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COUNTRY PROFILE 2017

NAMIBIA

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
ASDI	African Social Development Index
CMA	Common Monetary Area
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
NDP	National development plan
REC	Regional Economic Community
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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Country Profiles is a series published annually by ECA. The aim of the series is to produce and disseminate country- and region-specific policy analyses and recommendations for economic transformation, with an emphasis on promoting sustainable growth and social development, strengthening regional integration and facilitating development planning and economic governance. The series is the result of the close collaboration of the subregional offices of ECA and the African Centre for Statistics, with contributions provided by the Macroeconomic Policy Division, the Regional Integration and Trade Division, and the Social Development Policy Division.

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Namibia at a glance

General information		Index	Position	Out of a total of	Year	Source
Subregion	Southern Africa	Human development index	125	188	2015	UNDP
Official language	English	Gender inequality index	108	155	2015	UNDP
Currency	Namibia dollar	Ibrahim index of African governance	5	54	2016	Mo Ibrahim Foundation
Capital	Windhoek	Ease of doing business index	108	189	2017	World Bank
Membership of regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations	SADC, SACU	Corruption perceptions index	53	176	2015	Transparency International

Economic growth

In 2016, the Namibian economy is estimated to have grown by 1.1 per cent, far below the 6.1 per cent growth in real GDP in 2015. The lower-than-anticipated growth in 2016 was largely due to a sharp contraction in construction and the poor performance of the mining and quarrying sector. The Bank of Namibia expects growth to contract further to 0.6 per cent in 2017 and to recover to 2.2 and 3.1 per cent in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Fiscal policy

Revenue for the 2016/17 fiscal year was N$ 51.5 billion, representing a 1.4 per cent decrease from the previous fiscal year's revenue of N$ 52.2 billion. The expenditure for the 2016/17 budget was N$ 61.5 billion, which was 93.2 per cent of the N$ 66.0 billion budget. Owing to mounting macroeconomic and fiscal pressures, debt as a proportion of GDP increased from 40.1 per cent of GDP in 2015/16 to 42.1 per cent in 2016/17.

IInflation and monetary policy

Annual inflation was 6.7 per cent in 2016, a marked increase from the 3.4 per cent inflation in 2015, driven by price increases in housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, and food. Although in terms of year-on-year changes between 2015 and 2016 the Namibia dollar declined against major currencies, it strengthened over the course of the year from January and February lows. The depreciation of the Namibia dollar in recent years has largely been due to low commodity prices, the country's weakened domestic economic outlook, uncertainty linked to sovereign credit downgrade, and concerns regarding political developments in South Africa.

Current account

The current account deficit for Namibia grew slightly to 14.2 per cent of GDP in 2016 from 13.8 per cent of GDP in 2015. The current account deficit was N$ 22.6 billion in 2016 in comparison to N$ 20.3 billion in 2015. While the current account deficit increased owing to lower SACU receipts and net investment income, the reduced merchandise trade deficit, which fell by 20 per cent, is encouraging.

Capital and financial account

The capital and financial accounts recorded a surplus of N$ 16.9 billion in 2016 following on the heels of a surplus of N$ 32.0 billion in 2015. Other investments, specifically long-term equity investments, were a major contributor to the capital account surplus in 2016 owing to an increase in borrowing by locally-registered companies from affiliated entities abroad, mainly in the mining and banking sectors. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into Namibia fell sharply in 2016 owing to reduced investment in both equity and other capital.

Demographics

The Namibian population stood at 2,113,077 in 2011 (51.6 per cent female and 48.4 per cent male), an increase of 15.4 per cent compared to the 2001 population. Population projections for 2016 and 2017 are at 2.3 and 2.4 million, respectively, indicating further growth. More people still live in the rural areas despite evidence of urbanization. Whereas the urban population grew by 49.7 per cent between 2001 and 2011, the rural population declined by 1.4 per cent over the same period. The population is young (36.5 percent under the age of 15), and the females live longer than the males.

Poverty

Preliminary data from the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2015/16 indicates that poverty levels have continued to fall, with the upper poverty line headcount ratio falling from 28.7 per cent in 2009/10 to 18.0 per cent in 2015/16. The Gini coefficient for Namibia is estimated to have fallen to 0.57 in 2015/16 from 0.60 in 2009/10. Although this downward trend is encouraging, income inequality in Namibia is still among the highest in the world.

Employment

The employment-to-population ratio for Namibia is 45.8 nationwide, though gender and locational disparities persist. Agriculture is the sector with the largest number of workers, accounting for 20.1 per cent of employment. In 2016, informal employment was estimated to account for 67.5 per cent of total employment. Unemployment remains a considerable social issue in Namibia, particularly among young people. Youth unemployment (15 to 34 years) stands at 43.4 per cent, against an overall unemployment rate of 34.0 per cent. Both unemployment rates have deteriorated from their 2014 levels, with youth unemployment growing by 4.5 per cent while overall unemployment increased by 6.1 per cent.

Health

In Namibia, 79 per cent of the total population has access to health services. HIV/AIDS-related deaths have been significantly reduced and the country has continuously registered a decrease in antenatal and HIV dominance among pregnant women. Marginal strides have been made in limiting maternal mortality (335 per 100,000 live births). Neonatal mortality under the age of five stands at 54 per 1,000 live births, missing the national 2015 target of 39 per 1,000 live births. Thirteen per cent of children are underweight due to malnutrition, 24 per cent are stunted and 6 per cent are wasted.

Education

The Namibian education system has been unified from the ethnic-fragmented structure that existed prior to independence. The constitution provides for free primary and secondary education, as well as compulsory education from the age of 6. Despite locational and gender-based variations, the literacy level stands at 88.1 per cent for those above 15 years old. More females enrol at tertiary institutions (113 females per 100 males) and more males enrol with vocational colleges (58 females per 100 males). New policy provisions seek to address high failure and drop-out rates, poor teacher training and the shortage of schools.

Gender equality

Recent education policies have increased Namibian girls' access to education as measured by attendance and literacy rates. Constitutional provisions supporting gender parity have improved gender non-discrimination in Namibia. Men are in the majority in the cabinet (76.2 per cent) and parliament (58.7 per cent), though Namibia is ranked third in Africa with respect to the ratio of female parliamentarians. Namibia has a female prime minister and deputy prime minister. Notably, Namibia is on the verge of reaching gender parity with respect to non-agriculture employment.

1

Overview

Though the Namibian economy has enjoyed growth over a prolonged period, the weakening of major economic sectors (agriculture, construction, quarrying and mining) dented economic performance in 2016. The economy was projected to contract further, from 1.1 per cent growth in 2016 to 0.6 per cent in 2017. The economy is expected to grow by a margin of 2.2 per cent and 3.1 per cent in 2018 and 2019, respectively, courtesy of a recovery in mining and quarrying and agriculture (Bank of Namibia, 2017a). The second quarter of 2017 has seen the economy shrink by 1.7 per cent, pointing to further contraction (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a). The 2016 Africa Regional Integration Index (box 1) shows Namibia as a country well integrated into the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) owing to outstanding progress in financial integration and infrastructure development. The current account deficit deteriorated marginally in 2016, by just 0.4 per cent, against the 13.8 per cent recorded in 2015, owing to 15 per cent growth in export earnings in 2016 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017f).

The upper-middle-income country classification of Namibia has not benefited many. Though policy framework has seen the decline of the upper poverty line headcount ratio (18 per cent in 2015/16) as well as the Gini coefficient (0.57 in 2016),[1] most Namibians are poverty stricken, and inequality remains among the globe's worst. Unemployment, similarly to poverty, is defined in rural areas, as well as among women and youth. The Namibian constitution provides for gender equality, and results show progress towards gender parity in some sectors. A decline in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS accounts for the improvement in life expectancy, though women tend to live longer than men. The decline in infant mortality is pronounced in urban areas, but rural areas still record underweight, stunted and wasted infants. Literacy averages 88.7 per cent across Namibia (95.6 per cent in the urban areas and 82.6 per cent in rural areas), though access and quality is worrying (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012; Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014; African Union Commission, 2017).

1 South Africa has the highest level of income inequality globally, with a Gini coefficient of 0.63 (World Bank Group, 2018, available from http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SI.POV.GINI&country)

A new policy framework is being implemented in Namibia with the intention of reversing the dent caused by recent high-profile corruption cases and poor service delivery in the public sector, leading to a slip in the country's rankings on the Afrobarometer and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (Republic of Namibia, 2017). The new policy framework should promote greater probity and accountability in the public service and among political office bearers and ensure strict implementation of the performance contract regime with the political office bearers and senior public servants, with clear targets, monitoring tools and performance benchmarks.

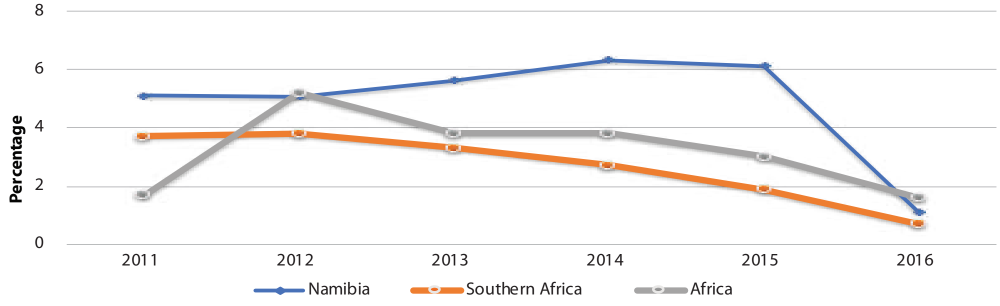
2

National and subregional context

Growth across the African continent and Southern Africa continued to trend downwards in 2016 as low commodity prices and constricted global economic conditions constrained economic expansion. In Namibia, real GDP growth decelerated sharply to an estimated 1.1 per cent in 2016, though this growth rate was above the subregional average of 0.7 percent (figure 1). Slow growth in South Africa, the key subregional trading partner for Namibia for the period 2015–2016, has worsened the country's external position, as demand for its commodity exports has remained subdued. Growth in Southern Africa is expected to rise to 1.8 per cent in 2017, driven by the slight recovery of commodity prices (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017).

