

# Model National Drought Plan



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

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## Model National Drought Plan

Recalling Decision 36/COP. 11, the Namib declaration, which calls for increased emphasis on mitigating the impacts of droughts and the development of national drought policies to enhance long-term drought preparedness and resilience at all levels, including government stakeholders and farmers with special reference to vulnerable communities;

Also recalling Decision 9/COP. 12 which highlights the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration to develop and implement national drought plans that can be implemented at local levels to build societal resilience to the impacts of drought while also enhancing land rehabilitation bringing about SLM, reducing biodiversity loss and enhancing the provision of ecosystem services;

Also recalling Decision 29/COP. 13 which requests the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, within their respective mandates to:

(a) Implement the drought initiative for the biennium 2018–2019 which proposes action on: (i) drought preparedness systems; (ii) regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk; and (iii) a toolbox to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought;

(b) Support countries to develop and implement national drought management policies, as well as the establishment and strengthening of comprehensive drought monitoring, preparedness and early warning systems;

Noting that national drought plans could be part of a wider Disaster Risk Reduction strategy, Integrated Soil and Water Management policy, National climate change adaptation plans or sustainable development policy;

Cognizant of the need for countries to develop and implement national drought management policies focusing on 'proactive' and precautionary approaches;

This document is prepared as a guide for the Drought Initiative by summarizing and minor modifications of the "National Drought Management Policy Guidelines" prepared by WMO and GWP<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> WMO/GWP Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) (2014). National Drought Management Policy Guidelines – A Template for Action (D.A. Wilhite). Tools and Guidelines Series 1. WMO, Geneva, Switzerland and GWP, Stockholm, Sweden.

## Background

Drought affects all sectors of society, from food production to public health, and there is a growing need to help communities, businesses and individuals threatened by drought to plan accordingly. At the Conference of the Parties (decision 29/COP.13), the UNCCD institutions and bodies have been requested to implement a drought initiative in the biennium 2018–2019. A key element of the initiative will be helping countries to build drought resilience by implementing concrete actions for drought preparedness. By being prepared and acting early, we can boost the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems to drought.

The countries that have expressed interest in developing a national drought plan will receive assistance from the UNCCD secretariat, which will provide a drought expert for each country to help with enhancing national drought preparedness and planning. Most countries already have some drought response measures in place. These, however, might need to be reviewed or validated since most existing approaches are not proactive and comprehensive, and their elements do not always fit well together, often overlooking the needs of vulnerable populations most affected by drought. The experts will help parties prepare a national drought plan that will put all the pieces together and identify gaps in the national drought preparedness and planning. A national drought plan should indicate measures to be implemented as soon as the possibility of drought is signaled by meteorological services. It is expected that the plan will be endorsed and eventual action triggered at the highest political level.

The purpose of this document is to provide a model national drought plan that can serve as a background document for national experts in the process of developing their national drought plans.

### Preconditions/Institutional arrangements required to develop a national drought plan<sup>2</sup>

- A national drought plan should include essential elements for a country's preparedness to drought. This exercise can help countries identify the drought events to which their populations can be vulnerable, as well as the probability of such events. Key elements of a national drought plan include the following: (i) early warning and prediction, (ii) vulnerability mapping, (iii) preparedness and mitigation, (iv) response, and (v) communications.
- A drought plan should outline the following:
  - What the country needs to do to assess and minimize the adverse effects before, during and after the drought;
  - How the country will monitor which populations are affected and communicate with the stakeholders, and the nation at large about expected or ongoing drought; and
  - What the country will need to do after the drought to reduce future impacts, including the review of actions before and during drought, as well as the effectiveness of the drought plan.

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<sup>2</sup> A technical guideline highlighted as part of DRAMP Framework (see Crossman 2018). These technical guidelines present practical information for supporting the development and implementation of national drought plans.

