

**Namibia Capacity Building Workshop on Multidimensional Poverty
and Social Protection: Approaches and Tools to serve Country's
Development Agenda**

DA16 INCEPTION WORKSHOP

**19 to 21 June 2024, Plaza Hotel
Swakopmund, Namibia**

Welcome remarks

by

Amson Sibanda

Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA

19 June 2024

Mr. Wilbard Nashandi, Director, Planning and Research, MGEPEWS

Mr. David Chipanti, UNAIDS Representative, speaking on behalf of the UN RCO

Distinguished Experts and Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to address this important gathering which gives us a unique opportunity to strengthen our efforts to ensure that those most at risk of poverty and exclusion, gain access to the opportunities and resources that lift them out of poverty and prevent them from falling back into poverty during times of crisis.
2. On behalf of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and our partner the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication, and Social Welfare (MGEPESW) for their leadership in convening this capacity development workshop, a clear demonstration of Namibia's commitment to *identify, reach out to, and expand* its social protection coverage to those left behind.
3. May I also take this occasion to thank all of you experts who have taken the time to travel long distances or join virtually to attend and actively participate in this workshop. Underlying this commitment is your recognition that social protection is a human right. It can be a powerful tool in the battle against poverty, exclusion and inequality.
4. We are also most grateful to our partners from the UN family and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative who work closely with us to deliver on the mandate on promoting inclusive sustainable development. Colleagues, we appreciate you for making

a strong commitment to pull UN resources and capacities together and develop integrated solutions to support all the ministries present here today.

5. Of particular note, this workshop builds on the work the UN Country Team that is ably led by the Resident Coordinator's Office has been undertaking in Namibia. This includes the collaboration between the NSA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and other UN agencies that resulted in the preparation of Namibia Multidimensional Poverty Index Report 2021. This work received technical support from Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, contributing to the development of capacity and skills of the NSA and other line ministries.

Distinguished Experts;

6. Progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is being adversely impacted by the gaps in the coverage, comprehensiveness, and adequacy of social protection systems against the cost-of-living crisis triggered by multiple shocks of finance, food and climate change. With this triple crisis, we have seen the benefits and shortfalls of existing social policies and mechanisms. The Covid-19 pandemic alone revealed assistance that aimed to be generous and universal, but proved to be costly, not targeted and those who needed it the most did not get enough. It reminded us how social protection and social inclusion policies must be designed to address the underlying, historical and new drivers of exclusion, including prejudices, legal and policy frameworks, and how institutions are set up and deliver services.

7. Many countries also faced a challenge of meeting the needs of the informal sector, where delivery systems were often unable to reach the informal workers who are not registered in social protection systems.
8. Today, the multiple intertwined crises we are currently facing has shown us that it is more critical than ever to make sure that everyone has access to social protection when they need it. While this response is unprecedented, it requires many innovations, particularly with regard to the development of digital delivery platforms that would ensure inclusion and equitable access.
9. Furthermore, shocks are likely to become more prevalent as longer-term global trends like the evolving nature of work, demographic change, climate change, and conflict and fragility reshape economies and societies.
10. As you well know, Namibia has one of the most comprehensive social protection systems in Africa. However, challenges of high unemployment, extreme income inequality, high levels of informality continue to persist. Like other countries in Southern Africa, Namibia is also suffering adverse effects of persistent drought.
11. It was within this context that the late President Hage Geingob requested the UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres to designate Namibia as a pathfinder country for the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. This initiative signals the UN system's collective response for addressing the multiple challenges that threaten to erase development progress.

12. As a response to this clarion call and in line with the aspirations of Our Common Agenda designed to accelerate implementation of SDGs - DESA, ECA and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) - developed a three year project to provide support to “Strengthen Capacity for evidence-based Social Protection Policies for responding to the triple global crisis in fuel, food and finance” in six (6) countries in Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions namely - **Cambodia, Maldives, Namibia, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia.**

13. In the next session, you will hear more about the objectives and strategy of this project that will build upon the existing good work and offer support to the Namibian Government through:

- filling research gaps to generate evidence that will inform scaling up of interventions to reach vulnerable and excluded populations;
- training and strengthening national capacities to accelerate development of inclusive and gender responsive social protections systems and national development plans;
- developing local capacities to use the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) as an analytical tool to identify the most vulnerable people, show aspects in which they are deprived and target resources and design policies more effectively;

- and facilitating knowledge sharing and cross-regional learning, enabling countries to draw insights and lessons from successful practices in Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions.

14. This work is timely. We are at a defining moment for concrete actions to scale-up implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and extend social protection to the four (4) billion people across the globe waiting on the promise for universal coverage.

15. In a world of competing demands, it is important that we continue to be passionate and make a strong evidence-based case for a social protection system that is well resourced to forge a broad-based and durable escape from poverty, resilience against shocks, and the transition to sustainable economies and societies.

16. This requires that we strengthen collaboration among all stakeholders, to take advantage of potential synergies and comparative advantages, including all of you present here, the UN system, regional organizations, multilateral agencies and civil society. From the UN side, we are committed to work better with member States and avoid fragmentation of our support. Our collaboration in this project and workshop, is a demonstration of our strong resolve to deliver as One UN.

17. In conclusion, I would like you to consider the following questions as you deliberate over the next two and half days:

- What do we need to know about social protection systems in Namibia and the impact of the triple crisis to inspire diligent actions and enhance focus on population groups and vulnerable populations at greatest risk of being left behind?
- What will it take to leverage new resources to establish and scale-up universal and comprehensive social protection between now and 2030?
- What innovative approaches and good practices could we document in Namibia to stimulate peer-learning and informed social protection policy in other countries?

I thank you for your kind attention