There is no doubt that decentralization in the Hardap Region has been characterized by a number of financial and other resource constraints. Intergovernmental transfers from the National Government have not only proved inadequate to meet all the new functions and responsibilities of sub-national levels of government. They are often not transferred on time. Funds are transferred from the National Government on quarterly basis, but are transferred in the last month of the quarter and quite often later than this, thus putting pressure on the Regional Council. Delays in the transfer of funds have often resulted in the implementation plans of the Council being put on hold. At the same time, the ability of the regional and municipal councils to supplement intergovernmental transfers with

their own sources of locally raised revenue has been constrained by the relatively poor revenue base, especially in the rural areas, as well as by the lack of efficient and reliable systems for tax collection and service charges and the relatively underdeveloped nature of the regional and local systems and procedures that have so far been put in for budgeting and financial management. These problems have been exacerbated by the difficulty in attracting well-qualified financial staff to the regions and municipalities. The lack of efficient and accountable financial systems, as well as the shortage of qualified finance staff, exposes regional and local governments to the risk of corruption and fraud. The Hardap Regional Council, for example, has experienced several cases of fraud and theft, and one of the Council's accounting officers has been convicted of fraud and jailed. According to the author's interviews with regional officials, one of the main reasons cited for corruption and fraud was the lack of effective systems, financial management skills and appropriate supervision and monitoring of council officials.



These financial difficulties have been accompanied by the lack of effective information management systems and the absence of accurate and comprehensive local data on which to base effective development planning. Other resource constraints include the serious lack of housing, office facilities and transport in the region and local areas. Committing resources to building such facilities, although necessary and important, will reduce funds which could have been used for other developmental purposes.

## **Community Participation**

As noted earlier in this report, there are signs that decentralization is helping to extend democratization in Namibia, in particular through opportunities for citizen participation on the various regional and local governance structures that have been established as part of the decentralization process. However, establishing participative structures (such as Constituency Development Committees, Village Development Committees, Settlement Committees, and Ward Development Committees) is one thing. Ensuring that they operate effectively is another. The evidence from this research is that many of these structures, once established, are not working as effectively as they could. From the interviews with community leaders, this can be explained partly by the newness of these structures and the lack of sufficient local publicity and information about their role and functions, and partly by the suspicion amongst such leaders that the views and ideas expressed at such structures are not likely to be taken sufficiently seriously by regional and local government structures and, in particular, by the Regional Development Coordination Committee of the Hardap region.

## **Summary**

This chapter demonstrates that definite progress has been made with respect to decentralization reforms in the Hardap region. The key structures are in place and elections have taken place for the Regional Council and the Mariental Municipal Council. Capacity building and training programmes for the officials of these councils have been introduced, and a regional development programme has been designed and adopted. In addition a number of local committees have been established to facilitate community participation in the decentralized structures and planning processes. Despite such

achievements, the findings in this chapter reveal that there are still a number of important limitations and constraints that will need to be addressed if the decentralization process is to achieve its objectives of building participatory regional and local democracy in Namibia and ensuring more effective forms of sustainable socio-economic development at the regional and local levels. In the following chapter, conclusions are drawn from the Hardap experience, and a number of recommendations are put forward for addressing the key limitations and constraints that have so far characterized the decentralization process in the Hardap region.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

From the evidence from the Hardap region, this research paper shows that the Namibian decentralization process, has made significant progress, given its relatively short history, towards its objectives of extending participatory democracy and ensuring sustainable development through the transfer of power to sub-national spheres of government and the development of their capacity to carry out the new decentralized functions and responsibilities assigned to them. Particularly noticeable in this regard has been the establishment of an authoritative legislative and policy framework for decentralization and the popularization of this framework through information and awareness raising campaigns; the design and introduction of guidelines for regional development planning; the introduction of capacity building and training programmes for regional and local councilors and officials; and the establishment of a number of local level committees designed to encourage citizenship participation and involvement in the processes of regional and local governance. The indications from this research report are that these measures and activities are having a positive effect on socio-economic development at the regional and local levels.

Despite these achievements, the research also demonstrates that the decentralization process has been characterized by a number of important challenges and constraints which will need to be addressed if decentralization is to meet its desired aims and

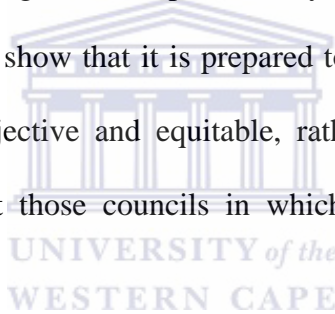
objectives. The ultimate success of the process will depend not only on the effective development of policies and procedures, but also more importantly on the relocation of resources, the enhancement of personnel capacity, the deployment of the necessary infrastructure and the exercise of greater political will and commitment by key stakeholders, particularly those at the national government level. Without such commitment and the introduction of appropriate institutional forms, powers and capacity, decentralization will not deliver its expected benefits such as greater efficiency, equity, service provision and development. Decentralization will, of course, continue to require a strong centre to regulate and monitor progress, to provide an overall framework to manage the re-allocation of responsibilities and resources in an accountable and transparent way, and to assist local governments in building the necessary human and resource capacity. However, it will also require that national ministries overcome their reluctance to giving up their previous control over local development and management. Ultimately, an accelerated and effective decentralization process will largely be dependent on the strength of the political impetus at both the national and sub-national levels to share power and make the new system work.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following section of the report provides a number of more specific recommendations for addressing the challenges and constraints outlined in Chapter 4 in ways that are capable of moving the decentralization process forward towards its ultimate objectives.

