

2017/2018

# BUDGET

CHILDREN AND THE  
NAMIBIAN BUDGET:  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE  
AND WELFARE



This Budget Brief is one in a series of four that examine the extent to which the Namibian Government budgets address the needs of children in Namibia. This brief explores the extent to which the budget for social assistance and welfare addresses the needs of children under 18 years in

Namibia, and analyses the size and composition of budget allocations for fiscal year 2017/18 as well as offers insights into the efficiency, effectiveness, equity and adequacy of past spending. Other briefs focus on the national budget, education, and health and sanitation.







# 1.5%

## Child grants as share of the total national budget – FY 2017/18



### KEY MESSAGES

- **Value of child grants is low:** Social grants for vulnerable children have gradually reached more children, yet the real value of the monthly grant per child has dropped substantially over time due to inflation, in contrast with the Old Age Pensions that increase annually. There is a need to adjust social grants annually, based on the inflation rate or public-sector salary increments, in order to improve the standard of living of those with low incomes and thus avoid a widening income gap.
- **Composition of social protection spending is unequal:** a disproportionately low proportion of budget is spent on social welfare services as compared to social assistance. Impact of social assistance on poverty reduction is limited if not coupled with welfare services that address overlapping deprivations of the most vulnerable.
- **Balance increase in coverage with increase in value:** monitor the impact of child grants on child poverty closely in order to balance the increase in coverage with the need to increase the monthly grant amount.
- **Inequity in social grant spending:** there is a need to review means testing of some grants since it is problematic in a society with a large extent of informal and infrequent work and since it absorbs valuable staff time that could be spent on social welfare services.
- **Value of grant targeting children with disabilities is too low:** Consider adjusting the Special Maintenance Grant amount to the Disability Grant amount, since children with disabilities have additional needs.
- **A significant portion of the poorest children do not benefit from a child grant.** Since children in regions with the highest share of poor households had one of the lowest uptake of social grants, Government needs to put more emphasis on identifying and including children in these regions.

### Key indicators

Beneficiaries of child grants, August 2017	306,555
Beneficiaries of school feeding programme – FY 2017/18	365,854
Number of orphans – single and double orphans – 2011	150,589
Monthly child grant amount, August 2017	NAD250
Monthly child grant amount, August 2017 in USD	USD18.79
MGECSW share of the total national budget – FY 2017/18	2.1%
Child grants as share of the total national budget – FY 2017/18	1.5%
MoHSS Development Social Welfare Services for families and children as share of total budget – FY 2017/18	0.03%
Civil registration as share of the total national budget – FY 2017/18	0.4%
Ratio MGECSW administrative officers to single and double orphans – 2011 & 12 <sup>1</sup>	1 : 1,369
Ratio state (child) social workers to child population - 2017 <sup>2</sup>	1 : 12,277

<sup>1</sup> The calculation is based on the 2011 number of orphans and the staffing in the MGECSW Directorate: Social Allowances and Welfare Programmes in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The ratio is based on the number of social workers employed in the MGECSW directorate 'Child Care Services'

# Introduction

Since Namibia gained independence in 1990, the country has made steady progress in reducing poverty, with official poverty rates dropping from 69.3% in 1993/94 to 28.7% in 2009/10 and to 19.5% in 2015. Despite this, inequality is still prevalent, currently estimated at 0.57, and high poverty rates persist for youth (37%), women (22.39%) and children (34%), sharply contrasting with the classification of upper-Middle Income Country that Namibia has been given.

Poverty is highest amongst households in Namibia's north-eastern regions – Kavango and Zambezi – exceeding 40% of all households. In contrast, in the Khomas region (home to the capital Windhoek) and the central coastal region Erongo with its industrial and tourism areas less than 10% of households were classified as poor. On average 19.5% of Namibian households were poor based on the NHIES 2009/10. Poor households tend to have on average more than double the number of children (4.2%) than non-poor households (2.0%). However, the largest number of children on average were not found amongst the regions with the highest number of poor households. On average 5.1% children lived in poor households in the Kavango, Ohangwena and Omusati regions with shares of poor households of 43.4%, 23.7% and 12.6% respectively. Since these are mainly rural regions, it can be assumed that the children were left behind with relatives by parents who moved to industrial and urban centres looking for work.

Namibia traditionally has a well-developed social protection system, and although the concept is not officially defined as such, it consists of a range of contributory and non-contributory social assistance

schemes, fee exemptions from social services, social insurance, food aid and income generating activities, as discussed in the Blueprint on Poverty Eradication and Wealth Redistribution, a strategy document adopted by Government in 2016. The Fifth National Development Plan (2017/18 to 2021/22) aims to increase coverage of “social safety nets [ that] aim at increasing coverage by improving the registration of national documents, and ensure effective operation of the distribution of grants and in kind benefits”. Social welfare services are defined as social work and child welfare services including shelter services for vulnerable children, families and survivors of violence or exploitation.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGE CW) is responsible for the administration of the various child grants through an administrative officer workforce, namely the maintenance grant, the special maintenance grant for children with disability, the foster

