This is one in a series of four briefing papers, initiated by UNICEF, that examine the extent to which the Namibian Government budgets have addressed the needs of children in the country.

Other briefs focus on health and sanitation; education; and the macro picture – a general overview of the socio-economic situation in Namibia and the budgeting process.
KEY MESSAGES

• Social grants for vulnerable children have gradually reached more children, yet the state budget allocation to child grants has not grown significantly over the past years, and the real value of the monthly grant per child has dropped substantially over time due to inflation. There is a need to adjust social grants annually, based on inflation rates 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.

• While an estimated 23% of children in Namibia receive a social grant, the effect on child poverty reduction has been minimal to date. Child poverty can be addressed more aggressively by introducing new grants and abolishing means testing of existing grants.

• A reform of the social work organisational structure that would include an increase in the number of social workers, regrading functions and task-shifting between social workers and administrative officers, would better equip the country to implement the new Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) and address social work retention challenges.

• Strengthening the cadre of administrative officers and auxiliary social workers is required to meet the surge in child grants and new roles for violence prevention and early intervention in communities when the CCPA comes into force.

• Abolishing means testing, or at least increasing the threshold substantially, as well as introducing a kinship grant when the CCPA comes into force, would reduce the administrative burden and allow social workers to focus on social issues.

• Increasing coverage of the special maintenance grant for children with disabilities would reduce the financial burden on caregivers and alleviate poverty.

• Consolidating the various social welfare and social assistance services under one administration would provide more effective support to children and families in need.

• Greater investment in school feeding by expanding coverage and budget allocation per learner would increase impact.
INTRODUCTION

This brief focuses on social welfare and social grants and not on the much broader topic of social protection. It includes a brief description of social welfare and assistance activities carried out by various ministries such as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW), Directorate of Child Welfare Services, responsible for child welfare services; the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Services (MoHSS), Directorate of Social Services, responsible for developmental social welfare services for adults and families); the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC), responsible for the school feeding programme; and the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (MHAI), Directorate for Civil Registration.

In addition, other ministries are involved in the administration of social grants. The Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare is responsible for the administration of the old age pension and disability grant, while the Department of Veterans Affairs under the Office of the Vice President is responsible for the war veterans’ grant. The Ministry of Safety and Security has responsibility for facility-based social welfare services to prisoners. In addition to state services, Namibia has a significant cadre of private social workers. For the purpose of this brief, the analysis has focused on the state social welfare and assistance functions of the MGECW, MoHSS and MoE, and the civil registration functions of the MHAI.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the budgetary allocations to the various social grants. The government could consider consolidating the grant administration and provision of social welfare services into one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries of child grants, September 2016</td>
<td>235,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries of school feeding programme, 2016/17</td>
<td>330,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of orphans – single and double orphans, 2011</td>
<td>150,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly grant amount, July 2016</td>
<td>N$250 (US$17.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child grants as share of total budget, 2016/17</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio MGECW administrative officers to child grant beneficiaries, 2016/17</td>
<td>1:2,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGECW child welfare and protection services as share of total budget, 2016/17</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio state (child) social workers to child population</td>
<td>1:11,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio state (child) social workers to active child case load, August 2016</td>
<td>1:301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoHSS social welfare services for families and children as share of total budget, 2016/17</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil registration as share of total budget, 2016/17</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ministry in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the social welfare system.

Budgetary allocation to grants (excluding the residential child care facility allowance) for vulnerable children has grown from 0.2% of the total budget in 2000/01 to 0.9% in 2016/17, or in monetary terms from N$19.8 million to N$610.3 million because of the extended coverage. Inflationary adjustments since 2014 would have increased the required amount by 9%.

**CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES AND CHILD GRANTS**

In the MGECW’s Directorate for Child Welfare Services, two main divisions are responsible for child care and protection services, namely Child Care Services and Child Care Facilities and Protection. Combined, these two divisions provide statutory and non-statutory child welfare and protection services, as well as the administration of four types of child grants, including the child maintenance grant, the foster care grant, the special maintenance grant and the place of safety allowance. The budget of these two divisions combined accounted for 1.06% of the total national budget in 2016. Subtracting the allocation to grants for children from this 1.06% leaves 0.09% of the total national budget for operational and capital expenditures for the administration of child grants, as well as the provision of child welfare and statutory social work for vulnerable children (see Figure 2).