Namibia is among the most regionally integrated countries in Southern Africa, and is a member of both SADC and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). SACU transfers from the common revenue pool are a major source of revenue for Namibia, accounting for 27.3 per cent of total revenue in the 2016/17 fiscal year. It should be noted, furthermore, that Namibia repaid N$ 3.0 billion to SACU in 2016/17 for overpayment in 2015/16, and with the normalization of receipts in 2017/18, SACU revenues are expected to increase by 39.2 per cent to N$ 19.6 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2017a). In June 2017, Heads of State and Government of SACU endorsed a work programme that included development of a new architecture for tariff-setting, rebates, duty drawbacks and trade remedies, a review of the revenue-sharing formula and long-term management of the common

Figure 1: **Real GDP growth, Namibia compared to Southern Africa and Africa, 2011–2016**



Source: Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a; Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017 revenue pool, establishment of a stabilization fund and exploring the feasibility of a financing mechanism for regional industrialization (Namibia Economist, 2017).

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) signed in June 2016 between the SADC EPA Group (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland) and the European Union (EU) harmonizes the conditions under which EPA countries trade both with the EU and among themselves. Not only does the EPA grant Namibia totally free access to the EU market, it ensures that any advantage granted to the EU shall also be extended to Namibia, thereby augmenting the country's integration status (European Commission, 2016).

The Namibian industrial policy implementation strategy, entitled "Growth at Home", focuses on securing market access at home and abroad, one of three Strategic Intervention Areas. In that respect, several infrastructure projects seek to enhance connectivity for Namibia with its neighbours and the world. Namport's new container terminal in Walvis Bay, which is anticipated to double container capacity, is expected to be completed by the end of 2017. The Trans-Kalahari Railway would link the Karoo Basin coal fields in Botswana with Walvis Bay through a 1,500 kilometre track. The project has remained nonbankable due to the low price of coal. In late 2015, the Governments of Botswana and Namibia expanded the project into a regional development corridor that would include the development of the agriculture, mining, transport and logistics, manufacturing and real estate sectors in addition to the planned rail line. A project management agreement was signed, though the feasibility study for the corridor is yet to be concluded (Creamer Media's Engineering News, 2016).

3

Economic performance

3.1 Economic growth

The growth prospects of Namibia are guided by Vision 2030, a long-term framework for national development that reflects a vision of “a prosperous and industrialized Namibia, developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability”.[2] National Development Plans (NDPs) have been crafted hinging on Vision 2030. One of the goals of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) (2012/13–2016/17) was to achieve high, sustained economic growth. Growth exceeded the targeted benchmark in 2012 (5.1 per cent against a targeted 4.6 per cent), but narrowly missed the growth targets set for 2013, 2014 and 2015.[3] In 2016, the Namibian economy is estimated to have grown 1.1 per cent, far below the 6.5 per cent growth projected for 2016 and also below the 4.84 per cent average growth for the NDP4 period (Republic of Namibia, 2017a). The poor growth in 2016 was due to a sharp contraction in construction and the poor performance of the mining and quarrying sector, which accounts for over 50 per cent of exports (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a; Ministry of Finance, 2017b). The Office of the President noted that the “slow change and development in the industrial structure, high level of government expenditure and debt driven mainly by unproductive spending” had slowed the growth of the economy (Republic of Namibia, 2016a). A programme of fiscal consolidation has been launched to reduce government expenditure, but industrialization may require the dismantling of deep-rooted inequality (especially in land ownership) to promote investment by the landless.

Household consumption, the largest contributor to GDP in absolute terms, increased 5.8 per cent from 2015 to 2016 (figure 2). Investment, which served as the engine of growth for Namibia throughout the first half of the decade, dropped by 27 per cent in 2016 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a). Imports fell relative to exports in 2016 owing to strengthening of the South African rand, to which the Namibia dollar is pegged. Domestic demand was expected to be subdued in 2017 due to slowing household consumption. Fiscal consolidation will stabilize or lower government consumption in the year to come (Bank of Namibia, 2017a).

2 Office of the President, 2004, p.38.

3 2013: Target 6.1 per cent, actual 5.6 per cent; 2014: Target 6.4 per cent, actual 6.3 per cent; 2015: Target 6.3 per cent, actual 6.1 per cent.

Box 1: Africa Regional Integration Index: Namibia

The Africa Regional Integration Index is designed to measure the extent to which each country in Africa is meeting its commitments under the various pan-African integration frameworks, such as Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the Abuja Treaty. The index, which is a joint project of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa, covers the following dimensions: free movement of persons, trade integration, productive integration (development of regional value chains), regional infrastructure, and financial integration and macroeconomic policy convergence. The following section analyses the five dimensions and their respective indicators. A technical description of the indicators can be found at https://www.integrate-africa.org/.

Overall rank: Third in SADC (score 0.56). The best performer in SADC is South Africa (score 0.74).

Free movement of persons	Trade integration	Productive integration	Infrastructure	Financial integration and macroeconomic policy convergence
– Sixth in SADC (score 0.60). The best performers are Seychelles and Swaziland (score 0.70) and the worst is Angola (score 0.1).	–Third in SADC (score 0.62). The top performer is South Africa (score 1) and the bottom is Zimbabwe (score 0.1)	– Thirteenth in SADC (score 0.19). The best performer is Zimbabwe (score 0.74) and the worst is Lesotho (score 0.1).	– Third in SADC (score 0.67). The best performer is Botswana (score 0.82) and the worst is Lesotho (score 0.3).	– Second in SADC (score 0.65). The top performer is South Africa (score 0.92) and the bottom is Malawi (score 0).

Source: https://www.integrate-africa.org

Namibia has a medium-to-high ranking in the general index and holds the third-highest position out of 15 SADC countries.

Free movement of persons: Namibia scored moderately for this dimension. Indeed, 79 per cent of nationals of other SADC members enter the country without a visa. Namibia has ratified the SADC protocol on the free movement of persons.

Trade integration: Namibia received a good score for this dimension. This performance is mainly due to the low average tariff applied to imports from other SADC countries, namely 0.003 per cent according to 2014 figures. In contrast, intraregional trade as a share of GDP with SADC members is low for Namibia (9 per cent), based on the data used for index calculation.

Productive integration: Namibia has a low score for this dimension. The country is only moderately integrated into regional value chains. Its trade weakly complements that of its partners. According to 2013 figures, its trade complementarity index is 0.25 (on a scale of 0 to 1). This indicates a weak correlation between its exports and the SADC import structure. Moreover, the share of intermediates in Namibian imports and exports from SADC was relatively low, at about 13 per cent (imports) and 5 per cent (exports) between 2010 and 2013.

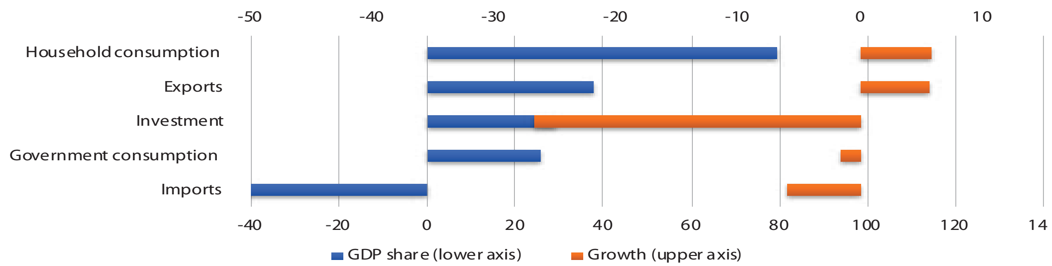
Infrastructure integration: Namibia is among top performers in this dimension. The country ranked fourth among SADC members in its average performance based on the AfDB Infrastructure

Development Index between 2010 and 2012. About 94 per cent of international flights to and from Namibia are intra-SADC. Namibia is also ranked second among SADC members in terms of total regional electricity trade (net imports) per capita between 2010 and 2012.

Financial integration and macroeconomic policy convergence: Namibia has a good score for this dimension. The country's inflation rate of 5 per cent over the period (2010–2013) was among the lowest in the SADC. The Namibia dollar is convertible in only one SADC country.

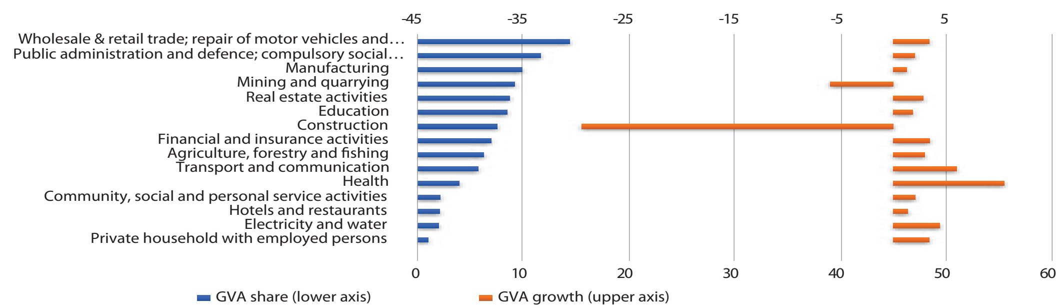
To conclude, Namibia appears to be well integrated in the SADC in terms of the financial integration and regional infrastructure dimensions. The country does not perform so well on productive integration, however. Improving Namibian' trade integration would entail better penetration of regional value chains through the waiving of visa requirements for nationals of more SADC member countries.