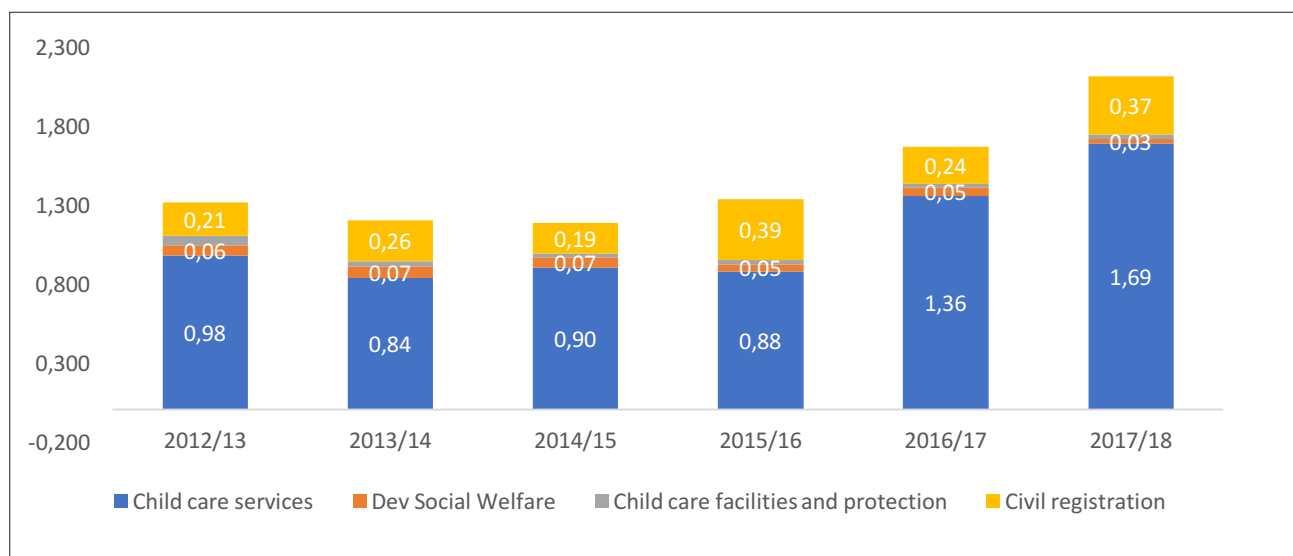
The social protection sector is fragmented, with mandates dispersed across several Ministries.

care grant and the vulnerable child grant. The MGE CW also provides subsidies for registered residential child care facilities (RCCF), shelters and place of safety, as well as social work services for vulnerable children, women and their families. Besides the support to children through grants, the MGE CW provides shelter, care and protection for children suffering abuse and neglect. In 2011, close to 20% of all children grew up in a household that was





**Figure 1: Budgetary allocation to directorates providing social services to children in percentage of total national budget**

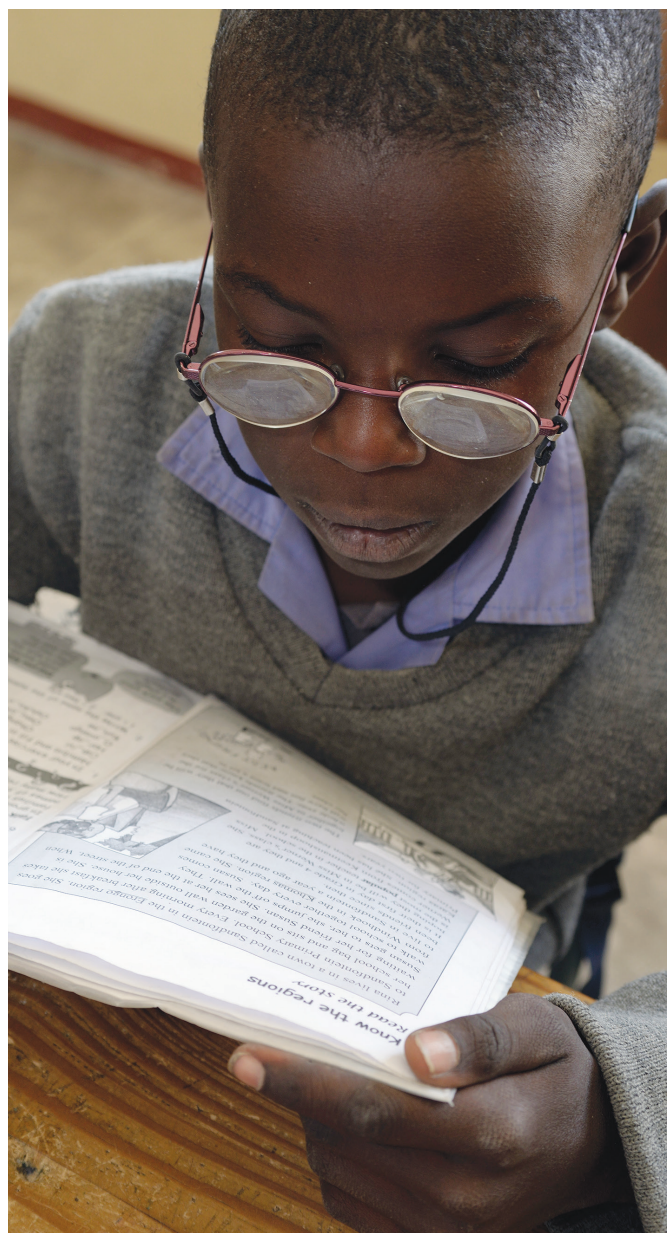


Source: EAN (Economic Association of Namibia) analysis based on Ministry of Finance (MoF)

dependent on a social grant. With the introduction of the vulnerable child grant in 2015, targeting children growing up in households earning less than 1,000 NAD per month (73 USD), the uptake of children on child grants has been steadily increasing, reaching close to 30% in 2017. Despite this, access to child grants is still inequitable across regions and health quintiles, and the system does not sufficiently ensure that the most vulnerable children have access to social assistance.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) through the Directorate of Developmental Social Welfare Services supports families and individuals in need of social welfare services, including mental health services, hospital-based support to survivors of gender-based violence, and rehabilitation of substance abusers.

