



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

OPENING REMARKS AT THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP

BY

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DEPUTY MINISTER

IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

TUESDAY, 02 OCTOBER 2018

(WINDHOEK)

- **Director of Proceedings**
- **USAID Country Representative, Dr. Randy Kolstad**
- **UNICEF Representative, Madam Rachel Odede**
- **Senior Government Officials**
- **Representatives from Private Sector, Academia and NGOs**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests**
- **Members of the Media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good Morning,

It is my pleasure to join you this morning. Today we mark an important milestone in the process of addressing the impeding food and nutrition insecurity situation in our country.

To ensure that Food Security and Nutrition considerations are properly integrated into existing, new programmes and projects, we first need to take stock of our current status and zooming into the future.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The Government of the Republic of Namibia launched the “Food and Nutrition Decade” in 1992 with a primary objective of addressing the incidence of chronic hunger and malnutrition in the country.

Food security is a complex phenomenon with extensive cross sectoral linkages and virtually all Government Ministries are engaged in programmes which could be construed to be contributing towards improved food security and nutrition in the country in some way. However, the

activities of individual ministries tend to be implemented on a sectoral rather than on an integrated basis. In recognition of this fact, the Government of Namibia set up a three-tiered inter-sectoral institutional structure to coordinate and oversee the cross-sectional dimensions of food security issues.

During September 1994, Cabinet approved a National Food Security and Nutrition Council (NFSNC) with a mandate to address problems of food insecurity and malnutrition in the country that was chaired by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

In the subsequent years, this Council became non-functional and was succeeded by National Alliance for Improved Nutrition (NAFIN) which operated as an independent trust with Synergos as its secretariat to strategically manage and advance national nutrition activities.

NAFIN being a Trust, played a critical role until Namibia was recognized member of the global movement of Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN). SUN is a country-led Movement, which puts countries at the heart of global efforts to improve nutrition. This is a unique Movement founded on the principle that all people have a right to food and good nutrition. The vision of SUN Movement reflects the collective efforts of governments, organizations and individuals – working together to end hunger and undernutrition in all its forms so that within our lifetimes, every mother, child and family can realize their full potential and right to adequate nutritious food.

The movement unites people—from governments, civil society, the United Nations, donors, businesses and researchers—in a collective effort to improve nutrition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As much as NAFIN did their best to bring all sectors together, government also took an approach to revisit its policies and programmes. In doing so, lack of coordination of National Food Security and Nutrition activities in the country was detected.

In addition, the revelation from statistical data by Namibia Demographic Health Survey, 2013, revealed that 24 % of Namibian children under-five years are stunted and 6% are wasted. The major contributing factors to food insecurity being poor agricultural production that was caused by recurrent droughts and floods as well as socio-economic factors. Malnutrition especially stunting affects the physical and cognitive development of children resulting into low academic performance and productivity as adults. With 24% of Namibian Children under-five years stunted, the country loses greatly in all social and economic spheres as these children will never reach their full potential and contribute less to the development of their country.

Strengthening a multi-stakeholder platform that includes relevant line ministries – across agriculture, health, education, social welfare, gender equality, region, local government and key partners including civil society, UN agencies, donors, the technical and research community and businesses requires strong coordination structures spearheaded by government. To ensure Food Security and Nutrition considerations are well coordinated and properly integrated into existing, new programmes and projects, government took a decision to revive the National Food Security and Nutrition Council. The Council will be the overarching coordination

body for all food security and nutrition activities in Namibia and is to be chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister. To improve the coordination at regional, constituency and village/settlement levels, similar structures need to be established.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government of Namibia is committed in alleviating malnutrition as indicated in the national road maps, including the Harambee Prosperity Plan, Zero Hunger and the National Development Plan 5 to attain the Namibian vision 2030. Hence the approach to review and develop the following documents:

- 1) Food and Nutrition Security Policy
- 2) Nutrition Action Plan
- 3) Food Security and Nutrition Coordination Systems

The processes of revising the Policy, Nutrition Action Plan and the Coordination systems is financially supported by USAID through UNICEF. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is grateful for this support which enables us to commission a team of two international technical experts to finalise the draft Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2018-2028), revise the National Nutrition Action Plan (2018-2028) and assist in strengthening the institutional structures of the Food Security and Nutrition Council in Namibia.

The work of this team included wide consultations with representatives from the Government at the national and regional levels, United Nations, Non- Governmental Organizations, Private Sectors, Civil Societies and

Academic Institutions. We also thank Technical teams (from all sectors) and all Regional Councils for adding value in the development of the coordination structure and for providing input to the documents that will be discussed here.

This workshop is organised to validate the draft Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2018-2028), the revised National Nutrition Action Plan (NAP) and institutional structures of the Food Security and Nutrition in Namibia, putting into perspective the multi-sectoral approach in Food security and nutrition programming.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The government stand is that policies and strategies should not just be developed and shelved but should be translated into actionable plans and implemented. Poor participation in policy development and weak implementation of policies can have a negative impact to our people and may lead to denying them to not getting the required services, technologies, skills and knowledge they need, to improve on their household food and nutrition security.

In this regard, I desire to see that the Food Security and Nutrition documents being discussed here guarantee the nation that food and nutrition interventions are integrated in development plans and budgets at all levels and promote partnerships between government, private sector and developing partners.

The Government in collaboration with our partners will continue supporting a holistic and multi-sectoral approach in finalizing and implementing all these documents through a well-coordinated and managed framework. Therefore, I look forward to more intense commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders in ensuring that the government's agenda is fully realized. This workshop ladies and gentlemen is now officially opened.

I thank you.