

Action brief

Nutrition for Health - Embracing our Namibian Food Systems

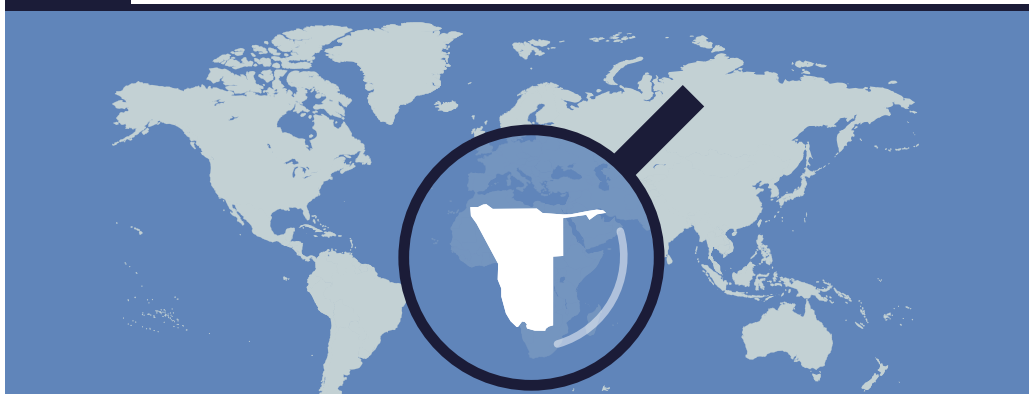
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Country: Namibia
Theme: Nutrition Specific
Sub-theme: Capacity Building

Date: 2025



Overview



Nutrition for Health (N4H) addresses the triple burden of malnutrition that Namibia is experiencing, where overnutrition coexists with undernutrition and hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies). The initiative covers a wide spectrum of key nutrition aspects empowering communities, practitioners, and decision-makers in very practical and easy-to-understand ways, linking them with important food system elements. The content is divided into four sections: Understanding Malnutrition (Under- and Overnutrition); Exploring Food Groups & Healthy Eating (incl. promoting indigenous foods and cautioning of

ultra-processed foods); 'Right Start' for Children (First 1,000 Days, breastfeeding, school meals); and Food Systems & Cycles (WASH, food safety, preservation, waste & composting).

N4H uses a highly participatory and experiential approach, utilizing helpful visuals (flipcharts) and playful games like quizzes, blind tasting, and food-image sorting to engage participants. A 'Nutrition Hotline' is provided in the Facilitator's Manual, allowing trained facilitators to reach out to Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN) nutritionists for on-the-spot mentoring and support.



SDGs

2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Period covered

2021-2025



Summary of results

By early 2025, over 530 N4H-Facilitators from all 14 regions of Namibia have been trained, having already reached approximately over 50,000 Namibians in communities across the country. These were primarily women with children, though deliberate efforts are made to proactively engage men in their role as supportive fathers.

While most facilitators come from health or agricultural backgrounds, there is growing interest from professionals in education (ECD) and the Private Sector (Corporate Wellness) to promote breastfeeding-friendly workplaces and address obesity. The 'Nutrition Hotline' established in 2024 serves to provide distance support to facilitators in the field, while established communication channels also serve as a mechanism to receive monitoring data.



Objectives of the action brief

- **Empowerment:** N4H aims to inform and empower people to make healthier food choices for themselves and their children, improving livelihoods and inspiring local organic food production. It goes beyond mere 'teaching' to engage on a personal level to encourage behavioral change in individuals, families and communities.
- **Integration:** The joint development brings together civil society, government, academia, development partners, and partially the private sector to assist them in integrating nutrition-related aspects into their existing work with communities.
- **Scale:** The goal is to reach a critical mass of over one-third of the population (1 million Namibians) by 2030 through a growing number of implementing partners, resulting in visible changes in the nutritional status of Namibians.