The MGECW is responsible for providing the following child grants:

- Maintenance grant to children who have lost one parent and whose other parent earns less than N$1,000 per month or has one parent in prison for a period of longer than six months;
Foster care grant for children legally placed in foster care with a court order;
Special maintenance grant for children with disabilities under the age of 16 years;
Vulnerability grant for children whose parents are unemployed or earn less than N$1,000 per month; and
Subsidies to registered residential child care facilities for children legally placed in their care.

According to the state budget, the MGECW employs 199 staff for the administration of social grants during 2016/17. Under the Child Care Services Division, the budget lists 115 administrative officers and 81 social workers. This translates into a ratio of 1,922 child beneficiaries per administration officer. Because of the increase in the number of beneficiaries, this ratio increased from 1,322 in 2012/13 (Figure 3). This has led to a backlog of child grant registration and processing. An additional five social workers and 28 administrative officers are responsible for carrying out the mandate of the Child Care Facilities and Protection Division, including shelter for children.

The budgetary allocation to social grants for vulnerable children stands at 0.96% in 2016/17 and averages 0.9% of the total government budget between 2013/14 and 2018/19 (see Figure 4). Under the mandate of the Child Care Services Division, administrative officers are charged with application, verification and approval.
of child grants, while social workers are charged with child welfare and protection services. Social workers play a role in the child grant business process only during investigation and background reporting for the foster care and special maintenance grants. The allocation to the main division (Child Care Facilities and Protection) responsible for the provision of shelter, care and protection for children averages 0.02% of the total national budget.

Interestingly though, this division of work is not reflected in the budget of 2016/17. While most social work staff is budgeted for under the Child Care Services Division, they are mainly tasked with the delivery of child welfare and statutory social work duties which are time-consuming, taxing and under-staffed functions of the MGEWC.

### SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES FOR ADULTS AND FAMILIES

In addition to social workers in the MGEWC, there were 136 social workers employed by the MoHSS, attached to regions and referral hospitals, in the 2015/16 financial year. These social workers are responsible for adults and families in need and some are specialised in suicide response, mental health and substance abuse. While the main mandate of the MoHSS social workers does not include children, MoHSS social workers in practice provide social work to children and refer children. They assisted a total of 1,233 children in the 2015/16 financial year, resulting in an average of 9.1 children per social worker. There were wide differences regarding the number of children assisted by social workers between hospitals, ranging from an average of 58 at the Katutura Intermediate State Hospital (350 children assisted by six social workers) to two in the Omusati region (21 children assisted by nine social workers).

Social workers employed by the MoHSS mainly deal with adults and families, in line with their mandate. The MoHSS social workers hand over child cases to the social workers employed by the MGEWC, and social workers in hospitals deal with child cases when the child is admitted to hospital. Upon discharge from the hospital, the case is referred to MGEWC social workers. Social welfare services provided for adults and families by MoHSS social workers account for slightly less than 0.1% of the total budget.

It is clear there is significant overlap between the social work mandates of the MGEWC and the MoHSS. There is also a difference in workload, with 136 social work positions (out of 144 budgeted) filled in the MoHSS and 81 social work positions (out of 140 budgeted) filled in the MGEWC.

The number of social workers employed by the MoHSS and the MGEWC suggests that the MGEWC is understaffed. A recently conducted functional review of the CCPA estimated that even before the Act comes into force, the MGEWC requires at least 295 additional social workers at various levels to meet the current statutory requirements, which would translate into an estimated additional budget of N$69,462,000 (US$5 million) per year based on the current ratio of Grade 8 to Grade 5 social workers. The adoption of the CCPA in May 2015 will increase grant eligibility and statutory case management functions.

A human resource analysis conducted in June 2016 proposed the need for additional staff, regrading and task shifting in order to meet the requirements in the CCPA.
There is therefore an urgent need to review the organisational structure of social welfare services, as well as the functions of social workers and staffing, in order to ensure that the required services can be provided in a timely manner. The government could consider merging all social welfare services, including social assistance, into one institution in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of service provision. There is also a need to define the mandates of MoHSS social workers and MGECW social workers.

