

## NAMIBIA

### Nutrition situation in Namibia

#### AT A GLANCE

Namibia has a population of 2.6 million people<sup>1</sup>. Despite being an Upper-Middle Income Country 43.3% of the population live in multidimensional poverty. With a Gini coefficient of 59.1 (2015) Namibia is the second most unequal society worldwide, and the driest country in Sub-Sahara Africa, which particularly affects children. According to UNICEF, 8 out of every 10 children do not have enough water to meet their needs. Oil and uranium explorations and potential mining activities threaten huge underground water resources. Reliable data for several nutrition indicators are lacking, but estimates are disquieting. Namibia has a double-burden of malnutrition where overnutrition (overweight and obesity<sup>2</sup>) coexists

alongside undernutrition (stunting and wasting). An average of 2 542 child deaths per year are 'directly associated with undernutrition', and stunting is estimated to cost at least 5.22% of Namibia's GDP annually, over EUR 560 million in 2016<sup>3</sup>. At least one in three households cannot afford a basic nutritious diet, which in certain regions increases to 70% of the population<sup>4</sup>. In the third quarter of 2024, an estimated 1.4 million people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)<sup>5</sup>. Oppressive traditional gender norms and dependencies still affect many women and children in Namibia<sup>6</sup>. Namibia has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.450 and is ranked at 112 of 166 countries in the 2023-24 index.

#### DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

#### NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

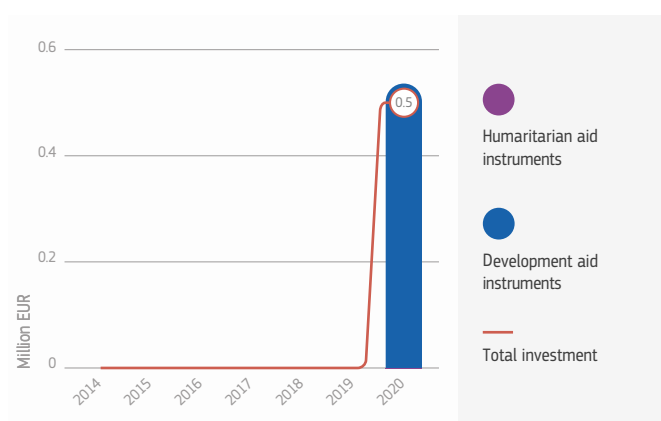
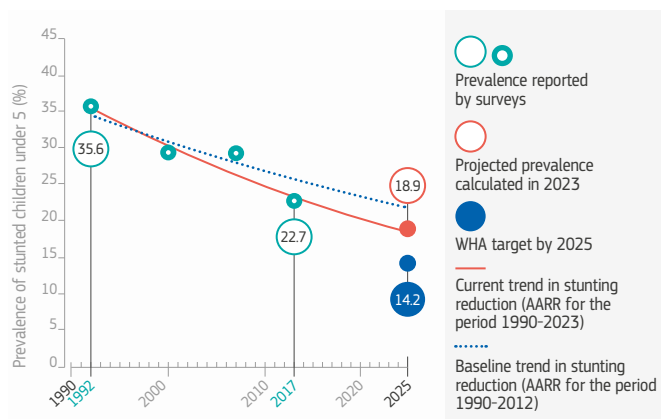
- Namibia joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement in 2011.
- In December 2021, Namibia launched its revised Food and Nutrition Security Policy, accompanied by a Coordination Structure and costed Implementation Action Plan. After almost two years, only rudimentary coordination structures are established with minimal implementation success. If properly coordinated and implemented, the Policy would bring multisectoral stakeholders together and enable a measurable impact on Namibia's malnutrition situation.
- With little official development assistance (ODA) inflows, worse still for nutrition, government revenues remain the main source of nutrition financing<sup>7</sup>.
- Namibia published its Food and Nutrition Guidelines in 2000 and various other relevant guidelines and resources.
- Namibia relies heavily (over 60%) on food imports, as the agricultural sector contributes only a small fraction to GDP.
- Nutrient-dense foods are not yet widely produced and consumed, and the main domestic supply is staple foods. There are efforts to increase and diversify local food production, with more research being conducted and multiple private sector and civil society initiatives emerging, increasingly focusing on a whole food systems approach.
- By the end of 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture (MAWLR) intends to finalise Namibia's National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP).

#### Example of EU support

In 2022, EUR 16 million has been allocated to the EU-Namibia Early Childhood Development (ECD) Sector Reform Contract<sup>8</sup>. In this framework, a variable tranche of EUR 2 million relates to nutrition and will be released upon progress in the number of children in ECD centres receiving school meals from the government, with a target of 16 410 girls and boys respectively in 2024 and as many in 2025. Through a contribution agreement with UNICEF and WFP, the expectation is to test the implementation of a sustainable community-based food supply for the school meals (food security) and to consistently improve the quality of the food provided so it is nutritious.



## Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



## TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

Since the last reliable Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) in 2013, Namibia has achieved a steady but slow decline in the prevalence of stunting since the 1990s. The rate of decline in the number of stunted children has accelerated from 1.3% in 2012 to 1.9% in 2023. If this trend continues, over 63 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025, still 16 000 children above the WHA target.

However, given the recent socio-economic developments over the last ten years, the reduction of donor-support due to the country now being classified a Middle Income Country, and based on fragmented reports from different regions, a significant increase in stunting is to be expected in the next National and Demographic Health Survey, for which Namibia's Ministry of Health and Social Services continues to seek funding; for example a study in 2016 estimated stunting to be 30.3%.

## EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 0.5 MILLION

During the period 2014 to 2020, the EU committed EUR 0.5 million as part of financing of actions in Southern Africa and Indian Ocean financed from the 11th EDF<sup>9</sup>. See also Example of EU support.

## Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

At the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth \(N4G\) Summit 2021](#), commitments from NAFSAN, a key non-profit alliance<sup>10</sup>, included (see [N4G Compact and its Annex](#)): 1. improved environments for breastfeeding; 2. an unconditional basic income grant with accompanying measures to promote nutrition; 3. the local production of organic and climate resistant food, as well as indigenous seeds, and protection of key natural resources e.g. water; 4. information and educational materials (e.g. [www.nafsan.org/n4h](http://www.nafsan.org/n4h)) and campaigns that promote healthier diets; 5. increased nutrition investment from both government and private sector; advocate for a 'sugar tax'.

At the [UN Food Systems Summit 2021](#), Namibia ([version 14.09.2021](#)) promoted the following actions: people-centred healthy diets through nutrition education and advocacy; access to, demand for and consumption of affordable diets; access to healthy and nutritious diets that account for food sovereignty of indigenous community groups and uphold people's rights to healthy and culturally appropriate food; improved sanitation and water infrastructure especially in informal settlements; social protection programmes linked to basic services, including food assistance; address micronutrient deficiencies; dietary diversification, mainstreaming indigenous crops and diversifying cropping systems; appropriate technologies throughout the value chain and initiatives on value addition, and long shelf-life products; regional governments to spearhead various crop and livestock projects for nutrition, income generation, and equitable livelihoods; capacity building and partnering of private sector and developmental partners for sustainable diets, infrastructure and technological developments, and climate change mitigation.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The EU's Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 includes nutrition as part of its support for integrated early childhood development service delivery (IECD), and the support for improved access to safe water and sanitation also addresses a key determinant of undernutrition.

In 2022, the EU committed EUR 2 million to feed children attending early childhood development centres under the EUR 16 million ECD Sector Reform Contract. A grant of EUR 370 600 was awarded to the Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN) from December 2022 to May 2025 for the project 'Making Multi-Sectoral Coordination Work: Collaborating towards better nutrition, food security and development for everyone', targeting three pilot regions among the poorest ones.

Together with GIZ Namibia's Farming-for-Resilience and with input from government, leading academic institutions and UN agencies, NAFSAN (currently supported by the EU) has developed the highly participatory '[Nutrition-for-Health: Embracing our Namibian Food Systems](#)' approach, which is going to be rolled out in communities and ECD Centres across Namibia through various implementing NGOs as from 2024.

1 - UNDESA [World Population Prospects 2022, population estimate](#) for July 2025. To note, according to the 2023 Namibia national census the population totals 3 million.

2 - The prevalence of overweight and obesity is higher than the regional average. Type 2 diabetes affects almost 10% of Namibians

3 - Namibian Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) study 2022, based on 2016 data.

4 - National Planning Commission and World Food Program (2021). [Fill the Nutrient Gap, Namibia](#).

5 - [IPC](#): Namibia: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April - June 2024 and Projection for July - September 2024. The number of people experiencing acute food insecurity has more than doubled from the same period last year when 579 000 people experienced high levels of acute food insecurity, and includes 85 000 people in Phase 4, Emergency.

6 - According to the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey, 2019 more males than females ages 18-24 endorsed traditional gender and sexual norms: 56.4% of males and 42.9% of females agreed with one or more statements related to traditional and harmful norms. Females ages 18-24 who experienced food insecurity were significantly more likely to experience childhood violence (27.8%) than those who did not experience food insecurity (18.3%)

7 - According to the WB, Namibia's net ODA received was 7.2% of central government expense in 2022, as compared to 52.3% for Ethiopia (2022).

8 - A Sector Reform Contract focuses on sector policies and reforms, to improve governance and service delivery. They focus on one or a few SDGs and support EU partner countries' efforts to ensure inclusive access to qualitative public services, promote women's and children's rights, and create at sector level the conditions for sustainable growth.

9 - Data excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. The European Commission applied the SUN Donor Network methodology from 2014/2020 and the OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker for nutrition resource tracking from 2021. Data for 2022 is preliminary.

10 - NAFSAN is a Namibian membership-based, non-profit alliance consisting of civil society, academia, private sector and committed individuals.