- When developing the drought plan, the following elements should be taken into account:
  - The proposed steps mentioned below can be adjusted (shortened or lengthened/modified), depending on the country;
  - A drought plan can be broadly outlined to accommodate adjustments in time and space;
  - It should be applicable to all regions, population groups, economies and social/cultural sectors, while reflecting regional differences in drought characteristics, vulnerability and impacts;
  - It should be gender responsive.<sup>3</sup>

### The step-by step process<sup>4</sup> for national drought plan

- The steps detailed below provide an outline of the process for policy and preparedness planning. It is an adaptation of the 10-step process prepared by WMO and GWP which is summarized here as guidance for the Drought Initiative.
- Applying this methodology requires adapting it to the current institutional capacity, political infrastructure and technical capacity of each specific country. In most countries, the function of responding to drought is normally assigned to the sectors that house functions of agriculture, natural resources, water management, environment or emergency management. For a national drought plan to be effective, all stakeholders and sectors of a country need to be engaged.

#### Examples of applying the step-by-step process

- Forty-seven out of fifty US states have developed drought plans, and the majority of the states have followed the guidelines proposed here for the preparation or revision of their drought plans;
- The steps have been adapted by several regions and countries. For example, in Europe<sup>5</sup> and West Africa;
- The methodology can be adapted to any level of government in any country.

The drought policy and preparedness process include the following steps:

#### *Step 1: Appoint a national drought plan task force*

- The task force is a permanent standing body appointed or established by the highest- level authority in the country, such as head of state or prime minister;
- The composition of the task force should reflect the multidisciplinary nature of drought response, as well as multisectoral nature of drought impacts. It should include all relevant ministries of the national government, as well as key drought experts. A representative of the head of state should also be included to facilitate communication and awareness of drought impacts, status and scenarios.

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<sup>3</sup> See more about this in gender mainstreaming document

<sup>4</sup> WMO/GWP Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) (2014). National Drought Management Policy Guidelines – A Template for Action (D.A. Wilhite). Tools and Guidelines Series 1. WMO, Geneva, Switzerland and GWP, Stockholm, Sweden.

<sup>5</sup> Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (2015). Guidelines for the preparation of Drought Management Plans. Development and Implementation in the Context of the EU Water Framework Directive.

A range of governmental and non-governmental agencies, including the private sector and civil society, should also be involved in the task force to represent the disadvantaged population groups, such as indigenous peoples, communities located in remote desert, rural or mountainous areas, nomadic tribes and migrants, since these groups are often the first and the most affected by water scarcity.

- **Tasks:**

1. The task force supervises the plan development process by mobilizing the necessary support and integrating resources provided by various ministries and levels of government to develop the plan;

2. The task force coordinates the implementation of the drought plan at all levels of government. It is also tasked with the activation of various elements of the plan during and before drought. The task force enforces actions and implements mitigation and response programmes or delegates this responsibility to government bodies at the sub-national level. It also develops policy recommendations for the head of the government.

*Step 2: Define the goals/objectives of the drought plan*

- The task force should establish specific and achievable goals as part of the national drought plan along with timelines for implementing various aspects of the plan and achieving the outlined goals. History of impacts and response to drought in the country, the most vulnerable economic, cultural and social sectors, legal and social implications of the plan and environmental concerns caused by drought should be considered at this stage.

*Step 3: Seek stakeholder participation*

- It is essential to identify all citizen groups and solicit input from stakeholders that have a vested interest in drought planning. For example, community focus groups or citizens' advisory councils that are included in the task force's organizational structure can facilitate communication and implementation of the plan. The process of stakeholder involvement should assess the dimensions of gender and age, as well as the interests of indigenous peoples, migrants and other segments of population already affected by water scarcity to identify the high risk stakeholders whose adequate access to water for personal and domestic use is most likely to be compromised (for example, 50 l pp/d).

*Step 4: Inventory/situational Analysis*

- A national drought plan should include an inventory of natural, biological, human, government and financial resources for drought response identify constraints that may impede the planning process and specify which population groups are likely to be affected first and the most at each stage of drought.

