



# NAMIBIA DROUGHT ASSESSMENT REPORT

2022

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# NAMIBIA

## DROUGHT ASSESSMENT REPORT

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **750,000 people are estimated to be food insecure.** This number may magnify as households continue to recover from impacts of COVID-19.
- **Over 63% of household surveys were responded to by female heads and 37.5% of the Key informant respondents were women.** Women and children continue to be more disproportionately affected by the drought than men.
- Communities continue to **develop negative coping strategies** as drought conditions persist.
- **Increase in nomadic and cross border population movements.** Over 1,792 Angolan nationals were repatriated from Namibia in January 2022 whilst others remain integrated in the Namibian communities.

### NAMIBIA: DROUGHT ASSESSMENT

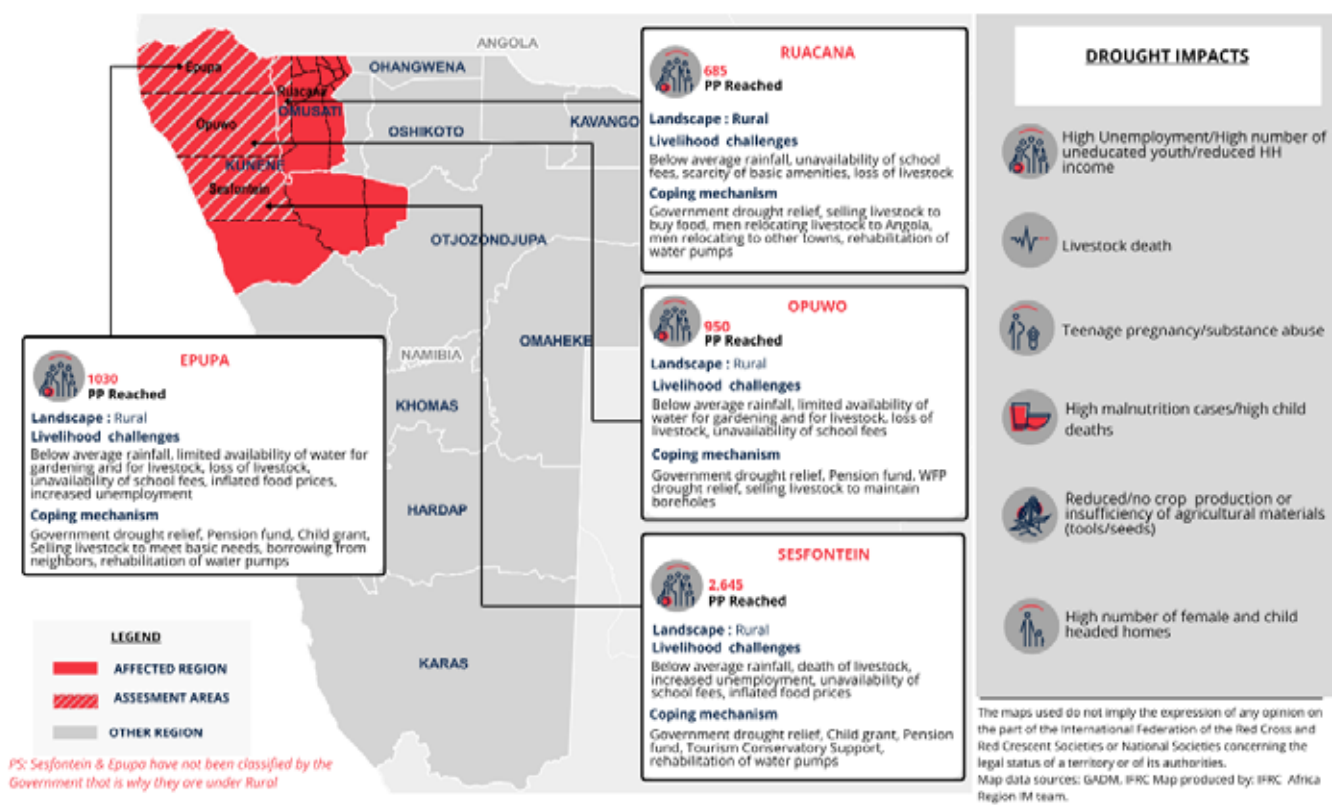


Figure 1. IFRC Map - data source: Namibia Red Cross Society Drought Assessment 2022.









## OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

**The country's lean season has been characterized by the cumulative impact of persistent drought, accelerated by the aftershocks of COVID-19 impacts on livelihoods. Assessments indicated that by the end of the lean season, 750,000 people would face high levels of food insecurity compared to an estimated 659,000 people in November 2021.**

Identified as one of the driest countries south of the Sahara, Namibia has been experiencing persistent drought conditions for over 7 years. **The Namibian government declared national emergencies** in 1992/1993, 1995/1996, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, and 2018/2019 due to extreme drought events, and by the end of 2019, which was the worst drought recorded in 90 years, agriculture production was at its lowest, increased livestock deaths were reported, and many families had their essential livelihood affected.

The northern regions (particularly the drought-prone areas: Kunene, Erongo, Omusati, and Omahek) are affected the most, with many families classified as IPC 4 and in need of urgent humanitarian support.

Namibia's rural population is the most affected by drought as they highly depend on crops and livestock production on communal land. In pastoral communities, **many households are female-headed**, and **many children often have to drop out of school** when families adopt a semi-nomadic existence, in search of fresh pasture and water for their livestock. During the 2018/2019 drought periods, human-wildlife conflicts also arose as a result of competition for water and grazing land.

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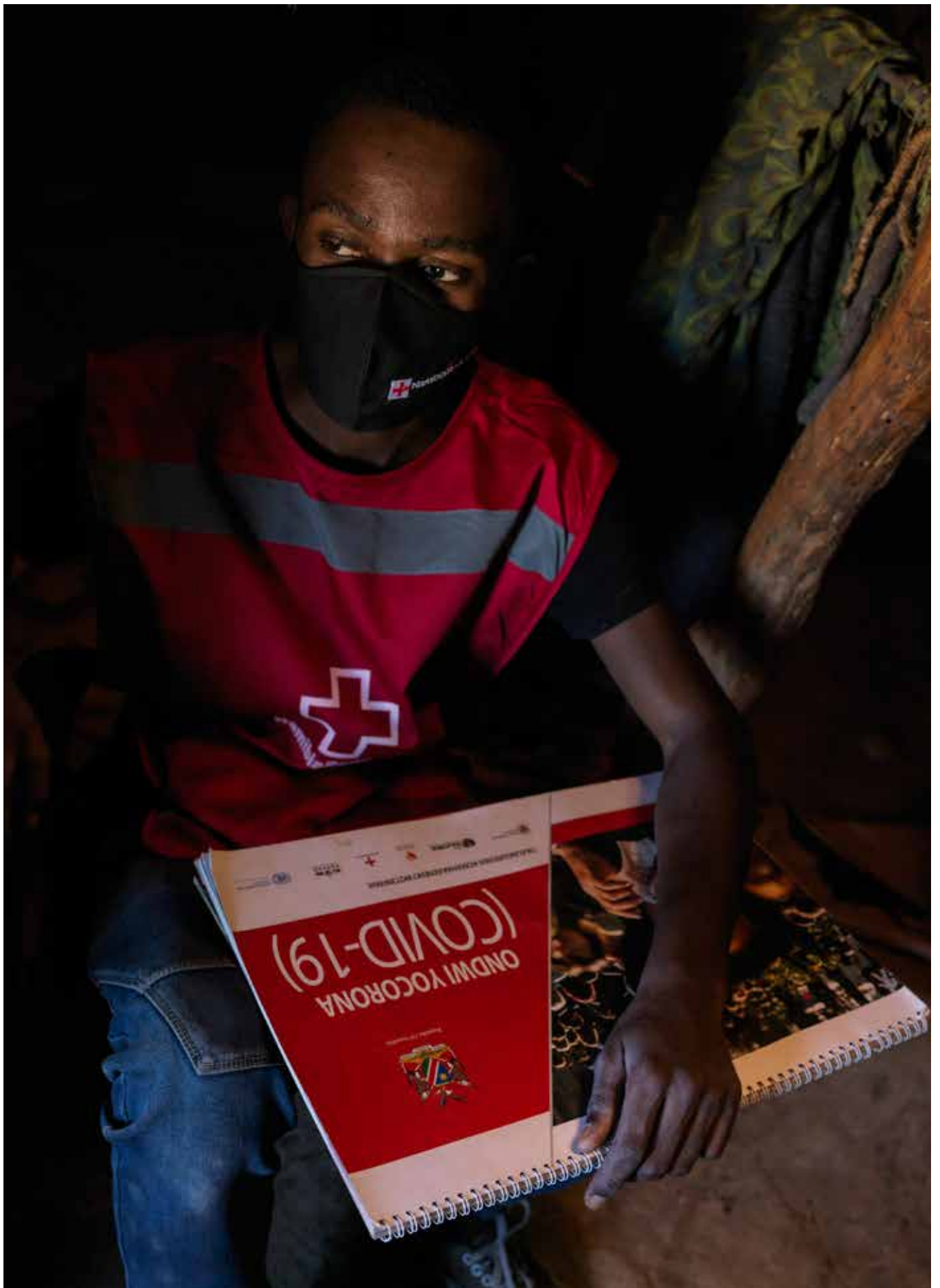
1) *The University of Namibia (UNAM) track 1 report of the Forecast-Based Financing Southern Africa Project (FbF-SAP): A Regional Drought Scoping Study - Namibia Sub-Chapter.*  
2) *The University of Namibia (UNAM) track 2 report Drought Forecasts, Drought Monitoring Systems, Vulnerability Exposure and Impact of Drought on Communities in Namibia.*

