

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Comming Together for Better Nutrition in Central Namibia (Otjozondjupa Region)
<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Friday, 8 November 2024 09:00 GMT +02:00
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN - <a href="http://www.nafsan.org">www.nafsan.org</a> )
<b>EVENT LANGUAGE</b>	English
<b>HOST LOCATION</b>	Otjiwarongo, Namibia
<b>GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE</b>	Community Level
<b>AFFILIATIONS</b>	Facilitating meetings and dialogues in which innovative and practical solutions are explored that ensure food and nutrition security for everyone in Namibia (where poverty and inequalities are currently leading to a rise in malnutrition cases and deaths), is an integral part of NAFSAN's work, especially through the collaboratively developed Nutrition for Health approach ( <a href="http://www.nafsan.org/n4h">www.nafsan.org/n4h</a> ).
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55159/">https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55159/</a>



The outcomes from Nutrition Dialogues will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on women and children and young people. Each Dialogue contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal "Explore Feedback" page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward - particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

# SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

## TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

25

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-11	0	12-18	9	19-29
12	30-49	4	50-74	0	75+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

19	Female	6	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

2	Children, Youth Groups and Students	6	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
2	Educators and Teachers	0	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
0	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	5	Food Producers (including farmers)
4	Healthcare Professionals	0	Indigenous Peoples
0	Information and Technology Providers	0	Large Business and Food Retailers
0	Marketing and Advertising Experts	0	National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives
0	News and Media (e.g. Journalists)	3	Parents and Caregivers
1	Science and Academia	1	Small/Medium Enterprises
0	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
1	Women's Groups	0	Other (please state)

## OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

## ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

Participants came from twelve different civil society organisations and one academic institution working across the Otjozondjupa Region in central Namibia, in both urban and rural settings. They are working with communities in areas of health, education, early childhood development, agriculture and socio-economic development.

# SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

## FRAMING

Poverty and inequalities are on the rise in Namibia, and the country's central parts are not spared by years of drought and severely affected by climate change. All of this - together with commonly unhealthy eating patterns and lack of knowledge around good breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices - leads to an increase of malnutrition cases and deaths in both urban and rural communities. The interactive Nutrition-for-Health training ([www.nafsan.org/n4h](http://www.nafsan.org/n4h)) that was facilitated during the two days prior to this dialogue, provided valuable insights and gave participants a comprehensive and practical understanding around different forms of malnutrition, food groups, the First 1000 Days, food safety and food systems in general. All materials used are available online here: <https://www.nafsan.org/n4h-materials> The Dialogue on the third day of the workshop then provided them with an additional opportunity to engage with one another and share their views, perspectives, concerns and ideas.

## NUTRITION SITUATION PRESENTATION

<https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Nutrition4Health-Training-OverviewProgramme-2.pdf>

## DISCUSSION

Before the Nutrition-for-Health training, facilitators already asked about participants views on nutrition and health, as well as the challenges they foresee when it comes to nutrition-related interventions in communities, hereby prompting some initial thoughts and discussions. After the training during the actual dialogue, facilitators asked about participants views on nutrition and health now, hereby prompting specifically for any identified challenges, suggested solutions, and possible opportunities, e.g. in form of resources, partnerships or initiatives to enhance food and nutrition security.

# SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

## CHALLENGES

1. Limited Space for Gardening: Many community members lack adequate space to establish backyard gardens, hindering efforts toward self-reliance and local food production.
2. Knowledge Gaps: There is a lack of understanding and practical experience in gardening and nutrition-related topics, including implementing and maintaining gardens effectively.
3. Resource and Financial Constraints: Access to essential gardening resources such as seeds, tools, and equipment is limited due to financial barriers. Additionally, the cost of nutritious foods needed for balanced diets is high.
4. Land Ownership Restrictions: Many individuals do not own land, which limits their ability to initiate gardening activities. Furthermore, water for gardening often requires payment through metered systems. Renters living in urban areas lack land for gardens.
5. High Cost of Seeds: The high price of seeds poses a significant obstacle, discouraging gardening efforts within the community.
6. Financial Challenges: Financial constraints are the most critical barrier, affecting access to both nutritious foods and the resources required for gardening and food production initiatives.