Figure 2: Shares of demand in relation to GDP and growth in Namibia, 2016



Source: Namibia Statistics Agency (2017a)

Figure 3: Sector shares of GDP and sector growth in Namibia, 2016



Source: Namibia Statistics Agency (2017a)

In sectoral terms, the largest components of the country's GDP are wholesale and retail trade, public administration and defence, manufacturing, and mining and quarrying (figure 3). In 2016, services are estimated to have accounted for 67 per cent of output, industry 26 per cent and agriculture, forestry and fishing the remaining 6 per cent (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a).

The strongest performing sectors in 2016 in growth terms were health, transport and communication, and electricity and water. Contraction in the mining and quarrying and construction sectors caused the near unitary GDP growth. Although uranium output grew sharply in 2016, reductions in diamond and other commodity outputs caused a 6.0 per cent contraction in the mining and quarrying sector. Private investment in the mining sector has declined and fiscal consolidation has put several public infrastructure projects on hold. The construction sector has contracted sharply as a result, shrinking by 29.5 per cent in 2016. Agriculture suffered a 0.4 per cent contraction in 2016 owing to drought and erratic rainfall (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a; Bank of Namibia, 2017a).

The economy is expected to recover to grow 2.1 per cent in 2017 and 3.8 per cent in 2018 despite the 1.7 per cent contraction recorded in the second quarter of 2017. Recovery in the agriculture, diamond mining, and electricity and water sectors is expected to drive economic growth. Uncertainty regarding the pace of recovery of the uranium price and output volumes has led to lower estimated growth for 2017 than previously expected. Downside risks include lower-than-expected growth for the trading partners of Namibia, the potential appreciation of the Namibia dollar, and uncertain weather conditions (Bank of Namibia, 2017a).

3.2 Fiscal policy

The Government of Namibia finances its operations and development expenditure through taxes and transfers. Revenue for the 2016/17 fiscal year was N$ 51.5 billion, representing a 1.4 per cent decrease on the previous fiscal year's revenues of N$ 52.2 billion. In the 2016/17 fiscal year, the main sources of tax revenue were SACU receipts (28.9 per cent), value-added tax (28.2 per cent), and income taxes on individuals (22.2 per cent) (Ministry of Finance, 2017a).

The expenditure for the 2016/17 budget was N$ 61.5 billion, which was 93.2 per cent of the N$ 66.0 billion budget. The budget deficit was 6.3 per cent of GDP for the 2016/17 fiscal year, greater than the 5.6 per cent budgeted. For the 2017/18 fiscal year, the budget deficit was expected to be 3.6 per cent of GDP (because of fiscal consolidation), but it increased to 5.3 per cent[4] on the back of increased spending (Ministry of Finance, 2017a; Deloitte, 2017). Fiscal consolidation is expected to free up resources to be channelled into reforming industry.

The 2015/2016 Mid-Year Budget Review introduced a growth-friendly fiscal consolidation programme that would reduce and stabilize the public debt by reducing non-core recurrent expenditure and non-productive development spending. However, lower-than-anticipated commodity prices and low demand for Namibian exports led the Ministry of Finance to impose even tougher consolidation measures during the 2016/2017 Mid-Year Budget Review because of deterioration in fiscal targets. Measures introduced included expenditure cuts to projects not yet implemented (e.g., the Kudu gas power project[5]), low implementation rates and tax administration reforms to provide alternative forms of revenue. Fiscal consolidation continues despite the reversal of some of the deep spending cuts outlined in the budget review. Despite the fiscal consolidation efforts meant to cut the budget deficit, Namibia was

4 The 5.3 per cent budget deficit exceeds the 2012 Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) benchmark of 3 per cent.

5 Fiscal consolidation has affected the industrialization move as key infrastructure developments have been put on hold and the move by the Government to rope in the private sector (BW Offshore) in executing the Kudu Gas-Power project is commendable. Source: http://www.offshore-mag.com/articles/2017/02/bw-namcor-plan-fpu-for-kudu-gas-field-offshore-namibia.html.

Table 1: Fiscal accounts (in millions of Namibia dollars)[8]

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Revenue (incl. grants)	37,997	42,376	49,967	52,230	51,512
Tax revenue	35,319	38,906	46,836	48,919	48,676
Non-tax revenue	2,505	3,171	3,008	3,144	2,447
Grants	168	278	110	152	159
	4	21	13	15	8
Return of capital from lending and equity participation					
Expenditure	38,112	46,751	58,765	67,268	61,496
Recurrent expenditure	32,537	39,415	50,056	57,244	54,595
Of which current payments	30,804	38,595	47,206	54,614	50,720
Of which interest payments	1,720	1,796	2,066	2,630	3,875
Development expenditure	5,575	7,337	8,709	10,024	6,901
Primary balance	1,606	(2,579)	(6,733)	?[9]	(6,109)
Primary balance as a percentage of GDP	1.4	-2.0	-4.6		-3.9
Overall balance	(114)	(4,375)	(8,798)	(12,423)	(9,984)
Overall balance as a percentage of GDP	-0.1	-3.4	-6.0	-8.3	-6.3

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2017a

downgraded to junk status in 2017 (Moody's Investors Service[6] in August 2017 and Fitch Ratings[7] in November 2017). Table 1 shows fiscal trends in greater detail.

Because of mounting macroeconomic and fiscal pressures, debt increased from 40.1 per cent of GDP in 2015/16 to 42.1 per cent in 2016/17.[10] Over the time frame of the medium-term expenditure framework, which continues through the 2019/20 fiscal year, government debt is expected to decrease to 37.7 per cent of GDP (Ministry of Finance, 2017b). Though government debt is mostly domestic, the share of foreign debt is expected to increase by 2019/20 owing to an increase in debt servicing costs arising from the depreciation of the local currency.[11]

6 Ministry of Finance, 2017c.

7 The downgrade was based on the Government's failure to meet its fiscal objectives (budget deficit and public debt). Source: https://www.ean.org.na/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Fitch-downgrades-Namibia-21-Nov-2017.pdf.

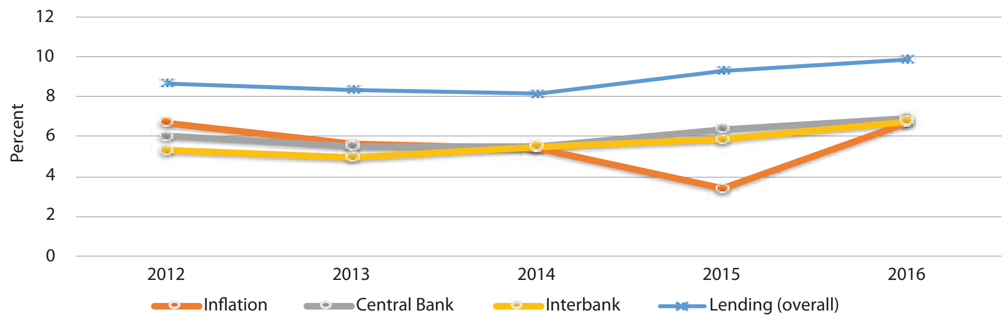
8 All figures reported on a cash basis.

9 Missing value

10 Though the proportion of debt to GDP for Namibia increased, it remains low compared to other Southern African countries (SADC Statistical Yearbook 2016).

11 Foreign debt as a percentage of GDP shows an upward trend for the period 2007–2016 (4.9 per cent in 2007 and 53.8 per cent in 2016) (SADC Statistical Yearbook 2017).

Figure 4: Inflation and interest rates in Namibia, 2012–2016



Source: Bank of Namibia, 2016 and 2017b; Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017b

3.3 Monetary policy

Annual inflation has generally increased over the past three years, though it remains below the 2017 regional average of 10.3 per cent (SADC, 2017). Inflation stood at 3.4 per cent in 2015, 6.7 per cent in 2016 and 5.7 per cent in 2017 (SADC, 2017). This was driven by increases in housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels and food prices (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017b). The recovery of global oil prices and currency weakness contributed to the impact of imported inflation, while drought conditions in the country pushed up domestic food prices. Figure 4 shows the inflationary trend against several indicative interest rates over the period 2012–2016.

The Bank of Namibia began raising its repurchase (repo) rate in June 2014 to dampen inflation amid concerns about the growth of private credit to the household sector to finance auto imports and luxury goods consumption. In 2016, the repo rate was raised twice. It has been maintained at 7.00 per cent since it was raised from 6.75 per cent in April 2016 to align interest rates with South Africa and maintain the Namibia dollar's peg to the rand.[12] Growth in broad money supply slowed to 4.9 per cent in 2016 from 10.2 per cent in 2015, largely due to the decline in net foreign assets of other depository corporations and slower growth in private sector credit growth. The average lending rate rose by 0.55 per cent in 2016 to 9.87 and the average deposit rate increased 0.98 per cent, reducing the interest rate spread (Bank of Namibia, 2017b).