Implications of drought also **affect communities' lifestyles and division of labor**. In periods of drought, women spend more time searching for water for household use and livestock, which limits their participation in economic activities.

Unfortunately, drought not only affects one area but is far-reaching. The northern region is home to Indigenous groups like the OvaHimba, Damara, and Herero, who mainly depend on agriculture as a source of food and income. Due to the drought situation in neighboring Angola, some of the **Angolan nationals migrated** to this region even though faced similar conditions back in Angola. It is inevitable for these two communities to try and

#### **NAMIBIA RED CROSS RESPONSE FOLLOWING 2019 DROUGHT DECLARATION**

- 2019 Multi-Country Drought Emergency Appeal
- 2019 Borehole rehabilitation project in the Kunene region
- 2020 WASH awareness raising in the Kunene region
- 2020 Conversion of diesel-powered pumps to Solar powered in Kunene region
- 2020 CVA intervention in drought-affected communities in the Kunene region
- 2021 Population Movement DREF in the Kunene and Omusati regions
- 2021 CVA intervention in the Kunene and Ohangwena regions (as a cooperating partner to WFP)











## ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

**An assessment was carried out to identify the severity of the impacts of drought in rural households in the drought-prone areas of the Kunene and Omusati regions. Based on secondary and primary data collected from 109 households, 12 key informants, and 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The assessment findings will aid in strengthening the National Society's response by identifying gaps and informing long-term programming.**

**Livelihoods** have been affected and in the areas, assessed, many households are pastoralists and used their livestock as income generators as well as for household consumption. With increased animal deaths due to limited grazing land and water availability, many households engaged in crop production. Though due to the persistent drought many are barely able to produce enough to feed their households. Continuous below-average rainfall has led to more time being spent searching for water than on livelihood and **income-generating** activities as most of the semi-skilled and unskilled labor force have been left jobless and many households without breadwinners.

