



# FIG WORKING WEEK 2023

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## A case for prioritising rural development in Namibia

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## Title: Rural areas are not breathing: Towards prioritizing rural development in Namibia

### INTRODUCTION

- Rural areas are the pinnacle for countries' development, supporting the urban with agricultural products and, for many in Africa, a solid link between ancestors and family land.
- Rural development ensures society's modernization and transformation from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy.
- Rural areas comprise around 51 percent of Namibia's population.



## The state of rural development in Namibia

### Rural development related policies and legal frameworks

- Rural development has been emphasized in various legal framework in Namibia, these include the National Development Plans, Vision 2030, Communal Land Reform Act No.5 of 2002, Harambee Prosperity Plan and the Rural Development Policy and Strategy.
- The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) launched the National Rural Development Policy and Strategy in 2012.
- The overall objective of the policy is to ensure a systematic, integrated and coordinated planning and implementation of development in rural areas to improve the livelihood of people living in rural communities.

## The state of rural development in Namibia

### Food security

- Food security is a key element of the paradigm of human development and capability.
- Drought and floods are major drivers of food insecurity in Namibia's rural areas.
- Between October-November 2021, approximately 659 000 people (26% of the population) across Namibia were facing food insecurity.
- Covid-19 pandemic has left many rural communities food deprived.
- 64% of Namibians live in poverty with an unemployment rate of 20.8%.

## The state of rural development in Namibia

### Access to basic services

- Water - Many Namibians who live in rural areas and low-income groups still face great difficulties accessing clean water for their daily needs. In 2018 only around half of rural Namibians (49%) have their main source of water outside their compounds; only one in every five (20%) have running water in their homes.
- Health facilities - The country has improved its primary health care system to better meet the demands of the general people. In rural areas, there are approximately 5780 individuals per PHC clinic and 58 825 people per district hospital.
- Schools – Poor infrastructure, budget constraints, digital gaps in e-learning.
- Sanitation - One in three rural Namibians (32%) say they have no access to toilets at all, while almost half (47%) use toilets outside their compounds. Late approvals of ministerial budgets for sanitation projects.

## The state of rural development in Namibia

### Land accessibility

- Increasing competition over land, land concentration through illegal fencing, lack of legal protection of customary land rights exacerbate vulnerabilities and precariousness in access to land.
- For women in particular, some traditional authorities continue to uphold traditions and customs that disadvantage women.

## The state of rural development in Namibia

### Employment and rural economic development

- Income is primarily obtained from non-agricultural activities such as pensions, business revenues, wages, and remittances.
- Most other citizens live on rural farms but rely on non-rural enterprises and jobs

## The state of rural development in Namibia



## How rural neglect hinders development of rural areas: A case study of Gibeon, Namibia

- The Gibeon Constituency in the Hardap region has the highest poverty prevalence at 25%, followed by the Rehoboth Rural and Mariental Rural Constituencies.
- The Gibeon community area has 769 056 acres of land and is home to approximately 12 000 people.
- The main sources of income have been livestock sales, old-age pensions, and, to a lesser extent, remittances sent to elderly parents back home by children working in towns.
- The community has been left in dire poverty ever since Agra closed its auction pens, relocated all auctions to Mariental, 70 kilometers away, and allowed small stock farmers to sell their livestock.
- There has been no infrastructural development in the last three decades.

## Major challenges faced in rural areas in Namibia

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Long distances to health facilities
- Hunger and food insecurity
- Out-migration
- Bad network coverage
- No access to water and power
- Inaccessibility to land

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SWOT analysis of rural development in Namibia

## Recommendations on ways to improve rural development in Namibia

- Maintain the boundaries of urban areas and focus resources on capacitating villages and settlement areas with land administration infrastructure.
- Improve Information Communication Technology to ensure access to information for rural populations, which is vital to inform decision-making.
- Invest in agricultural training, promoting diversification of farming in different regions to curb the negative impacts of climate change on livelihoods.
- Increase the availability of educational facilities.
- Promote land access opportunities for youth and women.



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