Total bank credit grew 8.9 per cent on a year-on-year basis in 2016, in comparison to 13.5 per cent in 2015, mirroring the overall slowdown in economic activity. Annual growth in credit extended to individuals slowed to 9.3 per cent in 2016 from 12.5 per cent in 2015 owing to declining mortgage lending. Growth in credit extended to businesses also declined in year-on-year terms, from 14.9 per cent in 2015 to 8.5 per cent in 2016 (Bank of Namibia, 2017b).

12 Being a member of the Common Monetary Area (CMA), Namibia has limited autonomy over monetary policy, and its decisions are thus closely aligned to those of the South African Reserve Bank.

Although in terms of year-on-year changes between 2015 and 2016 the Namibia dollar declined against major currencies, the currency strengthened over the course of 2016 from January and February lows. Against the United States dollar, the Namibia dollar appreciated from a low of N$ 16.13 in February 2016 to N$ 13.62 in December 2016. In year-on-year terms, the Namibia dollar fell 13.6 per cent against the United States dollar, 0.5 per cent against the pound sterling and 13.5 per cent against the euro (Bank of Namibia - Monthly Selected Statistics May 2017). The depreciation of the Namibia dollar in recent years has largely been due to low commodity prices, the country's weakened domestic economic outlook, fears of a sovereign credit downgrade, and concerns regarding political developments in South Africa.

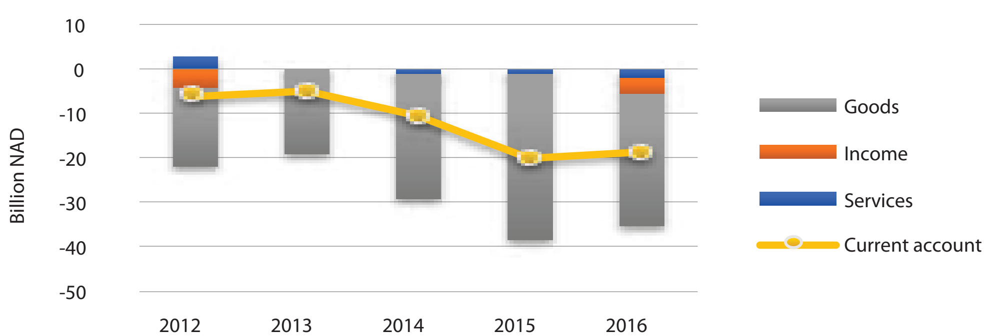
3.4 Current account

The current account deficit grew slightly to 14.2 per cent of GDP in 2016 from 13.8 per cent of GDP in 2015 (figure 5). The current account deficit was N$ 22.6 billion in 2016 in comparison to N$ 20.3 billion in 2015. While the current account deficit increased owing to lower SACU receipts and net investment income, the reduced merchandise trade deficit is encouraging. The import bill in the goods account remained stable as export earnings grew by 15 per cent, accounting for this reduction (Bank of Namibia, 2017c; Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017a).

In 2016, the trade deficit decreased for the first time since 2010. The trade balance registered a decrease of 24.7 per cent to N$ 29.8 billion in 2016 from N$ 39.6 billion in 2015. This was largely the result of strong growth in exports of diamonds, copper ores and fish while imports increased only slightly (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017c).

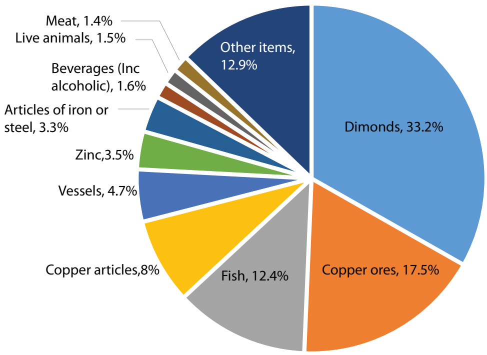
The top export items for Namibia in 2016 were diamonds, copper ores, fish, copper articles and vessels. Diamond exports, which are the top export by value, accounting for 33.2 per cent of overall exports, were primarily exported to Belgium, Botswana and South Africa and through the export processing zone. The export value of vessels and copper ores increased the most, expanding by 98 per cent and 120 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, exports of copper articles and live animals, beverages and meat declined because of low domestic production, as

Figure 5: Current account balance, 2012–2016 (billions of Namibia dollars)



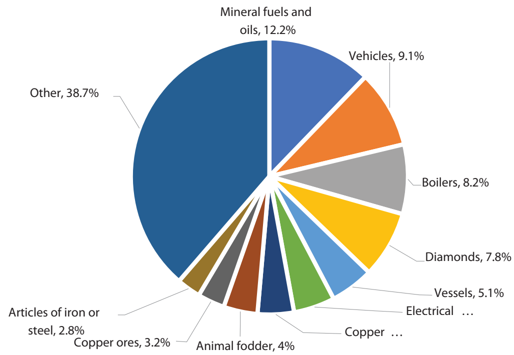
Source: Bank of Namibia, 2017c

Figure 6: Composition of exports in 2016 (percentage of total exports)



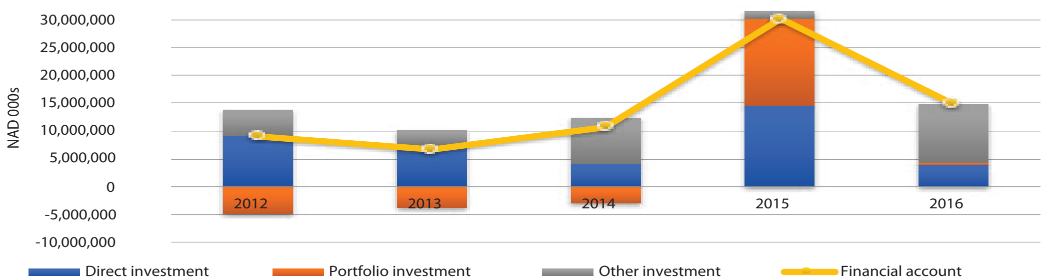
Source: Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017c

Figure 7: Composition of imports in 2016 (percentage of total imports)



Source: Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017c

Figure 8: Financial account balance, 2012–2016



Source: Bank of Namibia, 2015e

well as low foreign demand, primarily in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Norway, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017c). Figure 6 shows the composition of the Namibian export basket. South Africa, a key market for Namibian exports, was affected by poor economic growth in 2015 and 2016, suppressing Namibian exports over the same period (SADC Statistical Yearbook 2016).

The top imports to Namibia in 2016 were mineral fuels and oils, vehicles, diamonds and vessels. These items accounted for 42.3 per cent of import expenditure in 2016, up slightly from 42.0 per cent in 2015. Diamonds registered the largest increase in the import bill, growing 203 per cent because of imports from Botswana, the export processing zone and South Africa. South Africa remains the primary source of Namibian imports, accounting for 58.7 per cent of all imports in 2016. Imports from Norway increased by 7,048 per cent due to the shipment of a vessel valued at N$ 2.4 billion (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017c). Figure 7 shows the full composition of Namibian imports.

3.5 Capital and financial account

The Namibian capital and financial account is consistently in surplus, ending 2016 with a surplus of N$ 16.9 billion following on the heels of a surplus of N$ 32.0 billion in 2015 (figure 8).

Portfolio investment has recorded net inflows since 2015, with N$ 15.6 billion in 2015 and N$ 314 million in 2016. The large net portfolio investment inflow in 2015 was due to the issue of a Eurobond. In 2016, investment in equity abroad increased while foreign investment in debt securities declined (Bank of Namibia, 2017b).

Other investments, specifically long-term equity investment, were a major contributor to the capital account surplus in 2016 owing to increased borrowing by locally-registered companies from affiliated entities abroad, mainly in the mining and banking sectors. The net capital inflow of other short-term investment rose substantially in 2016. In addition, banks drew down their foreign invested assets and increased borrowing from their parent companies abroad (Bank of Namibia, 2017b).

Flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Namibia fell sharply in 2016 owing to reduced investment in both equity and other capital. However, the decline of 71.1 per cent was due largely to the base effects of debt-to-equity swaps by some mining companies in 2015, which drove up FDI flows for that year. Reinvested earnings rose from N$ 544 million in 2015 to N$ 3.3 billion in 2016 as a result of increased operating profits of enterprises, mostly in the mining and financial sectors.

Although Namibia remains one of the more favourable destinations for mining investment in Africa, its attractiveness has declined in recent years. In the Fraser Institute's Annual Survey of Mining Companies 2016 (Fraser Institute, 2017), the country's score and rank fell for the second straight year. In 2014, Namibia was ranked as the nineteenth most attractive jurisdiction globally in terms of policy, but fell to twenty-ninth in 2015 and thirty-eighth in 2016, and therefore no longer ranks as the second most attractive jurisdiction in Africa based on policy. Mining companies expressed increased concern over uncertainty regarding the administration, interpretation or enforcement of existing regulations, the taxation regime and trade barriers (Fraser Institute, 2017). Uncertainty over the New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework/Bill and the new Investment Promotion Act (12 August 2016) and how they will be implemented has made some firms less willing to invest. In terms of net FDI, Namibia ranked sixth in the SADC in 2015 (SADC, 2016).

At the end of December 2016, international reserves[13] at the Bank of Namibia stood at N$ 24.7 billion, up 4.8 per cent year-on-year (Bank of Namibia, 2017d). Import cover improved marginally to 2.9 months in 2016 compared to 2.8 months in 2015, slightly below the international benchmark of 3.0 months.