Household financial status keeps depreciating as the drought prolongs with many facing increased levels of debt.

**Household income** levels are gradually decreasing as agricultural failures due to drought subsequently affect local economies and employment opportunities, resulting in financial hardship. Many families are unemployed, and semi-skilled/unskilled and rely heavily on government grants and relief, as well as humanitarian support (Figure 3).

**Female-headed** households are dominant in the areas assessed (figure 4), followed by youth-headed and disabled-headed households. Prior to the drought, gender roles were clearly defined with men taking care of the livestock, crop production, maintaining water points, and collecting firewood. Over the years men have migrated for income opportunities, and animal grazing land, with some not returning, leaving the burden of the male role to fall on women. This gives additional responsibilities and coupled with a lack of knowledge and skill, leaves many women vulnerable.

**Youth unemployment** is on the rise with 100% of community leaders assessed reporting youth unemployment as one of the drought impacts. Government and other Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) provide skills development programs that lack linkages to working environments. High youth unemployment has been linked to teenage pregnancies and an increase in HIV incidence and prevalence. Many elders informed that the youth have nothing productive to invest their time in hence they end up engaging in risky behaviors which include unsafe sexual activity, substance abuse, and theft. 52% of families assessed indicated an increased number of **school dropouts** as they struggle to maintain school payments or purchase school materials for their children. As the income shrinks priorities like health and education are also reduced (figure 6) particularly in the female-headed households where girl children are also taken out of school to assist their mothers with their additional responsibilities which include fetching water and looking after other younger children and the elderly.

**Coping strategies** have turned negative as many families continue to suffer from the cyclical crisis that hinders them from moving out of the vicious poverty cycle they find themselves in. As the household income levels continue to decrease and the household demands increase, families are forced to cut down on basic necessities including meals. Additionally, families have resorted to selling off their livestock, agricultural tools, and some of the seed relief the government and NGOs provided to enable them to purchase a bag of maize meals. Figure 7 reflects the coping mechanisms adopted by the assessed rural communities.

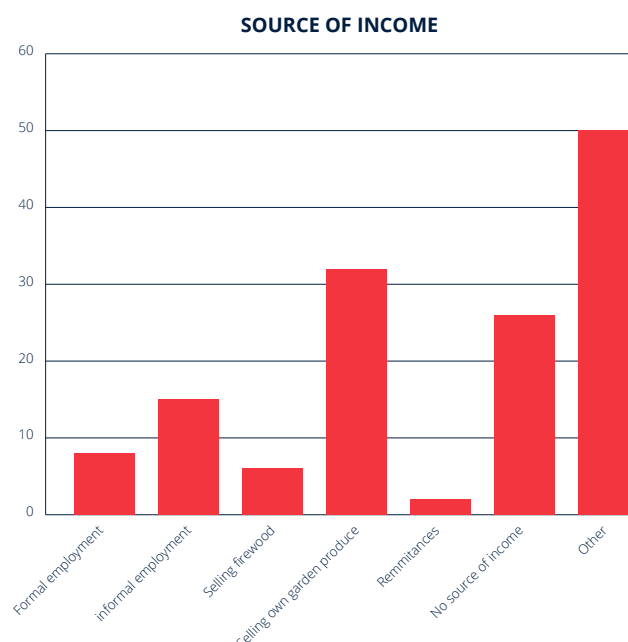


Figure 2: Rural households' source of income.