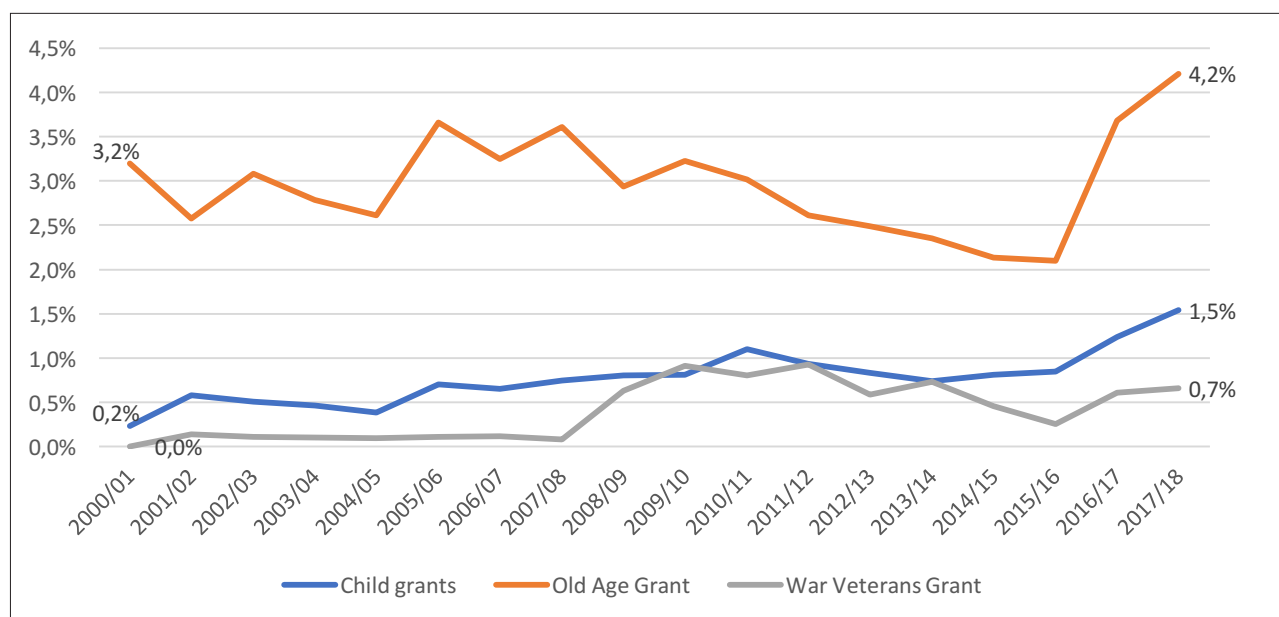
While the MGEWCW provides support to children with disabilities up to the age of 16 years through the special maintenance grant, the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MoPESW) is responsible for people with disabilities between the age of 16 years and 59 years. The financial benefits increase substantially once children receive the Disability Grant through the MoPESW, since the Old Age grant and Disability grant amount to



Namibia has a comprehensive social protection system, with various social grants and welfare services reaching at least 30% of the child population. Despite this, the sector is fragmented with responsibilities for social assistance and welfare services spread over a number of Ministries and Directorates that hinders the efficient and effective provision of services.



**Figure 2: Allocation to Old Age & Disability Grants, Child Grants and War Veteran Grants as percentage of total budget allocations**



Source: EAN based on MoF data, various years.



Namibia dollar (NAD) 1,200 per month compared to the child grants of NAD250 per month (pm). The special maintenance grant of NAD250 pm does not acknowledge that children with disabilities have additional needs that would warrant a higher monthly grant. In addition to the grants mentioned, the Government supports war veterans with among others a monthly allowance of NAD2,200.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) is responsible for the school feeding programme (see UNICEF Budget Brief on Primary Education).

Responsibilities for client database management and maintenance are spread across Ministries, with a resulting lack of coherence and administrative inefficiencies (GoN/ILO, 2014). Government is working towards the establishment of a centralised single registry for more grant administration and effective service delivery.

Since 2015 Government efforts have been made to better coordinate social protection as a sector, with the installation of a Core Team on Social Protection, coordinated by the MoPESW. A process is underway to develop a national social protection policy in 2018, that will define the concept of social protection and align the functional mandates in view of social protection system reform.

Civil registration is a pre-requisite for accessing social grants since it provides the necessary national documents such as birth and death certificates. Hence the Directorate of Civil Registration within the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration is vital to social protection programmes.