13 Foreign reserves are supposed to match the amount of domestic currency issued, as per the Lesotho-South Africa and Namibia-South Africa bilateral agreements (https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2007/wp07158.pdf).

4

Social developments

The African Social Development Index (box 2) was developed by ECA in response to a call from African States for an African-specific indicator of exclusion. The index is built on the premise that development should be reflected in the improvement of human conditions. Adopting a life-cycle approach, the index focuses on six key dimensions of well-being that reflect the impact of human exclusion over time: survival, health, education, employment, means of subsistence and decent life. Using available national data, the tool assists in mapping and assessing the effectiveness of social policies in reducing human exclusion at the national and subnational levels.

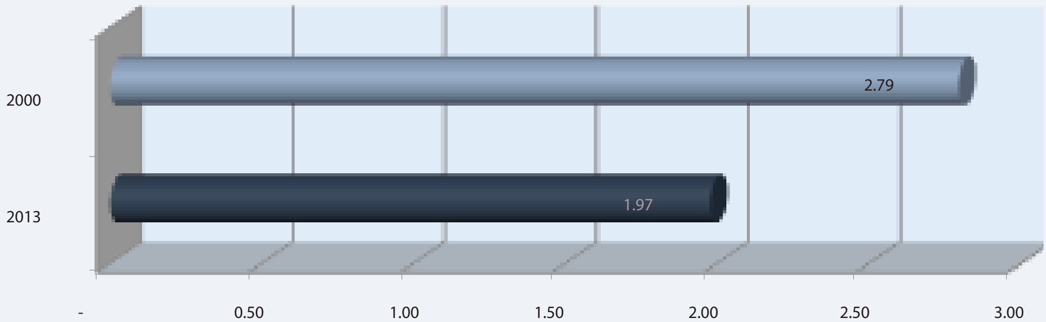
The index also supports countries in improving their data collection and strengthening their capacities to monitor progress on poverty and exclusion. As a policy tool, it complements member States' efforts to devise more inclusive social policies and facilitate the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which place a high premium on inclusiveness as a driver of sustainable and equitable development.

Box 2: African social development index: Namibia

The trend in the African Social Development Index (ASDI) value for Namibia reveals significant improvement between 2000 and 2013, despite the non-inclusive nature of growth (figure A). The value of each of the six indicators that compose the index ranges between 0 and 1, and the aggregate value of the index lies between 0 and 6. The higher the value of the index, the higher the extent of human exclusion.

In 2000, its baseline year, Namibia had a relatively low index value of 2.79. By 2013, the value had declined to 1.97 (figure A), reflecting major gains in life expectancy at 60, as well as improvements in youth unemployment and the poverty headcount ratio.

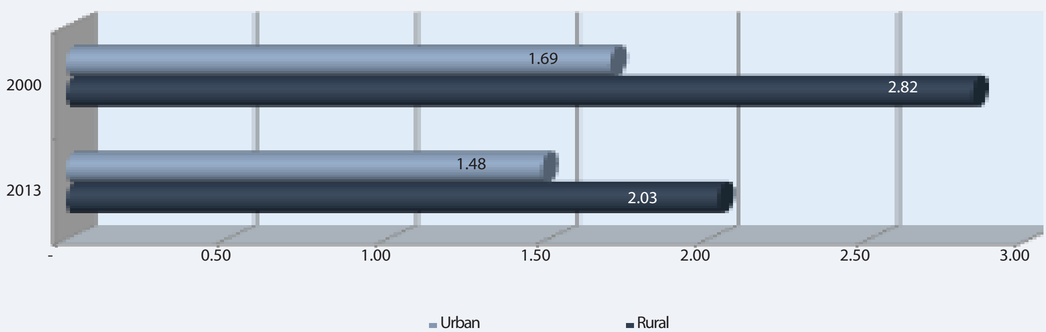
Figure A: African Social Development Index for Namibia, 2000–2013



Source: ECA computations using national data.

Human exclusion decreased more in rural areas than in urban areas from 2000 to 2013 (figure B). In Namibia, spatial exclusion is linked to agroclimatic conditions and to some extent to insufficient public service delivery in remote areas.

Figure B: Human exclusion by location for Namibia, 2000 and 2013

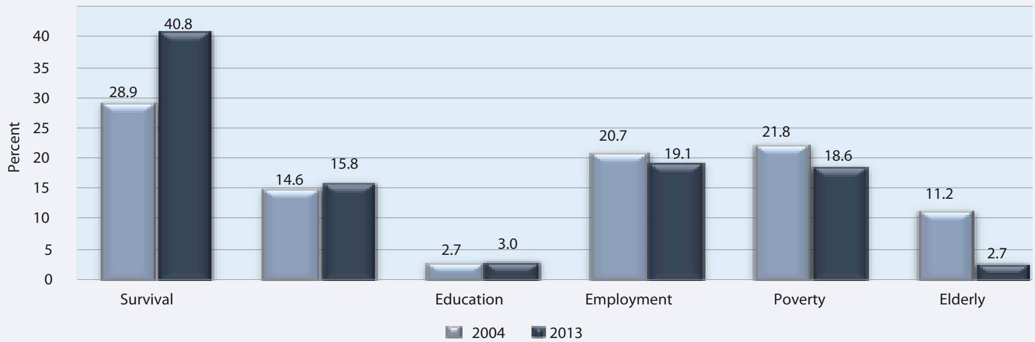


Source: ECA computations using national data.

The drivers of human exclusion in Namibia show that while employment, poverty and life expectancy at 60 have improved, exclusion in the first phases of life has worsened over time (figure C). Importantly, although youth unemployment and poverty have improved, youth's share of overall human exclusion has remained high.

The strong old age pension system in Namibia has had positive effects on limiting exclusion during adulthood. Issues of health and education access remain, owing in part to cost sharing schemes for delivering public goods. For example, the annual average household expenditure on education is about N$ 3 995. Furthermore, an education Gini index of 0.52 for Namibia, measured by the number of years of education distributed over the population, shows that inequality in education remains high.

Figure C: Drivers of human exclusion in Namibia



Source: ECA computations using national data.

Policy considerations

Improved data, particularly gender-disaggregated data, is needed to improve policy analysis on exclusion. The use of social protection policy instruments within Namibia needs to focus on creating a level playing field for all. Social policy should be designed to ensure that households excluded by location and income are targeted for full access to public services through income support or cash transfers.

More targeted policies – particularly for youth – are critical given the high rates of unemployment. Vocational training should be emphasized as an important mechanism for human capital development after high school learning. In this context, it is important to note that similarly to Mauritius, the Government of Namibia, through the Namibia Training Authority, has introduced a vocational education and training levy for all employers. However, this is only applicable to enterprises with an annual turnover of N$ 1,000,000 which creates a serious challenge for sustainable resources.

The ASDI results at the subnational level have highlighted marked inequalities within the different regions of the country. Therefore, decentralization policies with either increased fiscal autonomy or a recalculation of transfers to specific subregions are necessary. The impact of geographical and agroclimatic conditions can be attenuated if regional development plans and adequate resources are planned and coordinated.

4.1 Demographics

The Namibian population stood at 2,113,077 in 2011, consisting of 51.6 per cent female and 48.4 per cent male. Prior censuses recorded a population of 1,409,920 and 1,830,330 in 1991 and 2001, respectively, representing growth of 2.9 per cent annually between 1991 and 2001, and 1.5 per cent annually between 2001 and 2011 (Republic of Namibia, 2014a). Population projections stood at 2.3 million for 2016 and 2.4 million for 2017. Though population density has kept growing over time, it remains low at 2.6/km2 in 2011 (table 2).

The population of Namibia is relatively young, with 36.5 per cent of the population under the age of 15 (figure 9). The median age is 21 and only 7.1 per cent of the country is over the age of 60. With 58.4 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 64, the country's dependency ratio of 69.6 per cent is among the lowest in the SADC. Females live longer than males, with a life expectancy of 61 for females and 53 for males in 2011.

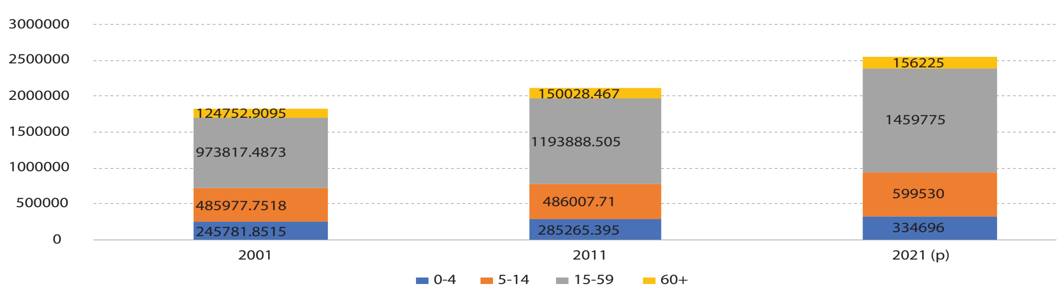
Urbanization is evident in Namibia (table 2), though the country remains mostly rural (57 per cent of the population resided in rural areas in 2011). The urban population grew by 49.7 per cent between 2001 and 2011 compared to a 1.4 per cent decline in rural population over the same period (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014). The Economic Report on Africa 2017 underscores that "a key element of structural transformation involves movement of labour out

