

Key Messages from Namibia's Voluntary National Review

Introduction

Namibia recognizes the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and attesting to this is the role she played in their formulation processes, specifically the intra-Africa processes that culminated in an African common negotiating instrument called the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, a process wherein she served as a member of the High- Level Committee (HLC) representing the African sub-region and thus contributing to the SDGs finalisation. Added to that and particularly appreciative of the need to keep track of the global agenda's implementation status, Namibia, joined by 47 other UN member-states, volunteered to submit her first (1st) SDGs Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2018.

Accordingly, this VNR is a product of Namibia's commitment towards the integration and implementation of the SDGs. Moreover our commitment is reflected in the processes that the country has undertaken to ensure the full integration of the SDGs into national development documents; particularly the 5th National Development Plan (NDP5) which is informed by the long-term national developmental framework for Namibia, Vision 2030. An extensive campaign was undertaken to sensitize the Namibian community on both the SDGs and Agenda 2063; and the need to have them domesticated.

In terms of Monitoring and Evaluation of progress regarding SDGs implementation, existing national structures are utilised to ensure harmonised reporting and accountability to avoid parallel processes. A baseline report was compiled to provide the data status on the SDGs' indicators which allowed Namibia to be able to report on progress. Furthermore, Namibia commits herself to complete the development of the National Indicator Framework that will provide key meta-data on all the indicators that will be used for monitoring and reporting thereof.

Progress on the implementation of the SDGs

Namibia prides herself on the milestones reached with respect to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is in this same spirit that she commits herself to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The institutionalization of the SDGs has been well done as embedded in the current 5th National Development Plan (NDP5). The Plan focuses on Economic Progression; Social Transformation; Environmental Sustainability; and Good Governance which consequently takes into account the SDGs' pillars of People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnership.

Namibia continues to register commendable milestones in terms of progress on several indicators. However, it is important to note that there are several challenges that are currently impeding progress regarding the implementation and achievement of the Goals. The following are the key milestones and corresponding challenges to date:

Economic progression, inequality and end poverty in all its forms everywhere

The Gini-Coefficient has improved over the past five years from 0.58 to 0.56. This can be attributed to the pro-poor policies and programmes that the Namibia has put in place. In addition, over the past

10 years (2008-2017), Namibia continued to register significant progress regarding economic growth averaging 3.7% annually. This is credited to the country's efforts to stimulate economic activities through government expenditure and foreign investment. Namibia has managed to decrease the level of poverty over the last decade resulting in a drop from 28.8% to 17.4%. This is attributed to concerted efforts geared towards ensuring that, 'no one is left behind'.

However, whilst inequality has over the course of time decreased; there levels remains high resulting in Namibia being classified among the top 10 most unequal countries in the world. There are still huge disparities in terms of who has access to sustainable income, productive assets, food, water, energy, and basic services. Whilst economic growth had consistently been recorded, the paradoxical is that that growth had not translated into commensurate employment opportunities, resulting in high unemployment rates on the one side and increased levels of inequality on the other.

In terms of economic growth, over the past 2 years (2016 and 2017), the economic growth has slowed and is projected at 1.2 and 2.1% in 2018 and 2019 respectively, thereby negatively impacting on industrial and investment growth. Rural poverty has reduced significantly from 34% to 25.1%, although still remains a challenge, therefore much needs to be done to ensure that rural communities are emancipated.

Achieve gender equality (including equity) and empower women and girls

Over the course of the MDGs and the period transiting into the SDGs to date, Namibia had done well regarding gender equity and equality in the spheres of education, political representation, land rights, including policy and legislation. Women's access to economic and productive resources has improved since independence. To date, according to the Global Gender Gap Report, women account for 35 percent of the wage employment in the agriculture sector and 51 percent of women are employed in the informal sector. Additionally, 27 percent of privately owned firms have female top managers and 43 percent of parliamentarians are women; and this represents an improvement from 25 percent in 2010. Furthermore, in the public sector, women in managerial positions account for 43 percent in relation to 57 percent of men. In terms of governance there are currently 22 women ministers (members of the executive), which represents 40%.

As part of the work to be done going forward, the proportion of women partaking in science and other high paying fields remain low; there are few women in positions of leadership compared to men. High poverty rates among women coupled with high unemployment rates poses a challenge to the attainment of gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. School retention rates remain low for both girls and boys, as more learners continue to drop out of school as they progress from primary to secondary schools. This requires that Namibia, in order to achieve the desired skills levels, seriously consider addressing this anomaly.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education

Namibia continues to do well and managed to attain the targets for universal access to primary education, literacy rates, and gender parity in terms of enrolment at all school levels. In this regard, enrolment has grown exponentially over a period spanning 10 years. Namibia's gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education 16.2% in 2016 is above sub-Saharan African standards of 8.2 percent.

Survival rates over the last five years are estimated at 90% and above for primary education. However, only 87% of the learners over the last five years have survived to Grade eight dropping further to 75% for grade nine and 67% for Grade ten while less than half (43%) of the learners survived to Grade twelve.

However, the quality of instruction is often unsatisfactory, especially in schools serving poor communities. At the secondary level, there are unacceptably high rates of repetition. In the most remote, rural areas, drop-out rates are an extreme concern.

In general, the quality of teaching is a major issue. The transition from secondary to higher education is very low, currently estimated at 19% of the grade 12 cohorts. At tertiary education level, quality and relevance of university education has been a serious concern of both private and public sector employers. Post-graduate education continues to be underdeveloped and its contribution to research and innovation remains small. Considerable inequalities of access to university education remain in terms of social class, geographical location, marginalized groups as well as those with special needs and disabilities.