## Social Assistance and Welfare spending trends

Overall expenditures in social assistance are steadily increasing. Actual expenditure has been increasing from NAD345.6 million in the FY2000/01 to NAD5,501.3 million in the FY2016/17, because of additional programmes, increased monthly grant amounts and increased coverage. While these programmes accounted for 1.3% of GDP in 2000/01, their share rose to 3.5% in 2016/17.

## Composition of Spending

Composition of overall spending on social assistance is uneven, with the highest percentage allocated to the MPESW (4.9%) for Old Age Pensions, 1.6% allocated to MGEWCW for child grants and 0.8% allocated to MPESW for veterans' grants. These allocations are reflected in Figure 1.

The MGEWCW receives 2.1% of the total national budget in the Financial Year 2017/18, up from 1.2% and 1.6% during 2015 and 2016 respectively. Because of fiscal constraints, Government cut the total national budget in October 2016 by some NAD4 billion. Only four votes were spared cuts. MGEWCW was one of them and received the highest additional allocation of 14.5% or NAD124 million. Of the 2.1% allocated to the MGEWCW in the FY 2017/18, 1.6% is allocated to child grants.

The budgetary allocation to the MoHSS's Directorate for Developmental Social Welfare Services was cut substantially in 2017/18 to NAD19.6 mln from NAD32.8 mln in 2016/17. The directorate accounts for 0.03% of the total budget and 0.3% of the MoHSS budget. This is reflected in Figure 2 (green line).

Finally, 1.0% of the total budget is allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and 35.8% of this amount to the Directorate Civil Registration that provides the necessary national documents to access social assistance and welfare services.

The increase in budget allocation to the MGEWCW can be attributed to the roll-out of the Vulnerable Child Grant. Again, the increase in the number of grant beneficiaries by 40% from 204,161 (2015) to 285,431 in April 2017 has resulted in the larger share of the national budget absorbed by the MGEWCW. The allocation to grants accounts for 81.3% of the total MGEWCW budget in 2017 up from 75.8% in 2015. Child grants absorb 1.7% of the total budget in 2017 compared to 0.9% in 2015. The growing share of funds allocated to grants resulted in a drop of personnel expenditure of the ministry's budget from 16.6% in 2015 to 12.3% in 2017. The share is projected to decline further in the next two years to 11.8% of the ministry's budget.

Besides the support to children through grants, the school feeding programme and social services provided by the MoHSS, the MGEWCW provides shelter, care and protection for children suffering abuse and neglect.



Social welfare is not a major government priority. Besides the support to children through grants, the school feeding programme and social services provided by the MoHSS, the MGE CW provides shelter, care and protection for children suffering abuse and neglect. NAD21.5 mln are allocated in 2017/18 for these services, which is less than the allocation in the previous year of NAD25.3 mln and will decline to NAD16.7 mln in the coming two FYs. The decline is due to reduced funding for shelters that is dropping from NAD20 mln (2016/17) to NAD10 mln for the next two FYs. Figure 1 illustrates the budgetary allocations to the various directorates within ministries that provide social services to children. The subsidies for RCCF increased from NAD3.5 million in 2015/16 to NAD6.4 million in 2017/18 and benefit 22 RCCF and 605 children. In addition, NAD14.75 million and NAD300,000 are allocated to the provision of shelters and place of safety respectively. The subsidies for these various initiatives account for 2.0% of the allocation to the main division 'Child Care Services' and for 1.7% of the ministry's total budget compared to 0.6% and 0.5% respectively in 2015/16, as reflected in Figure 2

Similarly, budget for social welfare was cut for the MoHSS. This is reflected in Figure 1 (Dev Social Welfare). The decline in expenditure from the 2016/17 FY to the 2017/18 FY was mainly due to shifting the financial responsibility for the Disability Council that received NAD8.8 mln in 2016/17 to the Office of the Vice President. The projected increase for the next FY is based on planned capital expenditure for construction activities. The allocation is expected to almost double, however, in the next FY to NAD38.2 mln or 0.06% and 0.6% of the total and the MoHSS budget respectively.

