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ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

State Resilience To Shocks And Disasters
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GOVERNANCE AS RESILIENCE INFRASTRUCTURE: NICG Reflections on Environmental and Disaster Management in Namibia

The Namibia Institute of Corporate Governance (NICG) was honoured to participate in the **Environmental Stewardship and Gender Mainstreaming for State Resilience to Shocks and Disasters Workshop**, convened by the **Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT)** on **26–27 January 2026** in Windhoek. NICG was invited to contribute to the panel on “**Good Governance as Resilience Infrastructure: Public Accountability in Environmental and Disaster Management**.”

We welcomed this invitation, particularly because it reflects a growing recognition that resilience is not only a technical or environmental concern, but a **governance challenge**, one that touches on institutional design, accountability, coordination, leadership and decision-making quality across the state.

The reflections below capture NICG’s **governance perspective** on Namibia’s environmental and disaster management resilience infrastructure, informed by our work across public, private and civil society institutions.



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Strengths in Namibia's resilience governance architecture

From a governance standpoint, Namibia has invested significantly in the **formal architecture required to manage environmental and disaster risk**. The country's legal and policy framework is comparatively strong and includes, among others:

- the **Environmental Management Act**, with its preventative orientation and environmental clearance mechanisms;
- the **Disaster Risk Management Act**, which frames disaster risk management as a continuous and integrated process spanning prevention, preparedness, response and recovery;
- climate change, biodiversity and human–wildlife conflict policies;
- disaster impact assessment frameworks and international environmental and social commitments.

These instruments are reinforced by established coordination structures and by **relatively strong social protection mechanisms**, including grants and social payments that play an important role in cushioning households during periods of stress. Namibia has also articulated clear policy commitments to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, alongside sustained public investment in resilience-related sectors.

From NICG's perspective, these elements indicate that Namibia's resilience challenge is **not one of policy absence or weak intent**, but rather of how governance systems perform in practice.



Where governance weaknesses undermine resilience

Despite the strength of the formal framework, several governance patterns continue to weaken resilience outcomes.

A recurring issue is **uneven implementation and enforcement**. While mandates are clearly defined, compliance monitoring and follow-through are inconsistent, and non-compliance is not always met with predictable consequences. This weakens the authority of regulatory systems and reduces their preventative impact over time.

Related to this is **limited oversight of environmental and disaster risk decisions**. High-impact decisions may be taken through lawful processes, yet there is often insufficient structured review of whether risks were effectively mitigated, conditions enforced, or

assumptions tested once impacts materialise. In the absence of such oversight, accountability becomes diffuse and institutional learning remains ad hoc.

Institutional coordination and policy coherence also remain challenges. Although coordination platforms exist, overlapping mandates and siloed implementation can blur responsibility for outcomes and resulting in duplicated efforts. Coordination, without clear accountability, risks diluting rather than strengthening governance.

practice.



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From a governance perspective, **data and information management** represents a particularly significant constraint. Environmental, risk and social data are generated across institutions, but fragmentation and limited information-sharing reduce their influence on planning, approvals and preparedness. Early warning does not consistently translate into early action, and constrained access to information limits transparency, oversight and learning.

Gender mainstreaming illustrates these broader dynamics. Despite strong policy commitments, implementation is uneven, institutional capacity remains limited, and accountability mechanisms are weak, highlighting the gap between policy aspiration and governance practice.

Governance as the backbone of resilience

NICG's view is that resilience is ultimately determined by **how institutions govern risk on a day-to-day basis**. Clear roles before crises, credible oversight during implementation, and accountability after crises are not supplementary functions—they are the backbone of effective resilience.

Where decision authority is unclear, data is underutilised, or accountability mechanisms are weak, even well-designed technical systems struggle to deliver durable outcomes. Conversely, where governance systems are disciplined, transparent and adaptive, resilience frameworks are more likely to hold under pressure.



Priority areas for strengthening governance performance

From a governance and institutional capacity perspective, strengthening resilience in Namibia requires focused attention on:

- **data governance and information-sharing**, ensuring that evidence meaningfully informs decisions across sectors;
- **performance and accountability frameworks** that embed risk management, compliance and gender mainstreaming into institutional practice;
- **policy coherence and role clarity**, particularly where multiple institutions share responsibility for risk governance;
- **systematic post-event review and learning**, so that shocks lead to measurable improvement rather than repetition;

- **stronger oversight and enforcement**, especially in relation to environmental compliance and disaster preparedness.

These priorities point less to the need for new policies and more to the need for **consistent governance discipline** in the application of existing frameworks.



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Concluding reflection

Namibia has invested in the formal structures required for resilience. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring that **governance itself functions as resilience infrastructure**, connecting policy to practice, data to decisions, and coordination to accountability.

NICG welcomes MEFT's leadership in opening space for this governance-focused conversation and sees continued value in grounding resilience efforts in strong institutional practice,

oversight and learning. As environmental, climate and socio-economic risks intensify, the quality of governance will increasingly determine whether resilience frameworks translate into real, sustained protection for people, ecosystems and the economy.



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