*Step 5: Prepare/write the National Drought Plan*

- This step includes defining organizational structure of the drought task force and drafting the national drought plan.

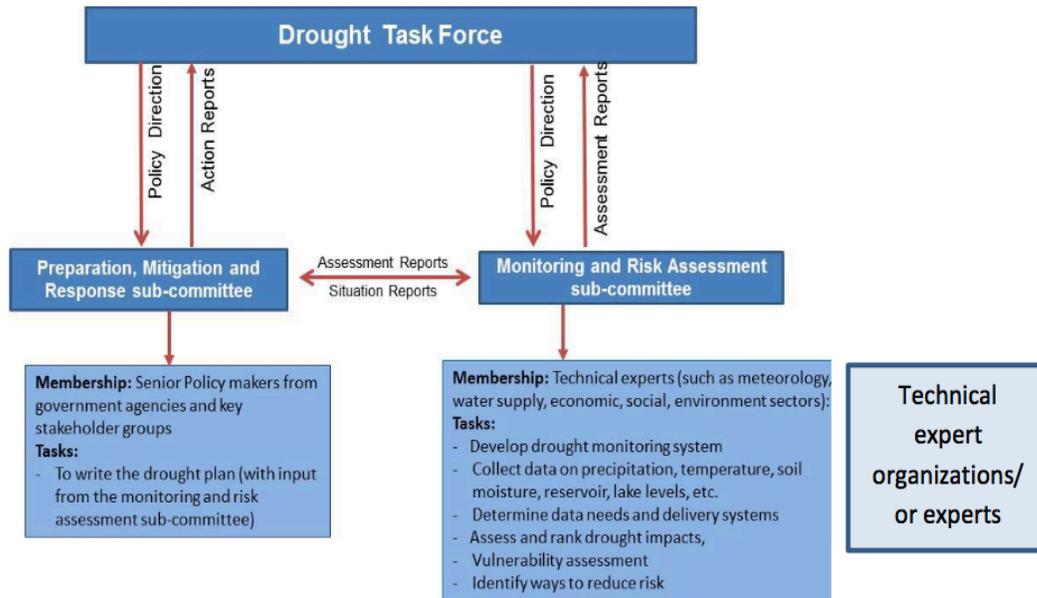


Figure 1 Drought task force organizational structure

#### *Step 6: Identify needs and fill institutional gaps*

- Based on the feedback from the sub-committees, the task force should compile a list of needs and gaps in the national drought planning, submitting the recommendations on remedial measures to the appropriate government body. This step is needed to identify data and institutional gaps in measuring the impacts of drought and the effectiveness of drought response actions, as well as developing appropriate plans for improvement.

#### *Step 7: Communicate/educate*

- Communicate with the public effectively and inclusively to reach all segments of society, emphasizing that the drought plan is designed to relieve both short- and long-term drought impacts; outlining the adjustments that the population might need to make in response to different degrees of drought; the costs of implementing each step of the drought plan and the funding mechanisms;
- An enhanced educational program that goes beyond standard outreach measures is necessary to build awareness of short- and long-term water supply issues and facilitate better preparedness and response to drought, along with the understanding that drought planning must continue during non-drought years.

*Step 8: Evaluate the plan*

- The final step of the planning process is the development of a detailed set of procedures that can ensure transparent and effective mechanisms for providing meaningful feedback and redress to ensure adequate evaluation of the drought plan – both ongoing and event-specific.