## URGENT ACTIONS

1. Education and Capacity Building
  - \* Develop more initiatives focused on knowledge transfer and capacity building in nutrition, gardening, and composting.
  - \* Conduct direct community training to ensure understanding and implementation of key concepts.
2. Change Ambassadors
  - \* Identify and support individuals or organizations advocating for change, equipping them with correct information and tools to reach larger audiences.
  - \* Use familiar and trusted community members to share knowledge and motivation.
3. Networking and Collaboration
  - \* Strengthen networking between CSOs to promote the exchange of ideas, foster collaboration, and provide integrated support.
4. Garden Initiatives
  - \* Encourage backyard and community gardening through the provision of seeds, gardening tools, and other essential resources.
  - \* Organize workshops and practical training sessions on gardening, composting, and sustainable agricultural practices.
5. Fundraising Campaigns
  - Launch initiatives to raise funds for establishing community farms, purchasing nutritious foods for soup kitchens, and supporting Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers.
6. Awareness Campaigns
  - \* Implement community-wide awareness initiatives to educate people on nutrition, gardening, and the importance of balanced diets.
  - \* Incorporate cooking demonstrations to practically prepare healthy meals.
7. Government Interventions
  - Advocate for government to reduce the cost of water and improve access to affordable utilities for gardening and food production.
8. Resource Accessibility
  - Enhance access to essential resources, such as efficient social grants.
9. Job Creation and Employment Opportunities
  - Support initiatives aimed at increasing household incomes to enable families to afford nutritious foods.
11. Stakeholder Support Systems
  - Involve various stakeholders—government bodies, private sector entities, and CSOs—to provide consistent and collaborative support for community-based solutions.

## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The diverging issues include:

- Cultural and Dietary Practices: Different cultures have unique dietary traditions, food preferences, and taboos that influence nutritional outcomes.
- Socioeconomic Disparities: The extent of income inequality and access to healthcare and education can vary significantly between countries and within regions.
- Environmental Factors: Local environmental conditions, such as soil quality, water availability, and climate patterns, affect agricultural productivity and food security.
- Policy and Governance: Government policies and regulations, as well as the strength of public health systems, can influence the nutrition landscape and affect some people more than others.

### OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Community Training Programs: Facilitate workshops like Nutrition for Health (N4H) and share educational materials to empower facilitators who can train their communities, raising awareness about nutrition, health, and food security.
2. Community Gardens: Establish backyard and community gardens to foster collaboration, promote shared goals, and address malnutrition and food insecurity collectively, ensuring inclusivity.
3. Nutrition Sensitization: Conduct awareness campaigns targeted at pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, emphasizing the importance of proper nutrition for both themselves and their children to break the cycle of malnutrition.
4. Support for Garden Establishment: Assist communities in setting up gardens by providing essential resources such as seeds, tools, equipment, and materials, along with practical training. Promote the cultivation of fruits and vegetables to encourage healthier diets.
5. Empowering Rural Communities: Organize small-group training sessions to ensure effective knowledge transfer and deeper understanding. Focus on reaching and empowering individuals in the most remote rural areas, ensuring inclusivity and widespread impact.

## OVERALL SUMMARY

With poverty and inequalities being on the rise in Namibia, which is also severely affected by climate change and drought, the country is suffering the triple burden of malnutrition. Unhealthy eating patterns and lack of knowledge around good breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices contribute to the increase of malnutrition cases and deaths in both urban and rural communities.

NAFSAN, as Namibia's SUN Civil Society Alliance, recently developed the comprehensive and highly interactive Nutrition-for-Health training approach ([www.nafsan.org/n4h](http://www.nafsan.org/n4h)) and decided to hold a dialogue right afterwards. In this way, participants - coming from various civil society organisations working with very diverse communities will have a practical understanding around different forms of malnutrition, food groups, the First 1000 Days, food safety and food systems in general.