Ensure healthy lives to promote well-being for all

For the period under the MDGs, including the transition to the SDGs, significant progress has been recorded in areas of HIV and AIDS (prevalence 13.3%, new infections reduced by 50% and treatment coverage of 95%); TB incidence has dropped; improvement in life expectancy to 65 years; and access to health has improved.

As regards communicable diseases, particularly Malaria incidences, significant progress had been recorded, however such progress had since been reversed due to the recent floods and cross border movements between Angola and Namibia in particular.

Additionally, as of the latest official data (DHS, 2013), Namibia remain seized with challenges around stunting which stands at 24%; anaemia at 48%; and neonatal mortality stands at 20/1000 live births. This calls for concerted efforts by Namibia to achieve its aspired goals in the health sector.

Some of the other key challenges in the health sector are a consequence of pandemic outbreaks that Namibia has been experiencing over the past three years, which necessitate drastic change in focus and innovative financing modules for both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Promote and build effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions for efficient governance and public service delivery

Namibia continues to augur well on the international stage when it comes to governance. This is further substantiated by the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance which scored Namibia at 81 in 2012 and subsequently improved to 83.9 in 2016. Continentally, this earns Namibia the 5th highest score in good governance out of 54 African nations. Furthermore, Transparency International recognises Namibia as the third most transparent country in Africa, while on the global level; it ranks 53 out of 176 countries on Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perception Index.

Nevertheless, domestically, public service delivery remains a challenge as the public perception index reflects a low rate when it comes to satisfaction of Namibians in regards of public service delivery. The supply of serviced land remains very low which artificially inflates its price, thus inhibiting access by ordinary Namibians. This leads to limited access to decent housing and the mushrooming of informal settlements in urban settings. Sixty-five percent of Namibians have expressed their dissatisfaction with Government efforts to fight corruption in the country.

Promote sustainable agriculture, Combat climate change, and ensure sustainable management of water and sanitation

Namibia has done very well regarding access to safe drinking water in both rural and urban areas, where access is at 98% on average. Namibia continues to invest resources in building resilience in terms of agriculture and food production. This has led to an increase in areas of land under productive agriculture i.e. the Green Scheme. It is widely held globally, continentally and nationally that Namibia is a wildlife conservation success story, particularly through the effective implementation of the Community-Based Natural Resources Management Programme (CBNRM) which empowers communities to meaningfully and legally manage; use; and benefit from natural resources.

However, Namibia's vulnerability to climate change has seen the gains made in the agricultural sector reversed, as the persistent occurrence of drought and floods have led to reduction in food production in the country, leaving 25% of the population food insecure. Moreover, climate change continues to exacerbate land degradation while also impacting on marine resources.

Moreover, as water-borne sewerages are the main sanitation system in urban areas of Namibia while dry sanitation system is mainly used in rural areas, nationally, only 54% of the households have access to improved sanitation. The problem is particularly acute in rural areas where only 28% of the households have access to improved sanitation facilities and an alarming rate 71% of households practice open defecation. Low access to improved sanitation constitutes a serious public-health problem.

Strategies to address challenges

Some of the strategies adopted by Namibia to address challenges with regards to the achievement of the various SDG goals are as follows:

Economic progression, inequality and end poverty in all its forms everywhere

In efforts addressing poverty, Namibia has initiatives in place to promote value addition to grow the economy and thereby create employment. This is complemented by the initiatives to invest in education and skills to ensure that a large number of the population have access to employment opportunities. In addressing rural poverty that remains high, Namibia has a strategy to develop and promote community based and social enterprises through incentivising the private sector to invest in the rural economy.

Achieve gender equality (including equity) and empower women and girls

In empowering women and girls, the main initiative being taken is to mainstream informal businesses led by women to ensure financial inclusion for women in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, especially in agri-business and extractive industries.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education

In addressing access to higher education, Namibia has put up measures to widen access to higher education through equity and inclusion by focusing on increasing higher education institution intakes from rural areas and marginalized groups. This is done through intensified public awareness programs and availability of student financing.

Ensure healthy lives to promote well-being for all

Namibia is strengthening the implementation of Regional extension centres and ensure reach out to all districts countrywide for immunization of all types. Developing a multi-sectoral approach for prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases is also another strategy Namibia is taking in efforts to promote the wellbeing of her people, through strengthening medicines supply management system and even health training institutions.

Promote and build effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions for efficient governance and public service delivery

Efforts to improve public service delivery are being implemented through initiatives to accelerate some basic services such as land servicing and housing supply. In its current Plans, Namibia aims to accelerate the provision of housing processes and delivery through embracing PPPs, and new financial resources for rural housing scheme.

Promote sustainable agriculture, Combat climate change, and ensure sustainable management of water and sanitation

Namibia is committed to build resilient to climate change through enhancing preparedness to natural disasters such as flood and drought impacts. In addressing sanitation challenges, Namibia promote coordinated investment on sanitation infrastructure (new and maintenance of existing infrastructure) by ensuring that resources are allocated accordingly and that advocacy to stimulate behavioural change around hygiene especially at the community levels are strengthened.

Conclusion

Namibia remains committed to the realisation of the SDGs and will continue to invest resources to ensure that targets, as set for the specific goals, are achieved. Domestic resources and, in the spirit of the Global Partnership for the SDGs as embedded in Goal 17, international support continues to be mobilized to ensure effective implementation of national developmental programmes that will enable the attainment of the goals.