## **Political Determination and Will**

Although the leadership of the National Government has demonstrated significant political commitment in devising and pushing through the legislative and policy framework for decentralization, greater political determination and maturity will be required if the process is ultimately to prove successful. This will be particularly important with respect to overcoming the resistance to decentralization that has been evidenced amongst a number of sectoral ministries and by many of the countries traditional leaders. At the same time, all political parties should pay increasing attention to nominating candidates for the regional and local council elections on the basis of their ability rather than purely on the grounds of political loyalty or connections. In addition, the ruling SWAPO party must show that it is prepared to treat all regional councils and local municipalities on an objective and equitable, rather than discriminating (as the Hardap case suggests) against those councils in which they do not have an overall majority.



## **Legal and Policy Framework**

As noted earlier, the legal framework for the regional and local government system has proved quite complex and difficult to grasp in its totality by many of the stakeholders involved. There is therefore a need to popularize the regional and local government legislation in order to facilitate a better understanding of the legal framework by regional and local councilors, officials, community organizations and other interested parties. The relationship of the regional governors and local mayors, on the one hand, and their chief executive officers, on the other, needs to be clarified to avoid conflicts with respect to their roles and responsibilities. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that clear job

descriptions be developed by the National Government (in consultation with stakeholders at the regional and local levels, and that compliance with such job descriptions be monitored by the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing (MRLGH).

There is also a need for the harmonization of the legislative framework for decentralization with other legislation and regulations dealing, for example, with the roles and responsibilities of national sectoral ministries. Legislation and regulations with respect to human resources and financial management issues will need to be a particular focus of this harmonization process. It is therefore recommended that a cross-ministerial taskforce, chaired by the MRLGH, be set up to deal with the harmonization of the legislation. The task force should be composed of representatives from national ministries and representatives from selected regions. There should be wide consultations with all key stakeholders in amending and streamlining the existing laws on regional and local governments so as to gain their input and ‘buy-in,’ with the ultimate aim of introducing more effective forms of cooperation and coordination in the area of inter-governmental relations.

### **Capacity Building**

Capacity building is the process by which individuals; organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives. Although the problems encountered in the implementation of the decentralization reform programme have often been as much political as administrative, there is no doubt that the capacity of the administrative machinery for decentralization needs improvement at both the national and sub-national levels.



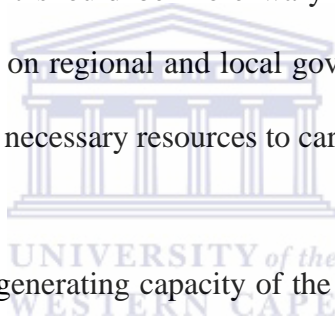
At the national level, implementing agencies, and especially lead agencies such as the MRLGH, need to enhance their capacity for policy formulation and implementation. To date, there has tended to be an over-reliance on external and especially international consultants. Building the capacity of indigenous policy makers through appropriate training and mentorship programmes is therefore an important priority.

At sub-national levels there is an even greater need for capacity building if regional and local officials (both elected and appointed) are to discharge their decentralized powers and responsibilities in an effective and accountable way. The emphasis for capacity building and training activities should be placed in areas such as leadership and motivation, human and financial management, policy formulation and analysis, development planning, and monitoring and evaluation skills and techniques. Opportunities should also be provided for study visits abroad to enable national, regional and local officials (elected and appointed) to share ideas and experiences and to learn and apply lessons from successful experiences with decentralization in other countries, in particular other developing countries. Capacity building and awareness raising programmes should also be introduced for the community members on the various local committees that have been established to ensure meaningful community participation in the developmental activities of regional and local governments.

### **Financial and other Resources**

The success of the decentralization program will depend to quite a considerable extent on the financial viability and sustainability of regional and local forms of governance. Four

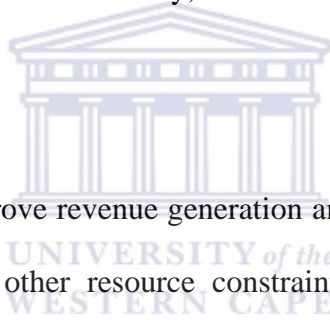
related elements will be central to ensuring such viability. In the first place, it will be necessary for the National Government to put in place a more effective system of intergovernmental transfers than the one that exists at present. Such a system should be based on an accurate assessment of the specific needs of the regional councils and local municipalities, and of the ability of such sub-national structures to meet such needs through their own revenue generating capacity. At the moment such local level structures are being forced to rely too heavily on their own locally raised sources of revenue, which is posing problems due to the relatively low revenue base in such area as well as administrative problems related to tax collection and service charges. In the second place, the National Government should be more wary than it has been to date about imposing 'unfunded mandates' on regional and local government by transferring powers and responsibilities without the necessary resources to carry them out effectively.



