

## **UN Namibia and GRN raise awareness at IDDR 2016 Commemoration**

**By: UNIC Windhoek**

**Opuwo, 13 October 2016:** The United Nations (UN) System in Namibia in partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Directorate of Disaster Risk Management (DDRM) and the Kunene Regional Council commemorated the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) on 13 October 2016 in Opuwo, Kunene Region.

Under the theme 'Live to tell: raising awareness and reducing mortality', the public, traditional authorities and other stakeholders gathered to commemorate the IDDR at the Stadium in Opuwo and to learn about disaster risk management in Namibia and the importance of protecting Namibia's people from disaster.

Kunene Region has been hit hard by disasters, namely drought, veld fires and flash flooding. Opening the event, the Governor of Kunene Region, Hon. Angelika Muharukua, said that climate change and disaster are real, citing that eight people had lost their lives to flooding in Opuwo this year. For this reason, she called for support in addressing disaster in the region.

Disaster also threatens the lives of people across the country. Ms. Kiki Gbeho, the United Nations Resident Representative (UNRC) to Namibia and Resident Representative to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), cited that Namibia is experiencing its fourth year of drought and that approximately 600,000 people have been affected.

Highlighting the importance of disaster management in achieving development agendas, Ms. Gbeho said, "We will not attain our local, national and international development agendas if we fail to prepare and respond to disasters adequately."

She continued, saying that there is an urgent need to increase awareness of disaster risk and to build resilience at the community level.

Disaster raises the risk for health-related issues, including the lack of access to clean water and sanitation, dehydration and malnutrition. For this reason, various companies handed over disaster relief items to Kunene Region. The Better Days Foundation donated water containers as a way to prevent dehydration and to promote the use of reusable water bottles.

As an introduction to a donation from NAMSOV, the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Hon Samuel Ankama Namsov explained the opportunities that the fishing industry provides; employment, food security, products for exportation, etc.

Continuing, Hon. Ankama emphasized the importance of sharing these opportunities with all Namibians. “Let us remember that the fish in our oceans belongs to all of Namibia and hence should benefit all of Namibia,” he said.

With an introduction by the Governor of the Kunene Region, the Keynote Speaker the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah reiterated the importance of strengthening regions to be the first line of defense and that, “We are being called to put in place mechanisms for people[...] to survive & tell their story”.

Hon. Nandi-Ndaitwah emphasized that when it comes to disaster, “You always have to be prepared because you never know when disaster will strike.”

Citing various programmes and agreements aimed at disaster reduction, she explained that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction has four main priorities; understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Hon. Nandi-Ndaitwah then shared her appreciation of the UN’s support, how to move forward in terms of disaster risk management and expressed the importance of strengthening coordination. Likewise, she explained that partnerships are key to success, and through working together, 'We must build national capacities to effectively mitigate disaster impact.'

The commemoration ended with a vote of thanks by His Worship Albert Tjiuma, Mayor of Opuwo and a skit about cholera performed by Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Following the proceedings, there was a small exhibition where the International Organization for Migration (IOM) displayed its publications regarding disaster risk management.

Besides learning about disaster reduction at the IDDR commemoration and through the exhibition, the UN System in Namibia educated the public through its flash #floodingwithfacts social media campaign as a lead up to the day.

The UN System will continue focusing its efforts in aiding the Government of the Republic of Namibia in disaster reduction and ensuring that all Namibians can stand resilient in the face of drought and 'live to tell.'