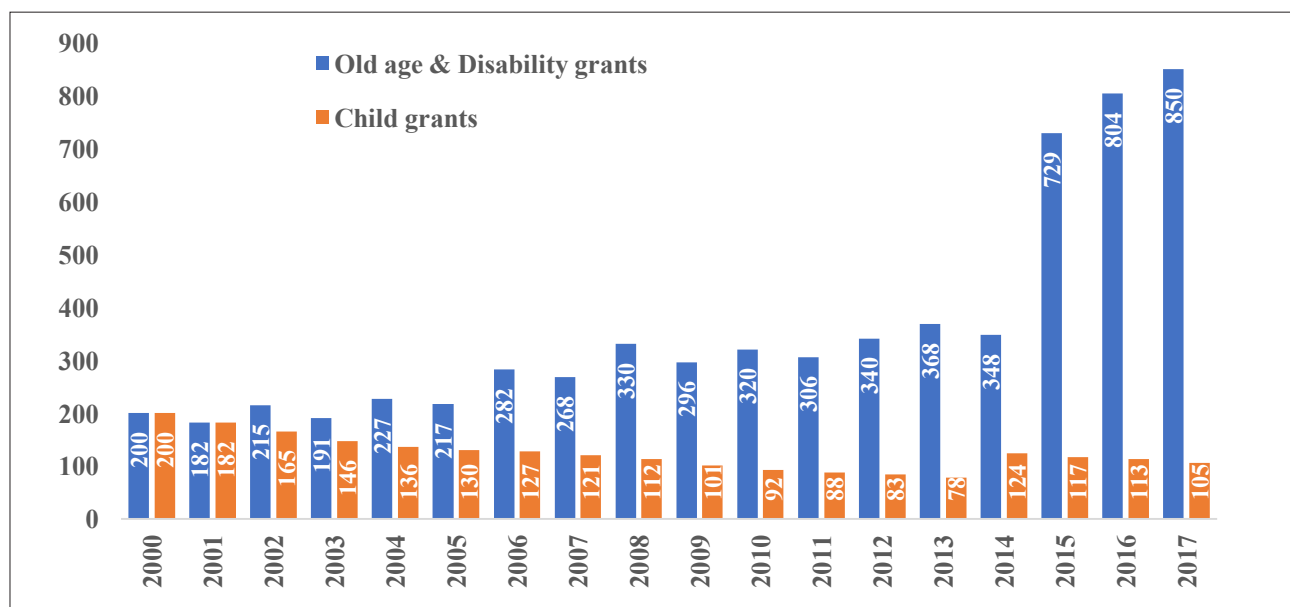
The increase in allocation to the MGE CW exceeded price increases over the past ten years. Between 2008/09 and 2017/18 the cumulative impact of inflation amounted to 72.4%, while allocations to the MGE CW have grown by 389.8%. Over the past five years (2013/14 to 2017/18) prices rose by 22.8%, while the budget for the MGE CW went up by 144.2% implying that the ministry's budget rose in real terms. The increase is caused by the expansion of the child grants (see below) as well as above-inflation increases of wages and salaries. The relative share of the Main Division 'Child Care Facilities and Protection' declined over the years, because of cuts to utilities, transport and materials and supplies. Although the division's title might suggest otherwise, financial allocation to shelter, Residential Child Care Facilities and Place of Safety is not part of the division, but included in the Main Division 'Child Care Services'.

### Real value of child grants declined...

As mentioned above, the MGE CW administers four different child grants. The maintenance grant and vulnerable child grant require means testing. The current threshold is set at NAD1,000 per month, which is below the minimum wage of a domestic worker for instance. However, it is not only the very low threshold that is of concern. In an economy with a large informal sector, actual monthly income is not only highly variable and difficult to determine, but the paperwork that goes along with it, absorbs valuable staff time that could be spend on providing social services to families in need. It is expected that the full implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act No. 3 of 2015 could result in changes to the means testing although the requirements for receiving the grant are not spelled out in the Act.



Figure 3: Real value of the child grants and Old Age and Disability grants in NAD per month



Source: EAN analysis based on grant amounts and the Consumer Price Index.

Inflation has reduced the real value of the monthly grant from NAD200 pm in 2000 to NAD105 pm despite an increase in between.

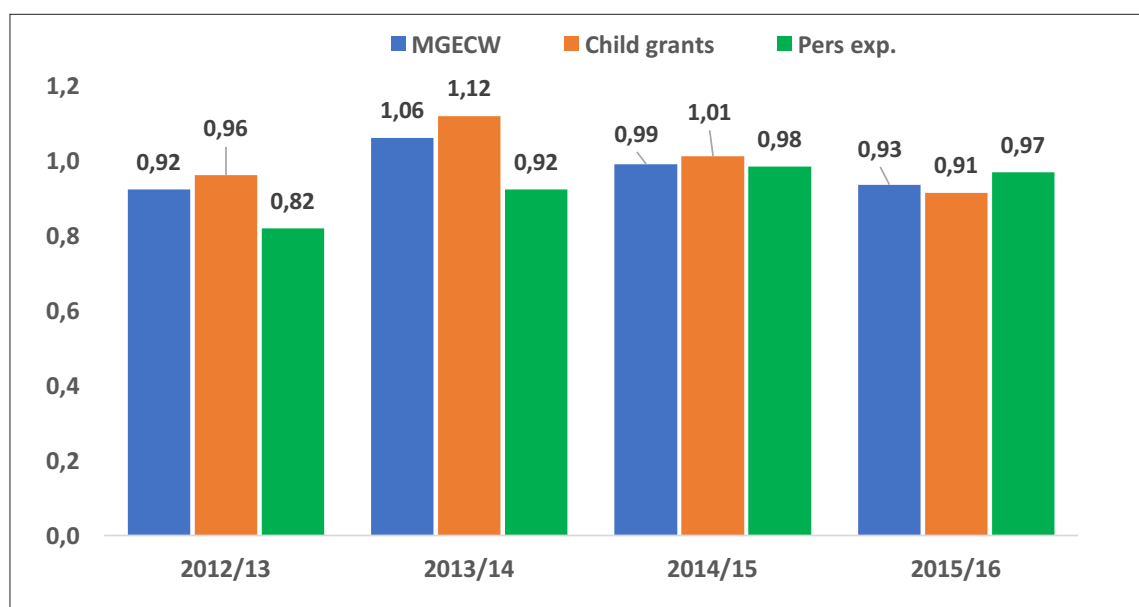
- Inflation indexing or public-sector salary increase indexing could prevent a widening gap between in the standard of living between grant beneficiaries and formal sector employees.

