

# African Food Security Urban Network



## AFSUN Policy Brief WINDHOEK

### Overview of the Study

At the last census in 2001, Windhoek had a population of 233,592 with an estimated annual growth rate of 4.74%. For the Urban Food Security Baseline Survey a purposeful sample of 448 households was selected from the 23,383 poorer households in Windhoek (as determined by the Central Bureau of Statistics' poverty line), with 256 (57%) from the informal settlements, 192 (43%) from Katutura Central and Khomasdal North. The overall level of chronic food insecurity was 77% in the sample population in Windhoek, which is the same as the regional average.

### Key Findings

The Urban Food Security Baseline Survey identified four specific groups that were vulnerable to food poverty and food insecurity. Using Maxwell's typologies, the first group is **low income urban wage earners**, with average incomes of below N\$418. This group is prevalent in the informal settlements and consist of predominantly, low paid labourers (i.e. gardeners and domestic workers). They work for low to low middle income formal households who tend to pay less than N\$500, which is lower than the official minimum wage which is between N\$800-900.

The second group is the **materially poor who have migrated from the rural areas** due to the decline of their traditional livelihoods as a result of drought, floods and health reasons. This group tends to find it difficult to find employment in Windhoek and a large proportion of this group is housed by family members who too often have a low income. This group was found to be spread over the study area.

The third group is the **new urban group which is dominated by males** between the ages of 25 to 59, and who have typically lost employment in the formal sector due to incompetence, substance abuse or illegal activity. The rural-urban relationship linkages are in many cases cut-off due to the inability of the person to contribute to the extended family. This group is extremely poor and has weak social safety nets, may be unable to seek employment in the city, often depend on begging and exchange their labour well below market rates.

The fourth vulnerable group comprises **households headed by single women**. At 34% of the total sample, female centred households are the largest most food insecure group. However, it is noteworthy that the study also

revealed that households headed by single men or married men whose nuclear families reside in the rural areas are also vulnerable to chronic food insecurity. This finding is important since it does tell us that while important, the vulnerability to food insecurity cuts across gender categories. Interesting, the most vulnerable households, both male and female centred, live in conditions of informality.

### Policy Issues

Broadening employment to include the urban poor and the most vulnerable groups is of primary importance in promoting food security. Given the limits to employment generation possible through the formal economy, the City of Windhoek should continue efforts to create an enabling environment for the full development of the informal sector, using best practices from the region and internationally.

Urban-rural links are an important dimension that explains urban food security dynamics in Windhoek, and the policy priority must be to encourage the maintenance of these informal social security safety nets, together with the existing welfare system that is in place.

Notwithstanding the factors that limit urban agriculture in Windhoek such as insecure land tenure for the urban poor, scarcity of water, rolling hills with hard bedrock, small plots, and protection of the underground aquifer from pollution, the city has the potential to expand this sector, from kitchen gardens to commercial ventures on the city's periphery. Environmentally sound approaches/technologies are available for adoption but often local knowledge is not present and training is required. The major policy constraint at present is that the Windhoek Town Planning Scheme does not recognize urban agriculture as a land use zone, which should be revised in terms of the agricultural provisions embodied in the national legislation (Town Planning Ordinance No. 18 of 1954 as amended).

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