



28 September 2015

# Importance of nutrition security for development

by Belinda Karuaera  
Windhoek

The Coordinator of the Scaling up Nutrition Movement (SUN), Mr. Tom Arnold, and Mr. Lawrence Haddad, senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), this week shared with parliamentarians the importance of nutrition security as a pro-development intervention.

The presenters defined the scope of the problem, starting with the importance of scaling up nutrition during the first 1 000 days of a child's life and provided an overview of the situation and progress with regard to malnutrition and stunting in various SADC countries.

Mr. Haddad underscored the importance of the five "C's" in resolving the challenge of malnutrition. The five "C's" stand for commitment, coherence, coverage, cash and collection of data, which all require that government, business, donors, NGOs and citizens cooperate closely.

Challenges and existing mechanisms/initiatives to promote nutrition

The session provided an overview of the rates of malnutrition and stunting in the region and also highlighted examples from countries in the region that have successfully lowered stunting rates, or successfully expanded coverage.

Presentations by Ms. Joan Matji, regional nutritional advisor for UNICEF in eastern and southern Africa, Dr. Vitalis Goodwell Chipfakacha, community medicine technical advisor within the SADC

Secretariat and Brigadier General Brian Chituwo, a member of the Zambian parliament.

Dr. Vitalis Goowel Chipfakacha called for a "paradigm shift" and emphasised the importance of countries in the region promoting local food that is both highly nutritious and affordable. He urged the assembled parliamentarians to implement SADC's Food and Nutrition strategy.

Overcoming barriers to nutrition

The session examined the reasons for the persistence of malnutrition (both stunting and obesity) and identified the political, legislative, economic and other factors that contribute to malnutrition.

The discussion considered various barriers to nutrition and focused on structural barriers, such as institutional, legal, economic and other factors, which contribute to malnutrition.

The panel, which included various experts in the field such as Mr. Haddad (mentioned above), the Director of the Swaziland Nutrition Council Danisile Vilakati and former Namibian Prime Minister and convenor of the National Alliance for Improved Nutrition Nahas Angula.

In discussing the Namibian experience Angula acknowledged that the country faces major challenges, as one in four children under the age of five is stunted. He said that malnutrition has geographical and seasonal trends and is largely a function of income level and knowledge.

He reported that the exclusive breastfeeding rate has gradually increased. Currently 12 percent of children between

the ages of 6 and 23 months are fed from four or more food groups and receive the minimum required number of meals.

Anaemia - a condition in which there is a deficiency of red cells or of haemoglobin in the blood resulting in pallor and weariness - is still high and is mostly prevalent in the age group between 15 and 49 years (pregnant 26 percent, non-pregnant 20 percent).

Defecation in the open in both rural and urban areas is also a contributing factor to stunting.

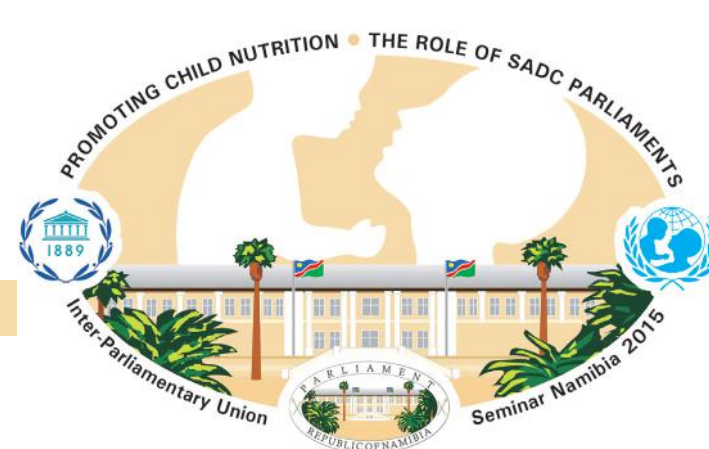
Hon. Christine //Hoebes, Deputy Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, in an impassioned statement said: "despite this progress and the economic and social improvements we have experienced since independence, it is unacceptable that almost half of the population of Namibia practice open defecation.

"It is unacceptable that almost 50 % of our children are anaemic. It is unacceptable that more than 50% of Namibian babies do not reap the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and it is unacceptable that families continue to suffer hunger night after night due to food insecurity."

Vilakati expounded briefly on the situation in Swaziland and the activities of the nutrition council there.

Haddad in turn shared the lessons of a case study conducted in Peru, of an aspiring political office bearer who made a difference in his community, as well as success stories from Ethiopia, Mexico and Vietnam.

Newsletter



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# SADC implored to devise strategies to increase food production

by Ndahafa Kaukungua  
Windhoek

The Vice-President of the Republic of Namibia, Hon. Dr Nickey Iyambo, on Monday recalled that the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit directed the Ministers of Agriculture, Food, Security and Health in August 2013 to coordinate and develop strategies to increase food production, food fortification and nutrition in the region.

Hence, the vice-president sees the ongoing regional seminar as an opportune moment for SADC parliamentarians to congregate in Windhoek to tackle the issue of nutrition security, as this year marks the beginning of SADC's Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (2015-2025).

Addressing the Regional Parliamentary Seminar on Promoting Child Nutrition in SADC underway at the Safari Hotel and Conference Centre in Windhoek, the vice-president noted that parliamentarians have an important task to ensure ratification and the implementation of all conventions and regional agreements aimed at improving the lives of children.



