

Widespread drought threatens 400,000

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA: A severe drought that sparked a state of emergency in Namibia has left 400,000 people facing hunger, the government said.



The government has been criticised for failing to do enough to provide relief to people during the worst dry spell to hit the country in decades.

But the chairman of the Disaster Risk Management Committee defended the government's performance as he announced the new figures late earlier this week.

"We are trying to do the best we can to make sure that food goes to the intended people. So far so good," he said.

Namibia is the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa, and only two percent of land receives sufficient rainfall to grow crops. The southern African country has seen several droughts in the recent decades.

The number of people at risk from hunger has risen from 300,000 in May to an estimated 400,000 by early August, when President Hifikepunye Pohamba declared a state of emergency.

In May, the government started handing out maize meal bags to people living in rural areas in a central part of the country and authorities are appealing for additional international support.

Unicef says more than 778,000 people including 109,000 children under the age of five are at risk of malnutrition. It says it needs about Nm\$22m to support those people.

The dry spell has destroyed grazing land and raised concerns about the country's wildlife population, which attracts vital tourist income.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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