Furthermore, while the monthly payments of the old age and disability grants were regularly increased and almost doubled in 2015 from NAD600 pm to NAD1,000 pm and increased in the following years by NAD100 pm, the monthly amount of child grants remained at NAD200 between the year 2000 and 2014, when they were increased by NAD50 pm to the current NAD250 pm for all children of a family. Previously the second child and any further children received NAD100 pm. As the following graph illustrates, inflation has reduced the real value of the monthly grant to below NAD80 pm before the increase in 2014. Despite the increase by NAD50 pm the real value is hardly more than half the value of the grant in 2000 (see Figure 3). In contrast, the real value of the old age and disability grants have increased from NAD200 pm to NAD850 pm in 2017.





Figure 4 : Ratio of actual expenditure to estimates for the MGECW, child grants and personnel expenditure



Source: EAN analysis based on MoF, various years.

More than **50%** of the beneficiaries of the pilot foodbank programme in Windhoek could be children.

### ...but number of beneficiaries increased

The number of grant beneficiaries has grown substantially from below 4,000 in 2000 to 320,647 children in October 2017 representing 30.7% of all children in 2017. The introduction of the vulnerable child grant in 2014 contributed to the strong increase in the number of beneficiaries. The grant accounts for 53.5% of all beneficiaries in October 2017. The number of grant beneficiaries included 5,515 children with disabilities that accounted for some 35% of all children with disabilities in 2016. Consequently, the budgetary allocation for child grants rose from less than NAD20 million (mln) to currently NAD963.9 mln and absorbs about 1.5% of the total national budget. Adding allocations to the old age and disability as well as the war veteran grant, Government allocates about 6.4% of the budget to social grants, which will rise to 7.3% in 2019/20. Based on the current monthly amount of NAD250 the budget allocation of NAD963.9 mln would cater for some 320,000 children in the current FY. Microsimulation modelling based on 2009/2010 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey data coupled with regulations on taxation and social assistance in effect in 2014, demonstrated that a universal child grant would reduce child poverty from 34% to 9%. Transferring the current child grants into a

universal child grant would require a more than threefold increase of the allocation to child grants, namely about NAD3,130.6 mln or 5.0% of the national budget.

- The number of children benefiting from grants has increased substantially and covered almost 31% of all children end of October 2017.
- Introducing a universal child grant would increase budgetary allocation from currently about 1.5% of total expenditure to about 5%.
- The right balance between increasing the number of children benefiting from grants and the monthly grant amount needs to be struck within budgetary constraints.

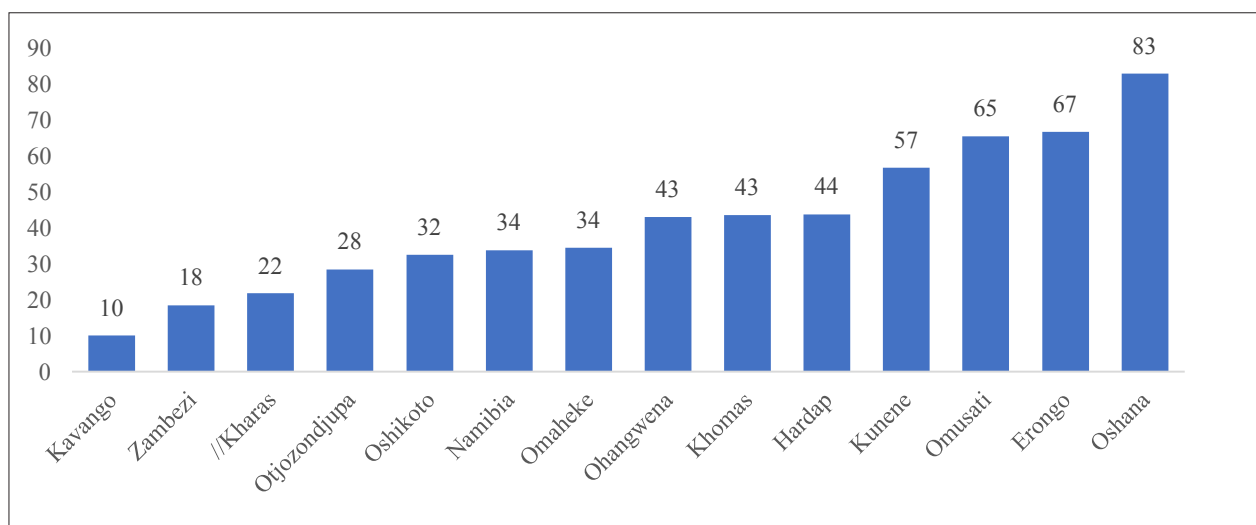
### Food support for children

The Government through the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare introduced a pilot foodbank programme in selected suburbs of Windhoek. 94,536 persons benefited from this pilot programme in 2016. Since the programme targets vulnerable households, the number of children benefitting from the programme can be estimated using the average household size for poor households in urban areas (6.4) and the average number of children per poor household (3.5 based on the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/10). Based on these average figures 51,699 children benefitted from the pilot foodbank programme in Windhoek.