Table 2: Basic demographic indicators for Namibia

Indicator	Census year		
	1991	2001	2011
Population	1,409,920	1,830,330	2,113,077
Interdecadal growth rate (percentage)	3.1	2.9	1.5
Density (population/km2)	1.7	2.1	2.6
Percentage urban	28	33	43
Life expectancy at birth (years)			
Male	59	48	53
Female	63	50	61

Source: Republic of Namibia, 2014a

Figure 9: Population by age group, 2001, 2011 and 2021



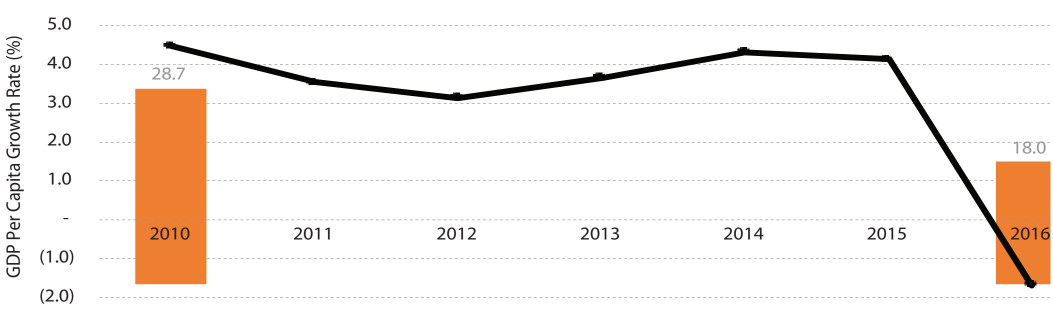
Source: Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014 of rural activities and into urban ones" (ECA, 2017). In turn, urbanization creates opportunities for industrialization by increasing demand and altering consumption patterns. This explains the rise in GDP per capita as urbanization increases. Given the low urbanization in Namibia, the Government should focus on "making cities and urban systems productive and tapping the urban advantages for industrial development" through tailored polices at national and local levels (ECA, 2017). Fertility is considerably lower among urban women, at 2.9 children per woman compared with 4.7 children per woman in rural areas, thus indicating the key role that migration from rural to urban areas plays in Namibian population dynamics (Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014).

4.2 Poverty and employment

Tackling poverty and inequality remains high on the Government's agenda, as evidenced by the prominence of the Harambee Prosperity Plan (2016/17–2019/20), a medium-term holistic poverty eradication strategy, in the national discourse. Though Namibia is an upper-middle-income country, its "history of colonialism and racial segregation resulted in a dual society and economy and, hence, strikingly divergent standards of living within its population" (Oyugi, 2008). The country's upper-middle-income status makes its poor ineligible for aid, yet growth in the economy only benefits a few given the high levels of inequality. The move by the Government to adopt the Blue Print on Wealth Redistribution and Poverty Eradication (Republic of Namibia, 2016b) in May 2016 is a commendable effort towards equity and poverty alleviation.

Preliminary data from the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2015/2016 indicates that poverty levels have fallen, with the upper poverty line headcount ratio14 declining from 28.7 per cent in 2009/10 to 18.0 per cent in 2015/16. The incidence of poverty in rural areas, largely in the north, is much higher than in urban areas. The Gini coefficient for Namibia is estimated to have fallen to 0.57 in 2015/16 from 0.60 in 2009/10 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017d). Although this downward trend is encouraging, inequality in Namibia is still among the highest in the world.

Figure 10: Poverty and economic growth in Namibia, 2010–2016



Source: National Planning Commission, 2015; Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012

14 The upper bound poverty line (or upper poverty line) is defined as the cut-off point below which persons or households are classified as poor; it includes the severely poor.

Research has shown that "the industrialized and more developed regions, in particular Khomas (with the capital Windhoek), as well as Erongo and Karas, both characterized by mining, fishing and tourism activities, display poverty levels far below average" (Kessy and Tostensen, 2008). Therefore, structural transformation is expected to provide employment opportunities as value-adding firms start to operate, thereby addressing poverty challenges. The employment-to-population ratio was 45.8 nationwide in 2016, but was 51.0 for men and 41.1 for women, and 53.8 and 37.1 for urban and rural areas, respectively. Different segments of the population displayed different levels of participation in the workforce. The employment-to-population ratio for 2016 marked a nearly 5 per cent decline from the 49.8 per cent measured in the Namibia Labour Force Survey 2014 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017e).

Agriculture accounted for 20.1 per cent of employment in 2016, a decline from 29.5 per cent in 2014. High employment sectors included wholesale and retail trade (9.7 per cent), construction (9.3 per cent), private households (8.7 per cent), public administration, defence and compulsory social services (4.5 per cent) and education (6.1 per cent). Informal arrangements (positions without pension schemes, medial aid and social security) constituted a large proportion of employment (67.5 per cent). More women (in rural and urban areas) were employed in the government, while more men (in rural and urban areas) were employed in private companies, enterprises and cooperatives (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017e). This might reflect the higher tertiary education enrolment for women compared to more vocational training for men.15

Youth unemployment (15 to 34 years) stood at 43.4 per cent in 2016, against an overall unemployment rate of 34.0 per cent. Both unemployment rates deteriorated from their 2014 levels, with youth unemployment growing 4.5 per cent while the overall unemployment rate increased by 6.1 per cent. The unemployment rate was higher in rural areas (drought had constrained the agriculture sector), at 39.2 per cent, in comparison with 30.3 per cent in urban areas. Unemployment rate for women was 38.3 per cent as opposed to 29.8 per cent for men. The wage gap between men and women narrowed from N$ 801 per month on average to N$ 208 between 2014 and 2016 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017e).

4.3 Health

Health is central to the provision of a productive Namibian labour force (Oyugi, 2008), key in supporting the country's structural transformation agenda of industrialization. While Namibia is classified as an upper-middle-income country, inequality has remained evident in health provision, mirroring the inequality characterizing the Namibian economy. Overall, 79 per cent of the population has access to health services. In 2011, life expectancy at birth was 61 years for women and 53 years for men, against 50 years for women and 48 years for men in 2001. This can be partially attributed to the falling incidence of HIV and AIDS,

15 Refer to section 4.4 on education for details.

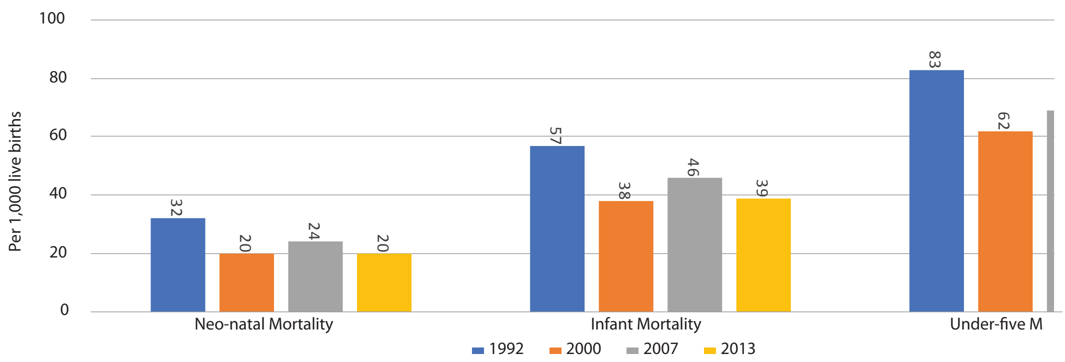
which disproportionately affects women. As at 2016, the average life expectancy (for men and women) stood at 59 years against 56.8 year in 2011 (SADC, 2016).

While there have been immense improvements in neo-natal, infant and under-five mortality since independence, as can be seen in figure 11, progress in the past decade has not had as much of an impact as the progress made during the 1990s. Neonatal, infant and under-five mortality rates are all substantially higher in rural areas.

The maternal mortality ratio is 385 deaths per 100,000 live births, an improvement compared to 449 in the prior period, though it accounts for 9 per cent of all deaths among women aged 15–49. The percentage of pregnant women who received four or more antenatal care visits declined from 70 per cent in 2006–07 to 63 per cent in 2013. Only 88 per cent of babies were delivered by a skilled provider (Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014).

Some 13 per cent of children are underweight, 24 per cent under the age of 5 are stunted, and 6 per cent are wasted.[16] Compared to the 2006–2007 statistics, this represents an improvement of 5 per cent in the prevalence of child stunting, 2 per cent in the prevalence of wasting and 4 per cent in the prevalence of underweight children. In rural areas, 16 per cent of children are underweight compared to 9 per cent in urban areas. Similarly, 28 per cent of children in rural areas are stunted and 7 per cent are wasted, in comparison with 17 per cent and 5 per cent in urban areas (Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014).

Figure 11: Neo-natal, infant and under-five mortality rates in Namibia, 1992–2013



Source: Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014

16 Underweight is defined as children whose weight-for-age is below minus two standard deviations from the reference median. Children whose height-for-age Z-score is below minus two standard deviations from the median of the WHO reference population are considered stunted. Children whose weight-for-height Z-score is below minus two standard deviations from the reference median are considered wasted.

Namibia has an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 14.3 per cent in the adult population.[17] Interventions and preventative measures have slowed the spread of the disease. HIV prevalence peaks at 30.9 per cent for women and 22.6 per cent for men in the 35–39 age range and is lowest among 15–24 year olds, at 4.4 per cent for women and 2.6 per cent for men. HIV prevalence among those aged 15–24 serves as a proxy for incidence, as it is assumed to reflect newer infections. The low HIV prevalence in this age group indicates a low recent infection rate among youth (Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014).