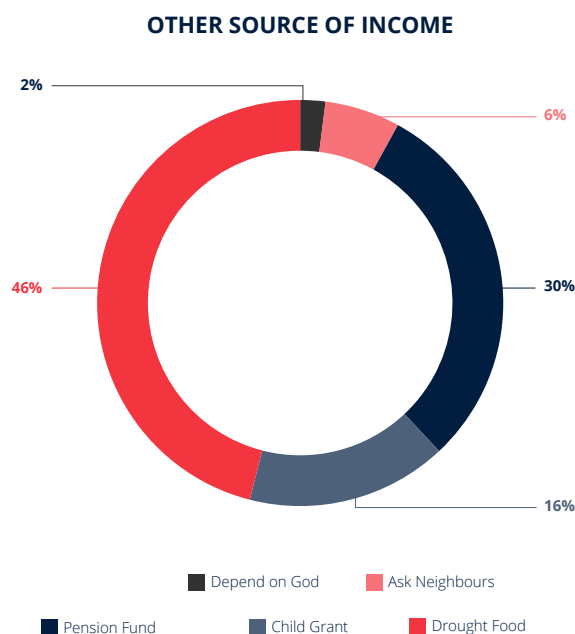


Figure 3: Other source of income.

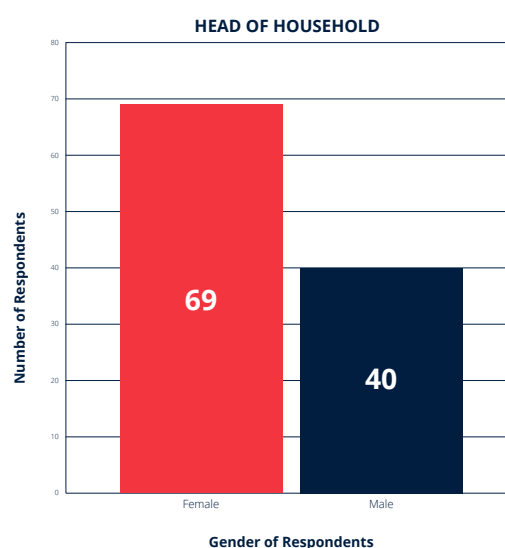


Figure 4: Gender headed households.