CURRENT CHILD GRANT SYSTEM DOES NOT SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT ON POVERTY REDUCTION

According to the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census, 124,320 children below the age of 18 years had only one living parent and an additional 26,269 children had no living parents. The number of double orphans – children who have lost both parents – increased between 2001 and 2011 to 2.7% of all children. In 2001, 1.3% of children were orphans, but this figure includes children up to the age of 15 years and not up to 18 years as in 2011. However, the strong increase cannot be explained by the different age groups used in the two surveys. Orphans account for a larger share of all children in rural areas (3.1%) than in urban areas (2.2%).

The HIV and AIDS pandemic remains a major contributor to children losing one or both parents. The roll-out of antiretroviral treatment and prevention-of-mother-to-child transmission programmes, as well as a decline in the HIV-prevalence rate among pregnant women from 18.2% to 16.9% between 2012 and 2014 (see also the brief on health), are expected to reduce the number of new orphans as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Households with child orphans are more likely to live in poverty than households without orphans. In addition, many children live in poverty because their parents are unemployed (see macro brief) or are not regularly employed.

Social grants play an important role in alleviating child poverty. A UNICEF-supported Child Poverty Study conducted in 2012 suggests that without social grants, 40.8% of children would live in poverty as compared to 34.0% of children who were classified as poor. A tax-benefit macro-simulation model has been developed for Namibia, the NAMOD, which estimated that at the current rate of N$250, child poverty could be reduced from 34% to 9% and extreme child poverty would be eliminated, with universal coverage of the child grant to all children. The NAMOD estimated that expanding coverage to all children classified as income poor would increase the costs of child grants to N$890 million. Including all children classified as vulnerable, as per Vulnerable Grant targeting criteria, would amount to N$1.6 billion. A universal children’s grant of N$250 per month for all children in Namibia, which would replace the current grants and would reduce the administrative costs and burden on social workers, would require roughly N$2.9 billion per annum based on 2009/10 household and income expenditure data.

GRANT VALUE AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW GRANTS

Beneficiaries of the maintenance grant and foster care grant received N$200 per month between 2000 and 2014. This amount was increased in 2014 to N$250 per month. The real value of the grant, however, decreased over time due to inflation, resulting in a real value of...
N$74 in 2000 prices by 2014 (see Figure 5). In 2009/10, the food poverty line was set at N$204.05 per month. This is the amount required to meet the minimum calorific requirement for an adult. The amount excludes other basic necessities such as clothing and toiletries. Including other basic needs, a lower and an upper bound poverty line were set at N$277.54 and N$377.96 per month. Even accounting for different needs of children – children under the age of 6 years are given a weight of 0.5 and children aged between 6 and 15 years a weight of 0.75 compared to an adult (1.0) when calculating the poverty line – the grant is not sufficient to lift children 6 years and older out of poverty.

The value of the N$250 grant per month has declined over the past two years to N$228.46 per month from 2014 prices because of inflation. An annual inflationary adjustment would have increased the grant from N$250 in 2014 to N$272 per month in 2016. In order to avoid the decline of the grants’ real value, the government could consider increasing grant amounts annually, based at least on the inflation rate, if not on salary increments for public servants. The latter would reduce the risk of a widening income gap between social grant recipients and employees in the public sector.

In contrast, the number of beneficiaries has increased substantially from an estimated 4,000 in March 2001 to over 221,087 in July 2016 (see Figure 6). The significant recent increase is caused by the introduction of a vulnerability grant for children towards the end of 2014. Vulnerable children are defined as children who need care and protection. A rough estimation suggests that about 21.5% of all children receive a social grant, exceeding the number of children living in severe poverty (18.3%). However, only two out of three children who are classified as poor and only 41% of children who are classified as vulnerable are currently benefiting from the grant. Since 2010, all children in a household who qualify for a grant receive N$250 per month, while previously only the first child in a household received N$200 per month and the next five children N$100 each per month. Given the limited fiscal space, there is a trade-off between expanding the coverage and increasing the monthly grant amount. It is necessary to identify savings in other areas in order to increase the grant amount to above the poverty line. The example of the old age grant that was almost doubled from N$600 to N$1,000 per month in 2015 indicates that given the political will, it is possible to address poverty more aggressively.