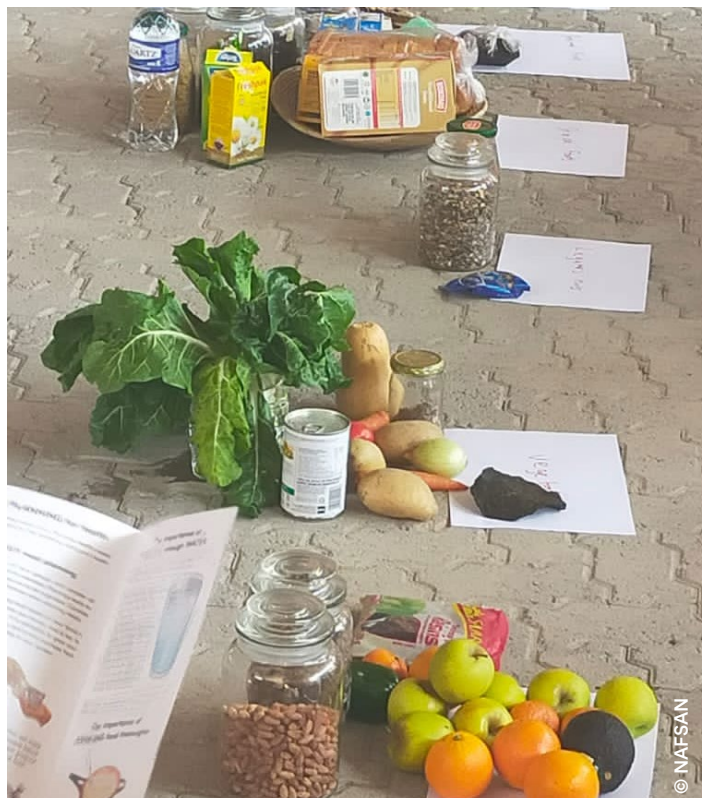




What action was taken?

In 2021, the Namibian Government revised the National Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) Policy. Building on initial pilots during the COVID-19 pandemic, NAFSAN and GIZ's Farming-for-Resilience (F4R) project collaboratively developed the "Nutrition-for-Health: Embracing our Namibian Food Systems" approach between 2021 and 2023. This process included developing a comprehensive facilitators' manual, visual slides, and food group exercise cards with input from key ministries, civil society alliances, academia, and UN agencies to ensure alignment with national and international guidelines.

Implementation began with a Training-of-Facilitators in March 2023. Subsequently, NAFSAN pooled funding from the EU, WHO, Commonwealth Foundation, and the private sector to print all the necessary materials efficiently and train a total of 536 facilitators by the end of 2024, mostly from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture. NAFSAN provides the training and materials, while the actual implementation at the community level rests with the trained organizations.



What makes this initiative different or *innovative* compared to existing solutions?

What is primarily innovative about this approach is the wide range of topics encapsulated in a comprehensive yet concise 2-day (16-hour) curriculum, which can also be divided into 2-3 hour sessions over several weeks. This format allows nutrition concepts to be delivered efficiently without overwhelming participants.

Other innovative elements include:

→ **Collaborative Design:** It builds on existing materials to avoid re-inventing the wheel, fostering cooperation among stakeholders, and is freely available online.

→ **Visual Portability:** The use of tailor-made images and durable physical slide sets (carry-bags) allows the training to be used flexibly in any environment, including remote rural areas.

→ **Methodology:** The training is highly practical and interactive, using games and experiments to empower participants rather than just delivering information.

→ **Accessibility:** N4H is not restricted to nutritionists; it is designed to be facilitated by professionals from various backgrounds—farmers, teachers, and social workers—supported by the technical backstopping through the 'Nutrition Hotline'.





Key lessons learned

Working together with CSOs, academia, and government ministries provided invaluable insights, ensuring the approach is comprehensive and practical for integration into existing programming. However, working with donors proved challenging, as many preferred specific short-term projects over long-term capacity building. It was difficult to get different donors to collaborate on pool-funding for efficient mass printing.

More awareness is needed among international development partners and the private sector to collaborate on long-term, multi-generational solutions to malnutrition. When engaging local donors, direct in-person engagement with key decision-makers and presentations to Company Boards are recommended.



Replicability and scalability

The combination of topics, exercises, and imagery is likely applicable and easily adjustable to different countries and cultural contexts. NAFSAN is interested in collaborating via the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) network to pilot N4H in other countries and can provide editable versions of all materials.

A comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is crucial to assess impact and secure future funding. This is still in the process of being developed. Feedback from communities also highlighted that training must be accompanied by practical resources, such as seeds for gardening, and better social protection systems like a Universal Basic Income Grant to address crucial accessibility issues.



What was the role of the SUN Movement in this good practice?

The SUN Movement played a key role through the SUN Pooled Fund in 2020, providing approximately 48,000 USD for the initial "Permaculture Gardening and Nutrition" project which formed the basis for N4H. The SUN Civil Society Network is currently funding the evaluation of the first phase

of implementation with another 20,000 USD. NAFSAN, as the SUN Civil Society Alliance, serves as the recognized technical partner to the Namibian government, practically supporting and advocating for a well-coordinated multi-sectoral response.



Further information



N4H Overview & Materials: www.nafsan.org/N4H & www.nafsan.org/n4h-materials/



Report to the Capricorn Foundation on N4H



Final Report to WHO on training Community Healthcare workers on N4H



Final Report to FirstRand Namibia Foundation on using N4H in the context of strengthening soup kitchens and ECD Centres



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 **Scaling Up
NUTRITION**

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