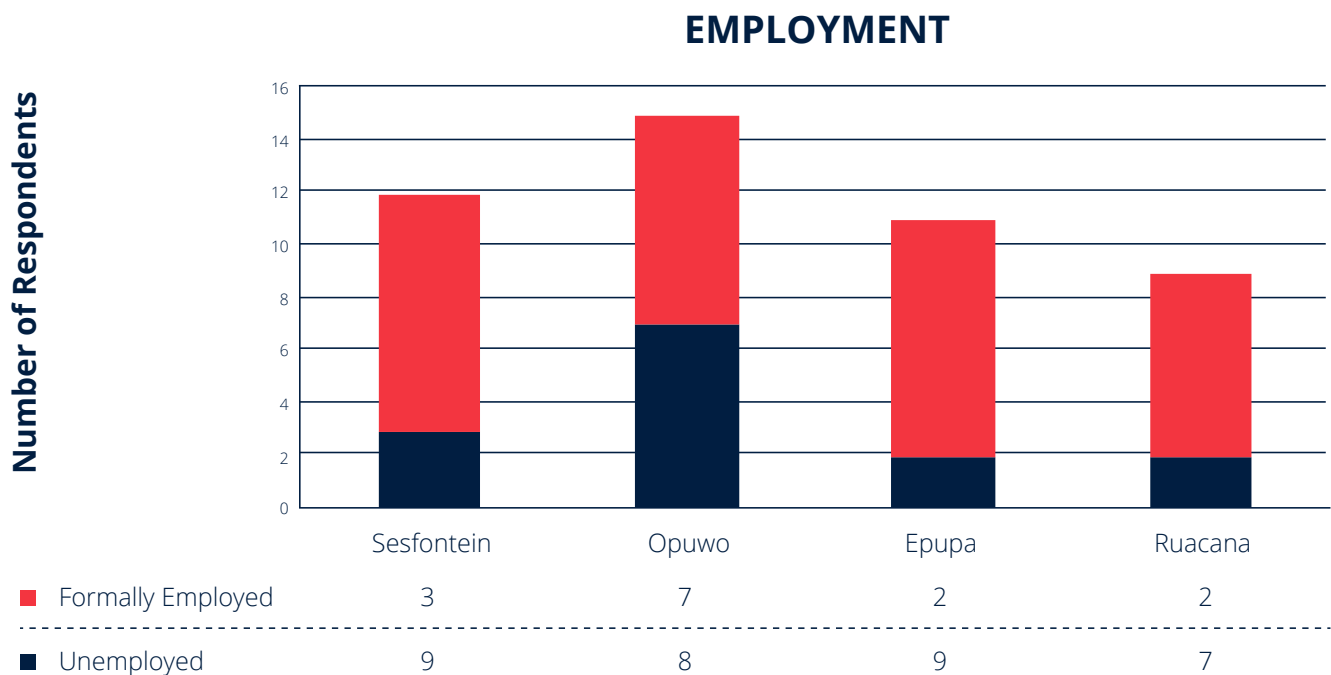


Figure 5: Employment status in communities assessed.

The majority of the affected population have depleted their assets thus making them more vulnerable to shocks as they have nothing to fall back on when the next emergency occurs. Seen as a coping strategy, households have been decreasing their food consumption and the number of meals per day (Figure 8) as the drought conditions progress. *Many families consume mealie porridge a minimum of once a day tallying with the current food consumption score of 19.1 which falls within the poor threshold.*

**Drought-induced migration** is increasing and associated with competition and increased stress in resource-scarce areas which ultimately leads to conflict. Nomadic pastoralism has long been a sustainable livelihood due to herders' ability to move and manage risk. Due to below-average rainfall patterns, herders are forced to seasonally migrate and leave their families for months on end in the search for grazing land and water for their livestock. This movement has been between communities and across borders (Namibia and Angola).

