



The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into actions to end malnutrition

Country profile: Namibia



Key statisticsⁱ

- 23.1% of children under five are stunted
- 7.1% of children under five are wasted
- 79% of the population have access to at least basic drinking water services
- 34% of the population have access to at least basic sanitation services
- 44% of the population have access to basic hygiene

Background

Namibia has shown a high level of political commitment to nutrition. In 2010 the National Alliance for Improved Nutrition (NAFIN), a multi-sectoral partnership led by the Prime Minister with support from UNICEF, was launched, and in 2011 Namibia joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The Government is not currently a member of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership.

Although Namibia has shown some progress on reducing rates of stunting, the country is off course to meet WHA targets on stunting, wasting and anaemia. It has low rural coverage of water and sanitation and is prone to emergencies such as floods and droughts. These factors have contributed to a number of disease outbreaks that have had significant impacts on population health and nutrition. Namibia has agreed to the Second International Conference on Nutrition framework for action and has signed the Ngor, Malabo and Abuja Declarations.

Is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) integrated within national nutrition plans?

Multi-sectoral nutrition implementation plan, results framework and dashboard of indicators (2013)

The plan sets out a high-level strategic framework and approach for implementing multi-sectoral nutrition activities. It does not give a high level of detail about delivery channels and mechanisms of specific interventions, and instead focuses on institutional coordination mechanisms and capacities needed to deliver multi-sectoral nutrition approaches. WASH is recognised in the plan as

one of the key sectors to contribute to improvements in nutrition outcomes, with a particular focus on improving sanitation and communications around WASH. There is one WASH-related indicator, focusing on sanitation. The WASH sector is given high prominence in the plan, with one of the four technical working groups working on water and sanitation. There are, however, missed opportunities to integrate WASH activities, particularly food and environmental hygiene promotion, into the delivery of other nutrition activities.

The strategy outlines the institutional mechanisms to coordinate the nutrition response. NAFIN, led by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), will oversee the implementation of the response. Within the MoHSS, the Food and Nutrition Subdivision operationalises the multi-sectoral approach. Costs for WASH activities are included and represent 82.3% of the total budget.

Is nutrition integrated within national WASH plans?

National Sanitation Strategy 2011/12–2014/15

The strategy recognises the health impact of improved sanitation but does not mention the links with nutrition. As such, there are no specific activities, objectives or targeting of sanitation programmes in relation to nutrition. In rural areas community-led total sanitation (CLTS), an integrated approach which includes hygienic use of toilets, safe disposal of child faeces, and good hygiene behaviours which are relevant for nutrition, is suggested. Schools and health facilities are included as high priority institutions for sanitation interventions. Overall, a number of nutrition-related activities are included in the strategy, but this is not explicit.

The main mechanisms for coordination and implementation of the strategy are not clear, but suggest potential collaboration across sectors. The development of a programme for hygiene promotion is coordinated by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Care and Services.

Recommendations for the Government of Namibia

- The nutrition plan should identify more opportunities to integrate WASH in the delivery of nutrition-specific interventions (e.g. during training of healthcare workers and infant/young child care volunteers and during promotion of diverse diets and food delivery programmes in schools) rather than delivering WASH components in isolation.
- The WASH plan should consider more explicit objectives and targets on nutrition to ensure maximum impact of the included nutrition-related activities.

Recommendations for all national governments

- Ensure policies align with the Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnected targets to strengthen WASH and nutrition coordination and collaboration, using opportunities such as policy reviews and joint sector reviews.
- Establish effective cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms championed at the highest level by heads of state, to support sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate meaningful participation of and consultation with civil society and affected communities.
- Ensure up-to-date national WASH and nutrition plans and progress reports are easily accessible online, to allow civil society to monitor progress and hold governments to account.

Nutrition policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Prioritise nutrition-sensitive WASH interventions and include specific objectives to improve WASH within nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improvement of provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-location of interventions to areas with lowest WASH access and highest prevalence of undernutrition.

WASH policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Increase the 'nutrition-sensitivity' of policies and programmes, including by: targeting geographical areas where undernutrition is most prevalent; prioritising women and children; and including nutrition-relevant interventions, such as improving WASH in health and nutrition centres.

This country profile is drawn from the global report '*The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition*' produced by ACF, the SHARE Consortium and WaterAid. Read the full report at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess

ⁱ To ensure consistency and cross-country comparability, we have used the most recent figures published by global monitoring reports. In some countries, more up-to-date national statistics are available. Nutrition statistics from UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) *Child malnutrition estimates*. Available at www.who.int/entity/nutgrowthdb/jme_dataset2017_final.xlsx?ua=1 WASH statistics from UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2017) *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*. Available at washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version1