



**WORKSHOP REPORT
NUTRITION STAKEHOLDERS
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA – JULY 13, 2009**

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the workshop was to convene a multi-stakeholder and multi-sector workshop on nutrition: the main purpose being to take the first step to form a *National Alliance for Improved Nutrition (NAFIN)*.

PROCEEDINGS

As the major champion for nutrition work in Namibia, the Right Honourable Prime Minister (PM), Nahas Angula opened the proceedings by giving an overview of the state of nutrition in the country (Attached). The PM also noted that Mr. Len le Roux, Director Partnerships of Synergos, who had been spearheading all the preparations for this workshop was unfortunately involved in an accident and could not attend the meeting. In his absence his colleagues from the local and regional office of Synergos had stepped in to be of assistance.

In his address the PM stressed the importance of good nutrition for all Namibians and the commitment and role that government can play in this regard. Judging by the presence of several government ministers, deputy ministers, senior government officials, representatives of UN Agencies, international organizations and representatives of the private sector the need for a national response to malnutrition in Namibia is shared by many different stakeholders.

Infant mortality in Namibia, per 1,000 live births was 46 deaths in 2006. According to the 2nd Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 issued by the National Planning Commission, Namibia is not likely to substantially reduce infant mortality by 2015. High infant mortality is partially attributed to low nutritional status among children in the country and acute malnourishment is said to be affecting 7% of children under five years. The PM sees under nutrition as a cause of inequality and a political priority for the government to address. The rural areas are his major concern since the diet for these communities is generally traditional staples (mainly millet) that tend to be repetitive and are therefore not well balanced.

According to the PM, the Alliance would be the clearing-house for all nutrition-related initiatives in the country. Some of the questions the Alliance should address are: could staple food in our communities be improved or enriched? Could mothers be encouraged to breastfeed their babies? Could a feeding programme be developed using locally produced food to benefit every child in the Early Childhood Development Centres and Preschools? What kind of public awareness programmes could be developed to promote better feeding practices? How could micronutrients be improved in the staple food of our communities? How could food security in the country be enhanced? The Prime Minister confirmed his office's readiness to coordinate Namibia's national efforts for improved nutrition through the Alliance.

The PM's delivery was followed by a detailed presentation on Namibia's Nutrition landscape by Ms Marjorie van Wyk from the Ministry of Health and Social Services. (Attached) Highlights of the

presentation were that more than 6% of infants below 6 months of age are acutely malnourished due to inappropriate breastfeeding practices, weaning and complementary feeding practices. In addition, 77% (18,500) of acutely malnourished children are found in the north-eastern part of the country. There is also no up-to-date and accurate micronutrient deficiency data and fortification activities exist but lack coordination, standardization and quality control. HIV prevalence in Namibia is 17.8%, the 5th highest in the world, and there is no data on malnutrition in HIV positive children. Namibian health services also lack dedicated staff with nutrition-relevant skills as well as the infrastructure and equipment not to mention funds to tackle these complex problems.

Synergos Institute's Regional Director in Southern Africa, Mr. Barry Smith, made a presentation on the role and impact of inclusive partnerships and collaborations (Attached) In his presentation Mr. Smith highlighted the need and comparative advantage that inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships can play in addressing complex social inequalities such as nutrition. He also touched on the elements that make for successful partnerships and important role such an alliance can play in the future. The importance of addressing nutrition in Namibia has been highlighted, but it is as important to take cognizance of the institutional arrangements that need to be put in place to effectively address the challenges of nutrition in the country.

As part of the panel discussants, Mr. Louwtjie Hoon (Namibian Grain Processors Association), Ms. Antoinette Venter (Namibian Agronomic Board) and Ms. Ina Mozheni (GAIN) also made a contribution to the current status of nutrition in Namibia, and in general, from their perspectives.

DISCUSSION

After all the presentations the participants entered into a brief discussion around the topic. The participants were in general agreement that there was the need to form a coordinated response to nutrition and committed themselves to forming a National Alliance on Improved Nutrition.

It was further agreed that the Alliance not only focus on food fortification, but rather adopt a broader approach to nutrition that could address the scope of the challenges outlined by the PM in his opening address. The participants also noted some of the unique characterization of nutrition in the more rural communities of northern Namibia, and that this would require specific solutions adapted to the needs of those communities.

The participants also noted the absence of civil society organizations at the meeting, and that in future they need to be urged to participate in the proposed Alliance.

NEXT STEPS

There is also a strong need for the Alliance to develop a multi-sectoral national strategy on improved nutrition and affirm commitment and leadership from relevant stakeholders to create the enabling environment for such a strategy. GAIN should continue the nutrition dialogue in Namibia and support them with technical assistance on the requested studies and relevant interventions. Synergos in coordination with the Office of the PM can work to identify the core stakeholders that would drive the alliance and agree to a terms of reference outlining the objective, activities, reporting mechanism and timeline for such an initiative. As an immediate first-step, Synergos and GAIN should discuss and agree on specific roles that each organization will play going forward.

CONCLUSION

With adequate financial resources, the fortification agenda in Namibia could move along fairly well given the commitment from government, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. The PM is ready to take the lead role and has re-affirmed that Improved Nutrition is an area where the different players can work together to find sustainable answers to the problem of malnourishment.