### Budget Credibility and Execution

On average, actual expenditure of the MGECW amounted to 98% of the initial, estimated budget between 2012/13 and 2015/16 (Figure 4). The division responsible for the

**Figure 5 : Share of children in poor households receiving child grants in percent and share of poor households by region, 2010**



Source: EAN analysis based on NSA, NHIES 2009/10 and MGECSW information

administration of grants (Main division 06 – Child care services) underspent also slightly during this period (99%). On average, estimated allocation to grants matched actual expenditure. However, on an annual basis, actual expenditure amounted to between 91% (2015/16) and 112% (2013/14) of estimated expenditure. The ministry underspent on personnel expenditure during all the years.

The analysis of the Auditor General's reports points in the same direction, but the magnitude of deviations differs. The Auditor General's reports include virements (authorised reallocation of funds between divisions) and hence estimated allocations as per Appropriation Act differ from authorised expenditure. Between FY2012/13 and 2014/15 the MGECSW spent on average 99% of the authorised expenditure. However, two FYs showed larger under- and overspending. In 2012/13 the ministry spent 92% and the following year 106% of the authorised expenditure. The Main division 'Child care services' overspent on average by 2%, but with variations between 98% (FY2012/13) and 109% (FY109%). Since the division receives the largest allocation within the ministry its deviations from authorised expenditure greatly determines the overall execution rate. The Main division 'Child care facilities and protection' underspent substantially during the period varying between 85% (2012/13) and 98% in the following FY. On average it used only 93% of the authorised allocation. The ministry also used only 97% of the authorised allocation to personnel expenditure.

### Equity of social grant spending

Large numbers of poor children miss out on their right to social security. Based on the NHIES 2009/10, 358,540

**Over-and under-spending in the MGECSW and in certain directorates alternate with the exception of personnel expenditure that were consistently not fully utilised during the period under review.**

- ➔ Child grant spending is lowest in some of the poorest regions of Namibia.
- ➔ Deeper analysis is needed to understand the reasons for this inequity in social protection spending.

children lived in poor households, while 120,828 children (or 33.7%) received child grants in 2010. The share of children receiving grants was lowest in the two regions with the highest share of poor households – Kavango and Zambezi. Only 10.0% of children in Kavango and 18.5% in Zambezi received grants compared to 66.6% and 43.5% in Erongo and Khomas – the regions with the lowest share of poor households (Figure 5). The discrepancy could probably be explained with the lack of Government services in mainly rural areas and the greater financial barriers to access social protection as the higher cost of travel does not weigh up to the grant value.

Since then, however, the number of grant beneficiaries has grown rapidly to 320,647 by October 2017.

It must however also be noted that not all child grants target children from poor households. The special





maintenance grant (targeting children with a disability) and the foster care grant are examples of grants that use other type of targeting criteria.

This analysis suggests that deeper analysis is needed to understand the reasons for the inequities in social protection spending. Moreover, more efforts are needed to identify and include children in the poorer regions of the country in the grant schemes.

According to data from the Namibia Inter-censal Demographic Survey 2016, there were 15,941 children with disabilities below the age of 16 years. 5,529 children received the Special Maintenance Grant in 2016, which amounts to 34.7% of all children with disabilities.

- ➔ The coverage of poor children benefiting from grants has increased substantially since 2009/10.
- ➔ The coverage, however, is lowest in regions with a high share of poor households.
- ➔ The coverage of children with disabilities has increased from 23% (2011) to 35% (2016).

### Impact on child poverty

Based on the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/10 34.0% of children were classified as being poor. Without social grants, the poverty rate for children would have stood at 40.8% according to a UNICEF-supported Child Poverty Study conducted in 2012. Since then, the monthly grant and the coverage has increased. While 14.9% of all children received a child grant in 2012/13 the coverage more than doubled to 30.7% in October 2017. It is assumed that both increases have led to a reduction in child poverty rates over the years. A study by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) and the World Bank released in July 2017 concludes