The Dialogue revealed how access to nutrition is one of the main challenges for poverty-stricken communities and families, with current social protection systems being ineffective and fragmented. Hence, much more efficient solutions, like the implementation of a universal basic income grant at national level are urgently needed to address high rates of malnutrition and provide a socio-economically transformative stimulus.

At the same time, decentralised local food production at household- and community-level needs to be inspired from within (intrinsically motivated) and supported from the outside by local authorities and development partners (e.g. through access to land, water, seeds, tools, know-how and other resources).

In addition, practical and correct information needs to be provided on healthy eating and drinking, with a focus on pregnant mothers and young children, hereby tapping into helpful indigenous knowledge and practices, while dispelling unhealthy and harmful myths that exist in communities.

Changing beliefs and practices around nutrition requires innovative solutions, such as the Universal Basic Income for all Namibians from 0-59 years of age, and for a real long-term commitment by multiple stakeholders to support parents and caregivers of young children through Right Start Namibia - as a platform that will continue to exist for the next 30+ years, because inter-generational problems such as malnutrition can only be overcome through inter-generational solutions where all stakeholders genuinely commit to collaborate over such an extended period of time, to really make an impact.

Such commitment from multi-sectoral stakeholders is needed at all levels to implement the various solutions, and the Nutrition-for-Health training in combination with the Nutrition Dialogue was a good step for Civil Society in Namibia's Otjozondjupa region to come together and to learn with and from one another, and to discuss ways in which such collaboration can continue, as well as what positive changes need to be advocated for. One of these changes is also for Civil Society to be fully recognised as not only as an advocacy voice that holds government accountable and as an implementing partner 'on the ground', but also as a competent and reliable partner when it comes to planning and coordination on national and sub-national levels.

# SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

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## PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Integrating the dialogues into the highly participatory and interactive Nutrition-for-Health training context already helped increase levels of engagement, while the selection of participants was based on previous visits to and stakeholder mapping in the Otjozondjupa region. Facilitators paid particular attention to ensure that a safe space was created in which everyone could freely share their views and perspectives, especially women, youth and indigenous people. Participants could also express themselves in their vernaculars, whereby other participants would then provide translations.

## METHOD AND SETTING

The session took place in Otjiwarongo, after an interactive two-day training-of-facilitators for Nutrition-for-Health. Dialogues started in plenary, before going into small groups, also using prompting questions around 1) Challenges, 2) Solutions, and 3) Opportunities. Facilitators then deepened the discussions with the whole group and provided a brief summary at the end.

## ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

# FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Commonwealth Foundation and the European Union for their support, plus all Civil Society Organisations who participated: DAPP Namibia, Development Workshop Namibia, Good Food Namibia, Joel Parks, Omake Charity Group, Otjozondjupa Communal Farmers Union, Pastors Forum Otjiwarongo, Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia, Shalom Vocational Training Centre, Steps for Children, Tulonga Foundation, Walvis Bay Corridor Group

## RELEVANT LINKS

- **Nutrition for Health: Embracing Our Namibian Food Systems**  
<https://www.nafsan.org/n4h>
- **Nutrition-for-Health, all materials**  
<https://www.nafsan.org/n4h-materials>
- **Right Start Namibia**  
<https://www.rightstart.com.na>
- **Basic Income Grant (BIG) Coalition - Namibia**  
<http://bignam.org>
- **DAPP Namibia**  
<https://dapp-namibia.org>
- **Development Workshop Namibia**  
<https://dw-namibia.org>
- **Food and Nutrition Security Policy in Namibia**  
<https://www.nafsan.org/nfns/>

## ATTACHMENTS

- **NAFSAN Report on Otjozondjupa (May, 2024)**  
[https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Otjozondjupa-Report-May\\_24-final.pdf](https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Otjozondjupa-Report-May_24-final.pdf)