In the third place, the revenue generating capacity of the regional and local councils will need to be strengthened. This will involve the introduction of more efficient administrative and information systems, on the one hand, and a process of improved communication and awareness rising, on the other. From the author's interviews and discussions with community organization, it became clear that many local residents are not averse to paying local taxes and service charges providing these are levied at a realistic rate and providing that community members can see positive benefits in terms of improved service delivery. In addition, the Regional Council must step up its efforts to promote local economic development and inward investment into the region, as this will obviously have a positive impact on the revenue base. As 60% of Namibia's tourist

destinations are situated in the Hardap Region, the development of the tourist industry is one obvious area for economic expansion.

In the fourth place, the regional and local systems for budgeting and financial management will need to be improved and strengthened, and capacity building in the areas of financial management will need to be introduced for both elected and appointed officials. Incentives to attract qualified financial managers and officials to the regions and localities should also be contemplated. These would need to be subsidized by the National Government, especially in the early stages. Particular emphasis should also be focused on improved financial accountability, monitoring and supervision to detect and deter corruption and fraud.



In addition to measures to improve revenue generation and financial management, it will also be important to address other resource constraints such as the serious lack of housing, office facilities and transport in the region. Otherwise this will continue to prove a disincentive in attracting qualified staff to work in regional and local structures. If the regional and local councils are forced to improve such infrastructure with their own resources, this, in turn, will cut quite seriously into the funds that could have been used for developmental purposes. It will therefore be important for the National Government to provide additional infrastructural support for these purposes.

### **Coordination and Cooperation**

The international experience demonstrates that decentralization often fails to meet its intended objectives because of a lack of effective coordination and cooperation between

the various actors involved at national, regional and local levels. This research report has shown that weaknesses in the current structures and systems of intergovernmental relations are having a limiting effect on the decentralization processes in the Hardap region. It is therefore imperative that improved systems be put in place, and that capacity building activities are introduced to facilitate a spirit of closer cooperation between the actors involved in the different spheres of government. This could be an important function of the cross-ministerial taskforce, chaired by the MRLGH, that was recommended earlier in this chapter.

At the regional level, the Regional Council should also focus attention on developing improved mechanisms for coordinating the activities of the multiple actors involved in regional and local governance. These include regional and local officials (elected and appointed) as well as the community representatives on the Village, Settlement, Constituency and Ward committees, as well as the Regional Development Coordinating Committee.

### **Communication**

There is a definite need to step up awareness raising and the communication of information on the decentralization process at the national and sub-national levels. In particular efforts must be made to bring on board traditional leaders in a more effective way. Improved communication channels should be established between the Regional Council and traditional leaders, in particular to ensure that information reaches communities at the grassroots level. In addition, the Regional Council should be overcome its current tendency to withhold information from the public because of its fear

of possible political repercussions. Greater trust needs to be established between regional and local leaders and the communities they serve.



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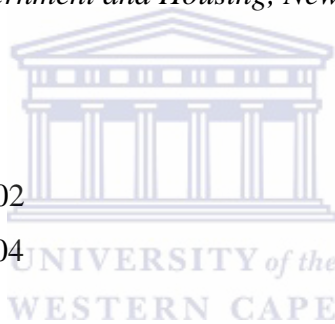
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2. [www.mrlgh.gov.na](http://www.mrlgh.gov.na)



## **ANNEXURE 1**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

**1. How does the decentralization process influence service delivery in the Hardap Region?**

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**2. To which extent is the objectives of the decentralization policy achieved in the Hardap Region.**

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**3. Does the Hardap regional council possesses the necessary skilled staff to commence and sustain devolution?**

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**4. Is the current infrastructure adequate enough to meet the needs of devolution?**

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**5. What will be the benefits of decentralization for the regional government and the communities it services?**

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**6. What are the achievements, limitations and constraints of implementing the decentralization policy in the Hardap Region?**

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**7. Are the RDCC, CDC, VDC, SC and WDC established and are they fully operational in the Hardap Region.**

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**8. What projects are put in place for development in the region and how are they progressing.**

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**9. If any, how is the co-ordination between the Hardap Regional Council and the other ministries or departments?**

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**10. Is the Hardap Regional Council ready to accept decentralization?**

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**11. What functions are already decentralized to the Hardap Regional Council?**

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**12. How is the progress of these functions?**

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**13. How is the relationship between the Hardap Regional Council and the Traditional Authorities of the region?**

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**14. What steps did the Hardap Regional Council take so far to build capacity?**

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**15. What is the way forward for the regional council with regard to the decentralization process?**