Furthermore, the grant is based on a means test. Only parents earning less than N$1,000 per month are eligible for the maintenance grant. This amount is below the minimum wage for domestic workers, for instance, that was increased to N$1,353 per month with effect from 1 April 2016. Means testing brings its own challenges. Establishing incomes in a society with a large informal and subsistence farming sector, and therefore irregular income, is challenging. Means testing could also provide opportunities for corruption since it leaves substantial discretionary power to officials.

Moreover, the costs (i.e. staff costs, travelling, etc.) of means testing can be substantial in relation to the grant amount. The means testing and investigation process for the foster parent grant are undertaken by social workers and absorb a considerable share of their time. Meanwhile, only some two-thirds of established positions for social workers in the child care division are filled. Abolishing means testing, or at least increasing the threshold substantially, as well as introducing a kinship grant as will be done when the CCPA comes into force, would reduce the administrative burden.
and allow social workers to focus on social issues. The introduction of a kinship grant would remove the need for a court process and replace it with the provision of a certificate by the clerk of the court, since many children are already in kinship care. This will simplify the process.

In addition, the government provides grants to persons with disabilities. The recorded number of children with disabilities has increased from about 8,000 in 1991 to 26,992 in 2011, currently accounting for 29% of all persons with disabilities. It is estimated that only 33% of all persons with disabilities receive the disability grant. Based on the number of beneficiaries of the special maintenance grant – 5,529 – the coverage for children with disabilities under 16 years of age was about 23% in July 2016. Since children with disabilities have different and often more costly needs, increasing the coverage and grant amount would contribute to reducing the financial burden on the caregivers and to alleviating poverty. The place of safety allowance of N$10 per day is paid to a person or place in whose care a child under the age of 18 years is placed by a commissioner of child welfare. This is a temporary measure before a permanent place for the child is secured. During 2015/16, the ministry paid allowances totalling N$14,184. Finally, the ministry pays N$473 per child per month to residential child care facilities. There are 18 registered residential child care facilities in Namibia, which accommodated 670 children at a cost of N$3.8 million in 2015/16.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL REGISTRATION FOR ACCESS TO SOCIAL GRANTS AND OTHER BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES

A prerequisite for accessing not only social grants, but also other public services such as education and health, is the issuing of birth and death certificates. The allocation to civil registration has fluctuated sharply over the past few years, ranging between a low of N$80 million (0.2% of the total budget) in 2012/13 and N$255 million (0.4%) in 2015/16, but it currently stands at 0.3% of government’s total expenditure. The fluctuations are mainly caused by once-off capital expenditure (vehicles) and training costs, as well as reductions in travel and subsistence allowances.

Because birth registration of children under the age of 5 actually declined from 70.5% in 2000 to 67.4% in 2006, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration introduced birth and death registrations at hospitals and opened additional sub-regional offices. Consequently, the registration rate increased to 87.1% in 2013. The difference in registration rates between rural and urban areas also narrowed significantly over time and the rates stood at 86.0% and 88.9% respectively in 2013. There remain, however, some legal challenges, including challenges related to customary law, to birth registration in hospitals. For instance, the father has to agree that his name appears on the certificate, and in some traditions the father-in-law has to provide the name for the child, which can take time. The introduction of e-birth and death registration and investments to strengthen interoperability of the national population registration system and the social assistance system will enhance access to timely issuing of national identity documents and access to social grants.

THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

Children living in poverty do not always receive sufficient food. The government therefore introduced a school feeding programme in 1991. The school feeding programme has been extended since 1991 and in 2016/17 absorbs 0.2% of the total budget compared to less than 0.1% a decade earlier. The number of beneficiaries has risen to some 330,000 learners in primary, and includes pre-primary learners in the current financial year, 2016/17. In 2009/10, the number of children classified as poor was estimated at 326,401 and the number of children classified as vulnerable at 534,722. Based on a population growth rate of 1.4%, but excluding children 0 to 4 years, there are 253,058 poor children of school-going age. The school feeding programme therefore covers not only poor children but also some vulnerable children.

The school feeding programme costs N$104 million. This amount translates into N$1.62 per beneficiary per school day, which is not sufficient. Food is served during the first break, meaning that learners often attend the first lessons on an empty stomach after walking considerable distances to school in both rural and urban areas. The government could therefore consider serving a healthy, nutritious meal before school starts. This would increase the concentration level of learners, encourage prompt arrival at school and eventually improve educational outcomes.