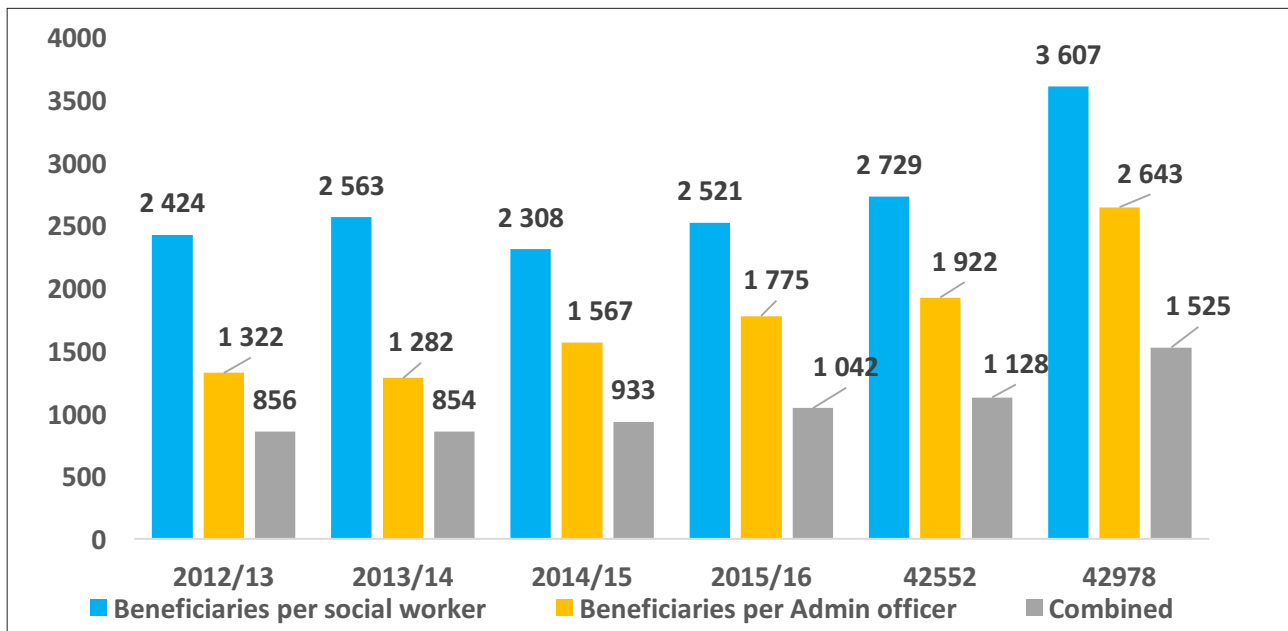
that Government's prioritisation on social spending, in particular in-kind spending such as on primary education, reduces poverty and income inequality in Namibia (see also Budget Brief on the National Budget). However, the paper also concludes that direct transfers, such as the child grants, are not well targeted since households in all income deciles benefit from some of these transfers.

### Key Policy Issues

State spending on social protection in Namibia is unevenly spent on "cash", e.g. social grants, as opposed to "care", e.g. social welfare services that provide care and protection for vulnerable women and children. An effective social protection system needs both pillars in order to sustainably lift people out of poverty and enhance their inclusion and resilience and, thereby, their social capital. Poverty is complex and consists of various overlapping deprivations that include lack of income but may also include limited access to information, to housing, to sanitation, health care, education, as well as

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**Figure 6 : Number of child grant beneficiaries per social worker and per administration officer**



Source: Economic Association of Namibia analysis based on number of beneficiaries and staffing provided by MGEW.

sexual, physical or substance abuse, all interacting to create a cycle of poverty. A range of “cash” and “care” interventions are needed to address poverty and social exclusion holistically. Investments are needed to make grant application and distribution more accessible and reduce financial access barriers. Investments are needed for “care” provided by social work staff who provide information on social protection, and who work with vulnerable families and children to address their various deprivations.

In order to meet the poverty reduction goals set out in NDP5 and in the 2015 Child Care and Protection Act, additional staff is needed to provide adequate services to children. Out of 275 positions established in the directorate Child Welfare Services that administers the grants 201 positions are filled in 2017. While the established positions increased by four compared to 2016, two more positions are filled this year compared to last year. Administration officers account for 56.0% of all established and for 57.7% of all filled positions, while social workers account for 44.0% and 42.3% respectively. 29.8% of the social workers’ positions remained vacant in 2017 compared to 24.7% of administration officers. These numbers indicate that despite the substantial increase in the number of grant beneficiaries the staffing in the directorate remained almost unchanged. Consequently, the number of beneficiaries per social workers and per administration officer increased strongly as Figure 6 illustrates. However, based on the total child population in Namibia, the number of children per social worker in the division Child Welfare Services has declined over the past five years from 16,730 (2013/14) to 12,277 in the current







FY2017/18, since the number of social workers rose by 29.4% compared to a 6.7% increase in the children population. It is estimated that the adoption of the Child Care and Protection Act in 2015 would require at least 295 additional social workers, because of increased grant eligibility and statutory case management functions, while the implementation of the kinship grant will require additional administrative officers. Based on the current number of staff in the directorate and the allocation to personnel expenditure, it is estimated that the additional positions could require additional funds to the tune of at least NAD73.7 mln per annum.

In addition to social workers employed in the MGEWCW, the MoHSS employs 146 social workers in hospitals and in the directorate Development Social Welfare Services. The social workers in the MoHSS are responsible for adults and families, but the social workers in the hospitals take care of children admitted to hospitals. Once children are discharged from hospital, they are referred to the MGEWCW if need be.

Moreover, in order to reduce the access barriers to social assistance in Namibia's context of large geographical distances, and subsequent high travel costs to access services, Government is encouraged to explore greater use of one stop service delivery options, e.g.

- The number of children per social worker has declined between 2013/14 and 2017/18.
- The full implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act as well as the implementation of the Kinship Grant will require more social workers and administrative officers.

bringing social assistance and other social services together under one roof. One opportunity to explore in this light, is leveraging already existing hospital-based birth registration for child grant application services, allowing the parents of eligible children to apply for a child grant immediately following the completion of birth registration. Such intervention would not only address the relatively low uptake of child grants among children under 1 year of age, it would also create an incentive for people to register their child, towards universal birth registration, and further promote early childhood development.







## United Nations Children's Fund

1st floor, UN House  
38–44 Stein Street  
Klein Windhoek  
P O Box 1706  
Windhoek  
Namibia

Website: <http://www.unicef.org/namibia>