Namibia has a dual system of public and private health-care providers, but access to health care is still a major issue for low-income households. Infant mortality is more than twice as high in the lowest wealth quintile as in the highest one, showing wealth inequalities in health access. A policy inclined to free access to health and expanding coverage of health delivery services can reduce the high level of inequality and promote equity in public service delivery with respect to health. Sick people are not productive; thus, reducing health inequality contributes to self-reliance and poverty reduction (Oyugi, 2008). The Ministry of Health and Social Services accounts for 11.3 per cent of the 2017/18 budget, and overall expenditure is up 5.8 per cent from the previous fiscal year and is the second highest allocation in the budget (Ministry of Finance, 2017a).

4.4 Education

Investing in education is a precondition in accomplishing the shift from a resource-based economy to value addition and manufacturing through skills development, key in increasing productivity (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). Post-independence, the Government of Namibia invested in unifying the education structure, which was ethnically fragmented. The Namibian constitution now provides for free primary education as of 2013 and secondary education as of 2016. The law also makes education compulsory from the age of six. The changes have raised the enrolment rate for school-age children to 95 per cent, and the number of teachers has increased by 30 per cent since independence. The 2013 Millennium Development Goals Interim Progress Report noted that there were more females enrolled at Namibian tertiary institutions (131 females per 100 males), whereas more males were enrolled at vocational training colleges (58 females per 100 males) (Parliament of Namibia, 2016). The learner-teacher ratio also improved over the period 2009–2012[18] (Republic of Namibia, 2014b).

Nationwide, the enrolment rate for children aged 7 to 13 is 87.0 per cent. More girls enrol for primary education, at 88.1 per cent compared to 85.9 per cent for boys. Urban areas have higher enrolment than rural areas, at 90.3 per cent against 85.3 per cent (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012). The net secondary enrolment rate was 53.9 per cent in 2013, down from 57.1

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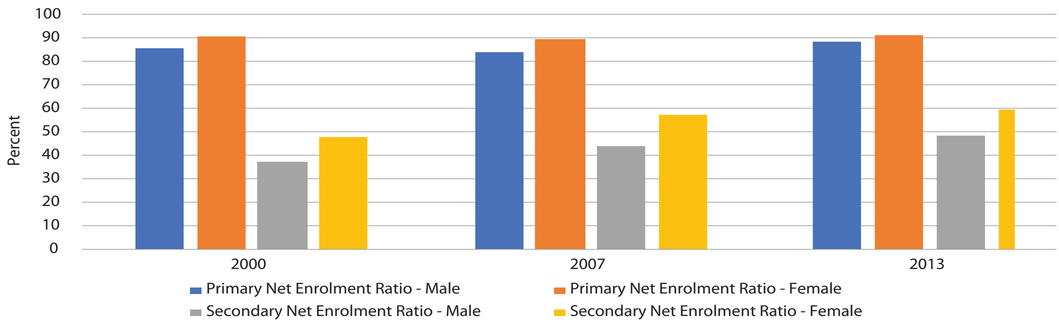
17 In 2010, HIV/AIDS prevalence for those aged 15–24 was 10.3 per cent, while for those aged 24–49 it was 26.4 per cent. By 2016, the prevalence was 8.5 per cent and 23.9 per cent for those aged 15–24 and 25–49, respectively (these are the age groups most affected by HIV/AIDS) (Ministry of Health and Social Services 2016).

18 The ratio fell from 29 to 27.2 for the primary school phase and from 24.2 to 22 for the secondary school phase.

Figure 12: Education in Namibia, 2000, 2007 and 2013



Source: Ministry of Health and Social Services and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2003, 2008, 2014; SADC 2016

per cent in 2011 (figure 12). Enrolment in secondary school was higher for girls than for boys, at 59.5 per cent for girls relative to 48.2 per cent for boys (SADC, 2016).

Despite locational[19] and gender-based[20] variations in literacy, Namibia has an overall literacy rate of 89 per cent for those aged 15 and above (EU 2017). Namibia is one of the three countries with the highest percentage of GDP directed toward education in the world (Parliament of Namibia, 2016). In 2014/15, 22.7 per cent of the national budget was allocated to education, followed by 18 per cent in 2015/16 and 20.8 per cent in 2017/18. Having noted high failure and drop-out rates, a shortage of schools in the rural areas and the need for further teacher training, the Government introduced a new policy framework (Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme – ETSIP) to improve quality and efficiency from the primary to the tertiary level. Given the entrenched income inequality and a decline in tertiary education funding, the Government should increase tertiary education funding, especially for the marginalized and the poor who cannot afford tertiary education (Tshabangu et al. 2013). Namibia has two public universities (University of Namibia and Namibia University of Science and Technology) and a single private university (International University of Management), hence the call for public-private partnerships in higher education (Parliament of Namibia, 2016)

4.5 Gender

The status of gender equality and women's empowerment is measured in terms of the key areas indicated in the chart in box 3. These areas are important for the improvement of women's lives and their contribution to sustainable and inclusive growth in Africa.

In 2004, ECA introduced the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) to measure gaps between the status of African men and women and assess the progress made by African Governments in implementing gender policies.

19 The literacy rate for those aged 15 and above is 95.6 per cent in urban areas and 82.6 per cent in rural areas.
20 The literacy rate for those aged 15 and above is 89.5 per cent for males and 88.0 for females.

Scoring is based on the Gender Status Index, one of the components of the AGDI. The score for each key indicator is an unweighted arithmetic average: the female-to-male ratio of the indicator values is multiplied by 10 and the result is rounded to the nearest whole number. A score of zero represents the highest level of inequality; a score of 5, an average level of parity; and a score of 10, complete parity. Parity levels above 10 represent situations in which women have outperformed men, regardless of the development level of the area concerned.

Most of the data used to calculate the indicator scores were drawn from the most recent national data available, mainly the Namibia Demographic and Health Survey 2013 and the Namibia Human Development Index 2017. However, for a few indicators where the country has no disaggregated data, international data sources were used, including the ILO statistical database, the World Bank's Global Findex database,[21] the UNICEF and WHO report entitled "Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2015 Update and MDG Assessment", and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs publication entitled "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables".

21 Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/globalfindex

Box 3: Gender equality and women's empowerment – Namibia

In Namibia, gender parity is seen in the under-five survival rate and youth literacy rate. Females are at an advantage relative to males in terms of under-fives who are not stunted, life expectancy at birth and net enrolment in secondary education. There is significant gender disparity in favour of males in political representation, with 58 women in parliament compared to 88 men and 24 male ministers of a total of 31. The gender parity score is 8 for access to credit and 9 for labour force participation and HIV prevalence.

According to the Demographic and Health Survey of 2013, the maternal mortality ratio was 385 per 100,000 live births. Access to a drinking water source within 15 minutes is estimated at 98 per cent and 85 per cent for urban and rural areas, respectively.

Employment : 9

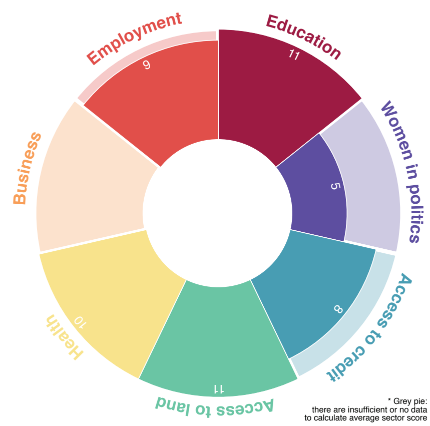
Employment in nonagricultural sector	No data
Labour force participation rate	9

Business : NaN

Top management in firms	No data
Ownership in firms	No data

Health : 10

Under-five survival rate	10
Children under age five who are not stunted	11
Life expectancy at birth	11
Share of population without HIV	9



Education : 11

Youth literacy rate	10
Enrolment ratio in secondary education	12
Enrolment ratio in tertiary education	No data

Women in politics : 5

Representation in parliament	7
Ministerial positions-cabinet	3

Access to credit : 8

Account at a financial institution	9
Borrowed from a financial institution	7

Access to land : 11

Access to land	11

Stand-alone indicators

Access to drinking water source within 15 minutes (urban)	98
Access to drinking water source within 15 minutes (rural)	85
Improved sanitation (urban)	54
Improved sanitation (rural)	17
Maternal mortality ratio	385

Source: ECA, 2016a

5

Major policy challenges

Governance context

Since independence, Namibia has been consistently recognized as one of the top performers on the African continent in terms of governance and accountability. In 2016, Namibia ranked fifth in Africa on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and Reporters Without Borders recognized the country as the freest in Africa in terms of journalistic freedom in its 2017 World Press Freedom Index. Accountability is built into the country's governance architecture through the separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The constitution mandates institutions such as the Attorney General, the Auditor General, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and an Ombudsman to enhance government accountability.

Despite the strength of the established institutions in Namibia, governance, accountability and transparency remain at the top of the Government's policy agenda. In 2015, the country's score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index worsened by one point, dropping from 53 to 52. In 2014, an Afrobarometer survey found that 63 per cent of Namibians felt that corruption had increased "a lot" or "somewhat" over the last year, while only 32 per cent thought it had decreased (Weylandt, 2017).[22]

Many high-profile scandals, inefficient public service delivery and deteriorating public perceptions have contributed to a sense that more must be done to curb malfeasance in government. Irregularities in the awarding of the tender to upgrade Hosea Kutako International Airport led to a Supreme Court decision in March 2017 to restart the procurement process. Investigations into cost increases at the National Oil Storage Facility are ongoing, and the Bank of Namibia has taken legal action against the SME Bank on account of alleged mismanagement of public funds (Republic of Namibia, 2017).