PARTICIPANT LIST

1. Right Hon. Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia
2. Ms Ina Mozheni, Regional Grants Management Officer, Africa, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), JHB , African Regional Officer
3. Mr Eric Kenefick – UN World Food Programme Regional Office, Johannesburg
4. Mr Louwtjie Hoon – Namibian Grain Processors Association
5. Ms Antoinette Venter – Namibian Agronomic Board
6. Dr. Andemichael Ghirmay – Maternal and Child Health: World Health Organization, Windhoek
7. Mr Paul Collair – VSO Namibia
8. Dr Desta Tiruneh – Disease Prevent Control Officer World Health Organization, Windhoek
9. Ms Madhavi Ashok – Deputy Representative UNICEF, Windhoek
10. Dr Agostino Munyiri , Chief, Maternal, Child Survival, Care & Development Programme, UNICEF, Windhoek
11. Hon. Tjekero Tweya –Deputy Minister of Finance
12. Mr Erastus Ipinge Negonga – Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing and Rural Development
13. Ms Marie-Claude Dsilets – UNICEF, Windhoek
14. Hon. Prof. Peter H Katjavivi – Director General of the Namibian Planning Commission
15. Ms Stella Papadopoulos – Proquin (DSM Consultant)
16. Dr Klaus Fleissner – CRIAA-SADC
17. Ms Elaine S Smith – Namibian Agricultural Union
18. Mr Laurentius Shilongo – Ministry of Education
19. Ms A. S. Mukubonda – Ministry of Education
20. Mr Conrad Haikera – Ministry of Education
21. Mr Dileepan Siva – Synergos, New York
22. Ms Marjorie Van Wyk – Ministry of Health and Social Services
23. Ms Dorothy Namuchimba – I-Tech
24. Rev. Maria M Kapere – Council of Churches in Namibia
25. Dr Pandu Hailonga van Dijk – UNFPA, Windhoek
26. Hon John Mutorwa – Minister of Agriculture, Water & Forestry
27. Dr Ochi Ilse – USAID, Windhoek
28. Melissa Jones – USAID, Windhoek
29. Ndopwa Alweendo – The Namibian
30. Dr Admir Bay – FAO, Windhoek
31. Ms Yvonne Konjore – I-Tech
32. Ms Alexia Krug von Nidda – German Development Service
33. Mrs Hilma Auala – Ministry of Health and Social Services
34. Hon. Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi – Minister of Health and Social Services
35. Mr Barry Smith – Synergos, Cape Town
36. Mrs Kasee Mhoney – Synergos, Windhoek
37. Ms Caroline Sitongo – Deputy Director, Office of the Prime Minister

OPENING STATEMENT BY RIGHT HONOURABLE NAHAS ANGULA

I would like to thank you all for responding to my invitation to this important Workshop. I particularly express my gratitude to the friends from the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). Mr. Len Le Roux should be commended for facilitating the Workshop may he recover soon. Our gratitude is extended to Synergos of New York for supporting the Workshop.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the Millennium Development Goals is the reduction of child mortality. Infant mortality in Namibia, that is deaths per 1,000 live births was 46 deaths in 2006. According to the 2nd Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 issued by the National Planning Commission Namibia is not likely to substantially reduce infant mortality by 2015. High infant mortality is partially attributed to low nutritional status among the Namibian children. Acute malnourishment is said to be affecting 7% of children under five years. It is reported that 32.1 percent of children aged 6-59 months are underweight and 37.3 percent are stunted. Underweight, stunted and wasted children are prone to opportunistic diseases. Such malnourished children do not fully develop their intellectual potential. Malnourishment therefore poses a serious constraint to Namibia's development efforts.

Our coming together this morning is an important step for our nation to acknowledge malnutrition as a threat to national well being and development. We must address this challenge head on. The first step to take is to form a National Alliance for Improved Nutrition (NAFIN). The Alliance should be the clearing house for nutrition related initiatives. Some of the questions the Alliance should address are: How could staple food in our communities be improved or enriched? Could mothers be encouraged to breast feed their babies? Could a feeding programme be developed using locally produced food to benefit every child in the Early Childhood Development Centres and Pre-Schools? What kind of public awareness programmes could be developed to promote better feeding practices? How could micro-nutrients be improved in the staple food of our communities? How could food security in the country be enhanced?

These questions and many others suggested that improved nutrition is a cross-cutting issue. The Office of Prime Minister is ready to coordinate our national efforts for improved nutrition. It is important to stress, however, that nutrition is every body's responsibility. With high levels of poverty and unemployment the need for political leadership cannot, however, be over emphasized. This is an area where Government, the private sector, civil and households society should work together to find sustainable answers to the problem of malnourishment. As I said earlier, today we are making the first important step.

Our technical experts from GAIN shall share with us good practices from other countries. While at UNESCO last week I raised the issue of nutrition challenges in Namibia. I was assured by UNESCO that they could help to fund some of our activities if we could come up with a good proposal. I suggested to UNESCO that Namibia is planning to establish a Nutrition Centre. The Ministry of Education established a small food processing plant in Ondangwa for processing pearl millet. The facility could be turned into a Nutrition and Food Research Centre.

I am quite sure there are a lot of other ideas among us. Let us put them all on the table. We must find a sustainable answer to the malnutrition question.

I thank you!