**Required actions at various phases of drought: a template**

<b>Phases</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Actions to be considered (Examples)</b>
<b>Drought advisory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Abnormally dry</li> <li>- Stream flow, wells, reservoir and groundwater levels start to drop</li> <li>- Identified high risk stakeholders notice reduction in access to water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor physical factors, including water supply to high risk stakeholders regularly,<sup>6</sup> conduct a targeted public information campaign</li> <li>- Drought task force monitors situation on monthly basis, discusses trends with meteorology services and other involved parties</li> </ul>
<b>Drought watch/alert</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PDI -1.0 to-2.0</li> <li>- Stream flow, wells, reservoir and groundwater levels are below normal</li> <li>- Damage to crops, pastures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closer monitoring of indicators of persisting or rapidly worsening drought</li> <li>- Assess the need for a formal risk assessment committee (RAC) activation</li> <li>- Restrict non-essential water uses, ensuring that priority is given to personal and domestic rather than business use</li> <li>- Official state of drought not yet declared</li> </ul>
<b>Drought warning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PDI -2.0 to-4.0</li> <li>- Stream flow, wells, reservoir and groundwater levels continue to decline</li> <li>- Water shortages become common</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement stringent water conservation measures</li> <li>- Enact mandatory restrictions</li> <li>- The drought task force (DC) and monitoring committee (MC) are activated</li> <li>- Potential drought emergency declared</li> </ul>
<b>Drought emergency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PDI -2.0 to -4.0</li> <li>- Major crop/pasture losses; widespread water shortages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Begin mandatory water allocation</li> <li>- Allow max per capita use of water</li> <li>- Plans for provision or re-allocation of water to ensure that min volume access (e.g. 50 l pp/d) is maintained to everyone at an affordable price, including high risk stakeholders</li> <li>- Drought emergency is declared by proclamation of the head of state</li> </ul>
<b>Coming out of drought</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Return to normal conditions</li> <li>- Some lingering water deficits; pastures or crops not fully recovered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term recovery operations continue</li> <li>- DC issues a final report and is deactivated</li> <li>- Resume normal monitoring</li> </ul>

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<sup>6</sup> As identified through Task Force Stakeholder Assessment

## The structure of a national drought plan: a template<sup>7</sup>

### **1. Background**

- Purpose, scope, goals and objectives
- Plan development: introduction of the ten-step process

### **2. Relationship with other plans and policies**

- National water laws, existing drought mitigation strategies and planning issues
- Importance of national drought plan
- International laws relating to human rights obligations for access to safe water

### **3. Overview of drought in the country**

- Historical occurrences
- Understanding drought: meteorological, agricultural, hydrological and socioeconomic drought
- Drought impacts: by sectors

### **4. Organization and assignment of responsibilities**

- Organizational overview
- Assignment of responsibilities

### **5. Drought monitoring, forecasting and impact assessment**

- Drought indices
- Current monitoring, forecasting and data collection
- Drought severity in all relevant sectors
- A drought impact assessment methodology

### **6. Drought risk and vulnerability**

- The drought risk and vulnerability assessment and GIS mapping
- Drought risk areas in various administrative areas

### **7. Drought communication and response actions**

- Drought communication protocol
- Declaration of drought conditions
- Communication and coordination guidelines
- Drought response actions

### **8. Drought mitigation and preparedness**

- National water resources monitoring and impact assessment
- Development of new and alternative water sources
- Water conservation practices/public education awareness and outreach
- Prioritization of water supply to meet minimum access rights to water in order to meet personal and domestic needs for all people at an affordable price
- Legislation and land use planning

### **9. Recommendations and implementation actions**

- Priority implementation actions
- Future updates and revisions

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://drought.unl.edu/droughtplanning/Plans/StatePlans.aspx>

## References

WMO/GWP Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) (2014). National Drought Management Policy Guidelines – A Template for Action (D.A. Wilhite). Tools and Guidelines Series 1. WMO, Geneva, Switzerland and GWP, Stockholm, Sweden.

Donald A. Wilhite, M.V.K. Sivakumar and Deborah A. Wood (Eds.). (2000). Early Warning Systems for Drought Preparedness and Drought Management. Proceedings of an Expert Group Meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal, 5-7 September 2000. Geneva, Switzerland: WMO.