Calls for improved government service delivery have gained traction given headwinds facing the economy. Most societal protection programmes are expected to be more

22 Though Namibia has a good governance rating in Africa (mainly due to poor governance in most African countries), when compared to other regions, its ranking in respect of corruption and ease of doing business have deteriorated.

efficient to maximize societal benefits given that the Ministry of Finance has started to reduce spending in multiple areas. A recent study conducted jointly by the World Bank and Namibia Statistics Agency showed that the country could significantly enhance the effectiveness of its social spending through key policy changes (World Bank and Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017). Policy changes in governance ought to improve the investment climate, advance institutional quality and address the skewed land ownership[23] that has stalled the country's structural transformation strategy (businesses have limited access to serviced land, premise and sites) (ECA, 2016b; Ministry of Trade and Industry 2016).

Government strategies and policies for effective governance and service delivery

After taking office in 2015, President Hage Geingob made fighting corruption one of his signature policy objectives. Good governance is a key pillar of the Government's Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) and effective governance and service delivery is the first pillar of the Government's Harambee Prosperity Plan. A recognition that effective governance is a necessary precondition for economic development and poverty alleviation underlies the rationale for addressing issues of accountability and transparency, government service delivery and financial management as part of holistic national development strategies. Responsible and efficient public service provision unlocks revenue for the Government (ECA 2016c) thereby providing a funding base for a structural transformation agenda of industrialization.

The NDP5 accountability and transparency targets for the next five years include the reduction of corruption perceptions, strengthened public sector auditing and public enterprise performance, and a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system. On the public service delivery front, the primary objectives are the decentralization of functions currently fulfilled by the central Government and increased citizen public service delivery satisfaction rates (National Planning Commission, 2017).

The Harambee Prosperity Plan incorporates accountability and transparency by seeking to increase the ranking of Namibia on the Mo-Ibrahim sub-index of Accountability from 65 points in 2015 to at least 90 points by 2020, to improve its ranking from fourth position to the most transparent country in Africa as measured by Transparency International, and to retain the position of Namibia as the country with the freest press in Africa as measured by Reporters Without Borders. The Plan's goals regarding improved performance and service delivery will be to ensure that at least 80 per cent of targets assigned to management cadres and political office bearers are met on an annual basis during the Harambee period, and to ensure a citizens' satisfaction rate of 70 per cent by the end of the Harambee period (Republic of Namibia, 2016).

In executing his War on Corruption, President Geingob has endeavoured to extend institutionalized transparency beyond the constitutionally-mandated institutions mentioned

23 Country Profile Namibia 2015 has more details on the land issue in Namibia (ECA, 2016b).

previously. In the period 2016/17, the Government instituted the first round of performance agreements for all ministers. During the initial year, some ministerial targets were not achieved, but publicly transparent performance criteria is expected to remain a crucial part of government performance management at the top level. In addition to performance agreements, the President has begun holding regular one-on-one performance discussions with individual cabinet ministers (Republic of Namibia, 2017).

In addition to stronger monitoring of performance, all ministers and parliamentarians are now required to declare their assets. While the President and Minister of Finance voluntarily made their asset disclosures public, other ministers did so privately with the President for the evaluation of potential conflicts of interest.

Several new policies, some of which have become law and others which have yet to be tabled in parliament, seek to address some of the ongoing challenges of transparency and accountability in government. A new Public Procurement Act, effective from April 2017, extends to all public entities and requires that all public procurement be approved by the Treasury.

The Whistleblower Law, which was first discussed in the 2016 parliamentary session, aims to create a framework in which officials and others can safely disclose wrongdoing or mismanagement of funds in government. Some of the key provisions in the draft law include a description of the different avenues through which disclosures can be made and specific protections for whistle-blowers.

A bill to amend the Public Enterprises Governance Act, tabled in parliament in 2017, aims to reform the management and financial structure of Namibian parastatal organizations. The proposed bill would centralize several state-owned enterprises under the direct control of the Ministry of Public Enterprises and include stricter rules regarding executive remuneration, performance management and financial disclosures to the public.

Other possible avenues for enhancing transparency, accountability and effective service delivery

Despite the advances in multiple areas, accountability is still low, in part because the performance agreements are not enforced on all management levels within the Government. Moreover, goals and targets are not clearly defined within the performance agreements, and regular performance reviews do not take place. These shortcomings translate into weakened service delivery capacity. Structural transformation through industrialization requires inclusive citizen effort; thus, "delivering social equity as a means of combating corruption demands governance reforms that empower poor and marginalized groups and give them a voice" (ECA, 2016).

The mandated asset disclosures are another important step towards enforcing transparency among politicians; however, some have argued that the secrecy of the declarations and the lack of any investigative or enforcement mechanism to follow up on them are shortcomings of the policy.

While these legislative developments and presidential mandates are moving to resolve some of the ongoing challenges to accountability, transparency and effective governance in Namibia, alternative approaches to some issues could aid the process. While the intention behind the Whistleblower Law is important, some of the attributes of the draft bill may have had unintended consequences. One issue is the lack of independence of various bodies the bill proposes to set up. For example, the bill states that the Whistleblower Protection Office is to be independent and impartial, yet it would fall under the Ministry of Justice in practice. As the Office's head would be a Commissioner appointed by the President and approved by the National Assembly, its political independence is lessened. Election of the Office's leadership through public interviews by an independent panel is one proposed method to ensure the independence of the proposed institution (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017).

In addition, the bill stipulates that individuals making intentionally false disclosures are liable to prison terms of up to 20 years and a fine of up to N$ 100,000. These harsh punishments could serve as a disincentive to would-be whistle-blowers, which would ultimately limit the effectiveness of the newly established procedures and institutions.

The Harambee Prosperity Plan's emphasis on accountability, transparency and service delivery is well-placed, but its choice of targets will make it harder to achieve its stated objectives. Measuring the country's performance in terms of international benchmarks leaves Namibia vulnerable to missing its targets due to external factors irrelevant to the country's actions to improve transparency. For example, in 2016, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index included 176 countries compared to 149 in 2015, owing to greater data availability. As a result, Namibia fell eight places on the index, from forty-fifth to fifty-third globally. Key performance indicators linked to Namibia-based policies related to transparency and accountability would be more meaningful for understanding the progress made in this area (Hopwood, 2017). Also, whereas the Government seeks to reduce corruption perceptions, monitoring progress in fighting corruption and considering various facets of corruption can be enhanced by adopting fact-based, quantitative corruption measures as suggested in the African Governance Report of 2016 (ECA, 2016).

Without stating specifics, the Harambee Prosperity Plan alludes to the extension of the performance contracting system. Despite some of the difficulties in rolling out performance contracts, such contracts carry great potential to improve accountability within the public service. Performance contracts could eventually be rolled out beyond ministers, deputy ministers and permanent secretaries and throughout the civil service. One potential model for this rollout could be the experience in Rwanda, where performance contracts are now mandatory for all public servants.

In a similar manner, asset declarations can also be made mandatory on a greater scale than they currently are. In addition to being mandatory for ministers and parliamentarians, asset declarations could be made mandatory for judges, managers throughout the civil service, and the management of state-owned enterprises. Given that some of the most notable accusations of corruption in recent years have emanated from the parastatal sector, transparency in the management of state-owned enterprises is a crucial aspect of ensuring accountability in government.

Technology and open data also have a critical role to play in the quest for greater transparency and accountability. Information on licensing agreements for companies in the natural resource sector are notoriously difficult to access. Projects such as the Namibia Transparent Oil website, which maps licence details, connections and trends in the allocation of petroleum export licences in the country, could help bring information on the governance of natural resources to the public in a more accessible way (Transparent Oil, 2017). High fees for accessing the register of licence owners and copying the information can be prohibitive for researchers, the media and members of the public who have an interest in tracking this data. The Government's draft Access to Information Act could help remedy some of the barriers to easy access to public information, but the appropriate data infrastructure will need to be in place to ensure that the public can make maximum use of it. In the 2017 State of the Nation address, President Geingob expressed the hope that the act would be enacted by the end of the year.

Transparency and accountability are laudable goals, but they ultimately form the basis for effective and efficient delivery of public services. Results from a recent World Bank and Namibia Statistics Agency study on whether fiscal policy benefits the poor in Namibia found that the targeting accuracy of transfers is low and could be improved. Improved capacity to identify households most in need through techniques such as proxy means testing, which estimates the best recipients of social protection programmes based on easily observable household characteristics, could help to improve the effectiveness of the country's social safety net. Methods such as these can be operationally complex, requiring considerable investment and institutional capacities.

The NDP5 exerts a strong push for decentralization to improve public service delivery. Currently, the central Government plays an outsized role in service delivery at all levels, but NDP5 targets the devolution of 28 functions to local government over the next five years (National Planning Commission, 2017).

As we draw closer to the midpoint of the Harambee period, it will be important to take stock of what has been achieved and how outcomes can be improved to ensure that the goals of this ambitious plan are reached within the planned timeframe. With limited resources in the exchequer than in recent years and competing needs, Namibia will need to be able to do more with less. For the country to build the inclusive society it desires, it will require an even stronger basis of good governance and service delivery. Many of the components of this basis are already present, but with policies tailor-made to the Namibian context and improved institutional mechanisms, the country can become an improved model for others in the region and world. Enhanced transparency and accountability will go a long way in attracting the much-needed investment in the industrialization process (OECD, 2003).

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