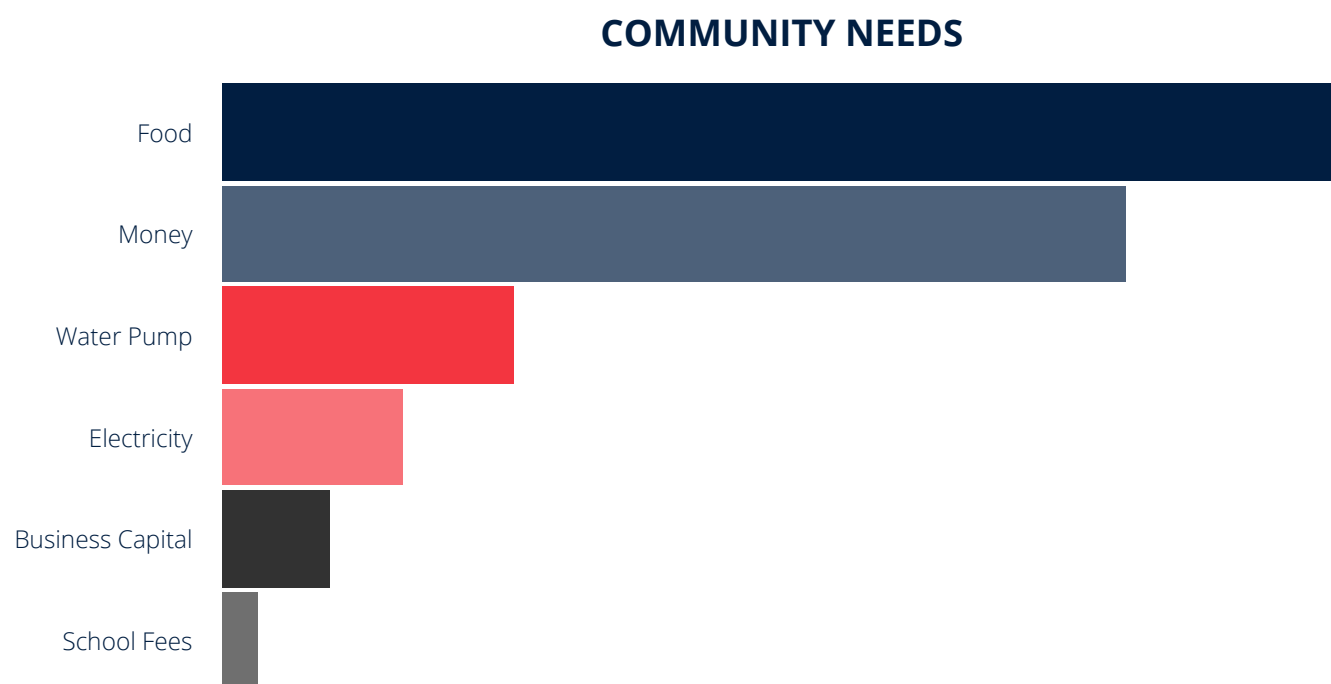


Figure 6: List of community needs from most to least important

## COPING MECHANISMS

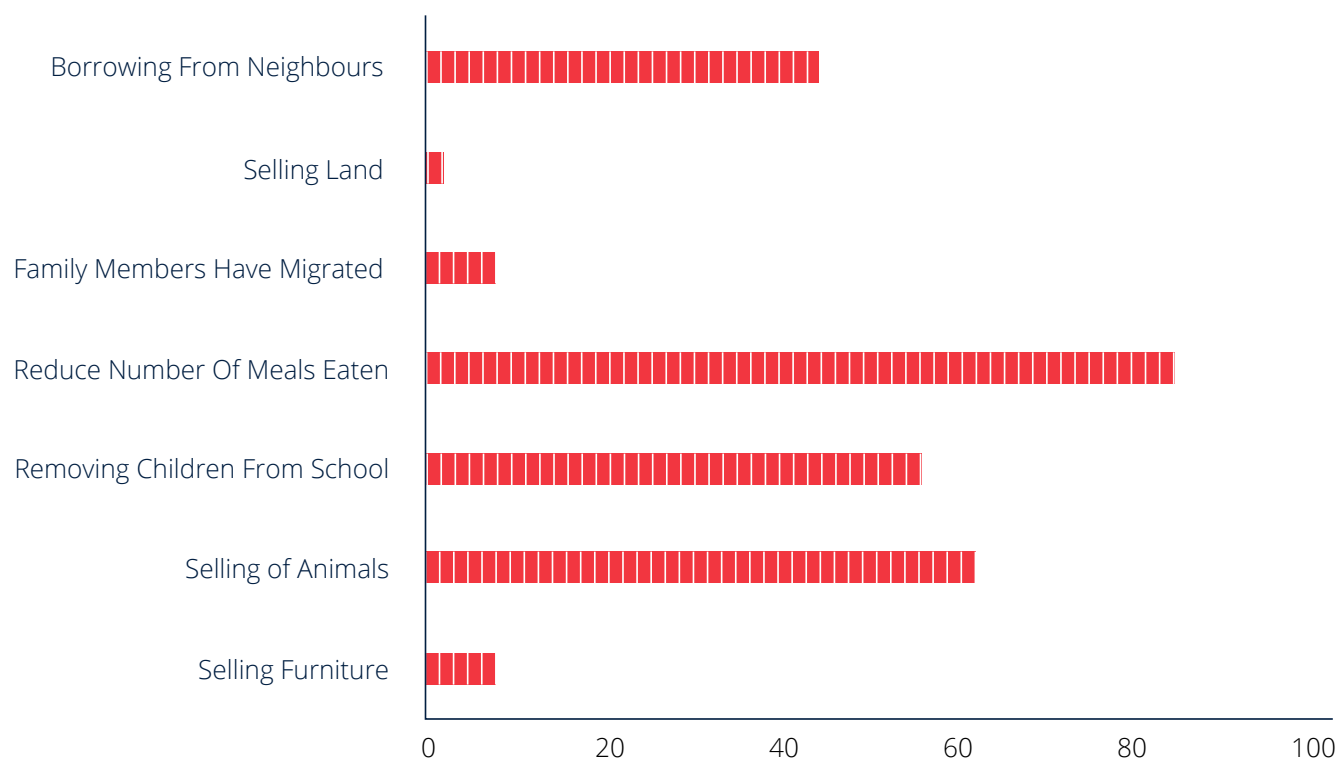


Figure 7: Coping mechanisms adopted by rural communities.

In 2021, **Namibia hosted over 4,000 Angolan nationals** who left their country in search of better livelihood opportunities. Through their government support, many were repatriated, with a small handful remaining embedded in the host communities.

As informal/seasonal employment opportunities decrease, semi-skilled family members travel to the nearest towns in search of job opportunities. 16% of the assessed communities reported migration of family members and further indicated that some would send back remittances to assist their families.

**Health** implications brought on by the drought are primarily a result of below-average rainfall, poor crop production, and the reduction of meals consumed in a day. Assessed communities reported cases of malnutrition coupled with reports of infant deaths.

Most of the households assessed are located in marginalized communities that have no or one clinic in their proximity. Individuals are tasked to travel long distances for health services and