

THE ALLIANCE IN A NUTSHELL

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A MOVEMENT. The Alliance is a national *movement* seeking to improve the living conditions in informal settlements in Namibia building on the inclusive practices of the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and other self-help groups across the country.

AMBITIOUS YET FRUGAL. The proposal is to reach the maximum possible benefit to households nationwide, by *replicating* a process that has proven to yield both efficient use of resources and equity. This is key during these difficult economic times and the COVID-19 emergency.

AN URGENT CALL. This strategy is proposed with a sense of *urgency*, responding to the call of President Geingob who has regarded informal settlements as a “humanitarian crisis”; and the pressing need to improve the challenging living conditions of inhabitants in informal settlements.

POVERTY THAT THE NATION CAN'T AFFORD. Informal settlements are the face of poverty in Namibia, and the costs of the poor living conditions is too high for everyone. Effecting change on the ground can be the face of Harambee prosperity, and can be its driving strategy in terms of addressing issues of public health and education, as well as national security.

NATIONAL UNITY OF PURPOSE. This endeavour is not a sectoral matter but an initiative that can mobilise the public sector, civil society, the private sector, and the population at large. Improving the living conditions of the poorest can be a process of nation-building, a form of restoring justice, and fulfilling the promises of independence.

AUTONOMOUS, YET GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED. While support and mandate from government is crucial, this *movement* should be seen as a *national aim*. This is a coalition of partners seeking to expand their activities to the scale needed to make an unprecedented difference through simple, inclusive, incremental, and affordable ways.

UPGRADING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS NATION-WIDE: KEY STEPS

STAGE 1. Registration of informal settlement households.

During the first year, registration is done in databases in local authorities.

STAGE 2. Layout design.

During the second year, studios take place to develop ways for settlements to be upgraded.

STAGE 3. Re-blocking and installation of services.

During the third year, installation of services and other necessary infrastructure to enable housing opportunities.

NOTE: In many urban areas, processes are already on-going and progress is already underway.

WHAT TO DO?

The Alliance *potentiates* what is currently existing while incorporating those who would like to contribute and come on board. It should *not* be seen as “a new” or “additional” programme; but a consolidation of good practices already on the ground.

The Alliance proposes to gradually *upgrade* rather than “replace” informal settlements across the country through engaging *inhabitants as development/implementing partners*, not “beneficiaries”.

The strategy proposes to make a shift from “building houses” to *enabling housing opportunities*; primarily through facilitating security of tenure, supporting installation of basic services, and encouraging subsequent community-led improvements leading to *adequate housing*. The Alliance proposes to see *development opportunities* as indicators of success; rather than “houses” or “plots of land”.

The Alliance *mobilises resources*, particularly those of communities themselves (e.g. savings). *People will invest* in the improvement of their living conditions if *development rights* are released *en masse*.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

The Alliance believes that the opportunity to upgrade informal settlements in Namibia lies in supporting bottom-up-led approaches through improved coordination and increased funding for current implementing partners. For this, four needs have been identified:

- 1. Coordination capacities.** This requires best possible project management capacities, to coordinate informal settlement upgrading projects in Namibia *as a whole*. As a project of national importance, this Unit would require a mandate from government.
- 2. Technical capacities.** The Alliance aims at mobilising young professionals through *regional technical teams* including project managers, town planners, engineers, surveyors, land administrators, and others into *professional brigades*. Currently, many young graduates remain unemployed; this can be an opportunity to mobilise efforts towards a national aim.
- 3. Financial capacities.** The estimates for upgrading informal settlement upgrading are considerable, and beyond the capacity of any of the current members of the Secretariat. However, the Alliance needs to remain *an initiative that partners with government; not a “government initiative”*.
- 4. Social capacities.** Inclusive bottom-up-led processes of upgrading are led by SDFN, supported by the broad coalition of civil society (trade unions, women’s groups, churches). This requires unprecedented mobilisation matching or exceeding the collective energies around independence.

This document is based on the National Alliance for Informal Settlement Upgrading strategy to scale-up bottom-up-led upgrading of informal settlements nationwide. The full document can be downloaded from: <https://nationalalliance.nust.na/>

The Alliance partners are the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG) / Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN); the Namibia Association of Local Authority Officials (NALAO) and the Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN); the Civil Society Organisations Working Group on Land Reform (CSO-WGLR); and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). They are supported by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD). For a full outline on the proposed upgrading process, see the Alliance’s [CONCEPT NOTE](#).