From left, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Lesotho Hon. Nthloi Motsamai, Prime Minister Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Vice-President Hon. Dr Nickey Iyambo, The Speaker Hon. Professor Peter Katjavivi, Ms. Micaela Marques de Sousa UNICEF Country Representative and the Deputy Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Christine //Hoebes at the Regional Parliamentary Seminar on Promoting Child Nutrition in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional underway in Windhoek.

Hon. Dr Iyambo said parliament is responsible for representing the interests of all sectors of society, including children and articulating these interests - whether related to nutrition, education or health - and translating them into relevant laws for efficient and effective implementation.



# Katjavivi calls for collective effort to combat malnutrition

by Ndahafa Kaukungua  
Windhoek

The Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, in his welcoming remarks commended the efforts of former Prime Minister Nahas Angula in promoting the work of the Namibia Alliance for Improved Nutrition (NAFIN).

NAFIN, which is headed by Hon. Angula, is a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder forum that is actively involved in spearheading child nutrition in Namibia, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister.

Hon. Katjavivi further encouraged parliamentarians to adopt relevant legislation and policies aimed at addressing the causes and effects of malnutrition among children in the wider SADC region.

The Speaker said parliamentarians have a constitutional responsibility to address these challenges and to find solutions to issues that affect the daily lives of children with utmost urgency.

The problems of stunting, malnutrition and underdevelopment are just some of the issues that need to be addressed at an expedited pace to achieve the ultimate goal of the government and other stakeholders involved in promoting child nutrition.

Hon. Katjavivi said the timing of the Regional Parliamentary Seminar is opportune as it coincides with the countdown towards the expiry date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the end of September.

In that regard the regional seminar provided an opportunity and platform for lawmakers to pause and reflect on the developments of the past fifteen years in order to fairly consider whether governments in the region have lived up to the pledges made at the Millennium Summit.

He further urged leaders of the SADC region to synchronise their food and nutrition policies with regard to child nutrition and encouraged the participants to share their experience and develop a set of SMART indicators (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-related) upon which SADC should work to eliminate nutrition insecurity within the Region.

On her part Ms. Micaela Marques de Sousa, the UNICEF Country Representative for Namibia, started off her speech by portraying the stark global reality that



Honourable Professor Katjavivi

over 180 million children under the age of five are not reaching their potential due to nutritional deficiencies, thus leading to a situation where they are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.

"Malnutrition is not merely a result of too little food. It is caused by a combination of factors, such as insufficient energy, protein and micronutrients; frequent infections or disease; poor care and infant feeding practices; inadequate health services; unsafe water and sanitation; and frequent natural disasters," she said.

She further said access to adequate nutrition remains a challenge for a significant proportion of the world population, especially during the critical window of opportunity - the first 1 000 days of a child's life.

This according to scientific evidence, the UNICEF Country representative noted, affects children's overall learning outcomes and earning capacity, as well as future economic prosperity.

SADC's Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (2015-2025), indicates that the proportion of food insecure households in the SADC region remains high and the proportion of the malnourished population has remained within the 33 to 35 percent range, according to Marques de Sousa.

However, despite the challenges, she observed that a number of concerted efforts are indicative of progress in the fight against malnutrition, as evidenced by the recent launch of the following targeted programmes:

The African Regional Nutrition Strategy launched by the African Union Commission, entitled 'Financing Growth: Mobilising Leadership and Investment in Nutrition';

The Scaled-Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative in September 2010, which is a global call for greater national ownership and stewardship of nutrition interventions and better coordination of nutrition activities;

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Without improving nutrition, the world will fail to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals," she argued.

In conclusion, she appealed to parliamentarians to make a critical contribution to efforts on the ground to tackle malnutrition as parliamentarians have the power to enact laws and regulations, influence the shape of national development plans, determine national budget design and allocations, monitor and oversee the government implementation of commitments to children and hold it to account.

# High-level seminar on child nutrition underway

**The SADC region faces weighty nutritional challenges, as evidenced by the widespread prevalence of stunting and wasting among its children, with many being underweight and overweight.**

by Staff Reporter  
Windhoek

A regional parliamentary seminar on Promoting Child Nutrition in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, is taking place in the capital of Namibia, Windhoek, from 28 to 29 September 2015.

The ultimate goal of the meeting is to enhance parliamentary capacity and action to support nutrition interventions and contribute

to nutrition security.

The seminar is jointly organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Children's Fund (formerly the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) and is being hosted by the Parliament of Namibia.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) stunting rates alone are close to or above 30 percent in ten of the 15 countries that comprise the region.

To reach this two-fold objective, the seminar aims firstly to bolster the understanding of parliamentarians and of parliamentary staff on issues related to malnutrition and stunting, including the damaging effects inaction has on countries' economic development.

The seminar is paying par-

ticular attention to parliament's role in tracking and earmarking budgets for scaling up nutrition and to other powers (law-making, oversight and representation) that parliamentarians can deploy to help reduce malnutrition rates and boost economic development in their communities and countries.

Secondly, the seminar is considering parliamentary strategies based on best practices at the national level and offers the opportunity to explore possibilities for parliamentary initiatives to help implement the Rome Declaration on nutrition, as well as the framework for action, the two main outcome documents of the second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), held

in Rome in November 2014.

Monday September 28 is significant in that is the Day of the Namibian Child, aimed at among others raising awareness of the plight of Namibian children.

On 28 September 1990, Namibia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and consequently Cabinet declared it a national day in the year 2000.



Future of the nation... Namibian children



Delegates at the opening of the two-day Regional Parliamentary Seminar on Promoting Child Nutrition in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional that started in Windhoek on Monday.

Photo: NawaZone