in some cases have to pay for the services. As household income decreases, so does the availability of funds for health needs. Families then resort to other health service alternatives in some instances.

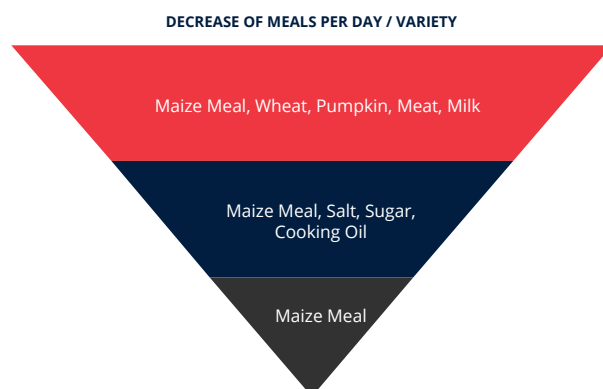


Figure 8: Household consumption.

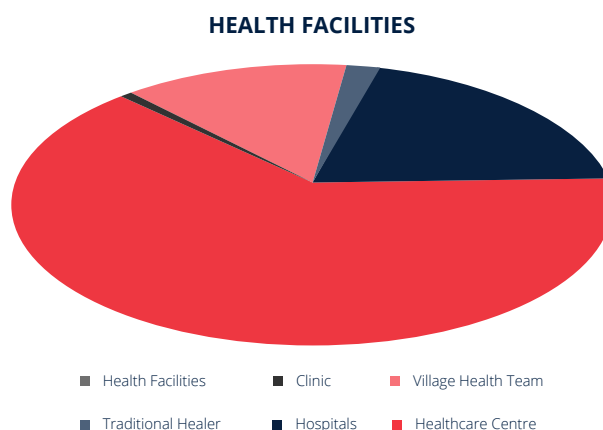


Figure 9: Health services sought.













## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Urgent assistance is required as the drought conditions persist leaving many families vulnerable. Communities indicated the need for immediate and long-term interventions that are geared toward building resilience, are sustainable, and decrease their reliance on government and humanitarian support. Below are the listed proposed activities:**

- Installation/Rehabilitation of water pumps with the preference of solar pumps over diesel
- Restocking of livestock, the provision of agricultural tools and seeds, and the incorporation of climate-smart agriculture
- Programming that provides educational assistance for children (school uniforms, school fees, and school boarding supplies)
- Skills development and education on nutrition for women



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