

# Improving targeting for urban food banks, Social Protection in Namibia

## Experience of Namibia Red Cross Society

*Date: June 2021*



**Location:**  
Namibia

**Dates:**  
October 2018 – June 2019

**Objective:**  
A case study on using the Household Economic Security approach to revise Food Bank eligibility criteria with the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare of Namibia and the Namibia Red Cross Society.

**Partners:**  
Namibia Red Cross and British Red Cross Societies

## Background

This is a case study about targeting for social protection. It outlines lessons learnt from collaboration between the Namibia Red Cross Society and the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to revise urban food bank eligibility criteria in peri urban Khomas Region using the household economic security (HES) approach in June 2019. As the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) looks to pursue similar collaborations internationally, the Namibia experience offers initial learning that can inform other National Societies (NS) conducting similar exercises. This case study is for RCRCM members, management, staff, and volunteers. It is also for government partners involved in social protection or public safety net programmes. We hope that additional stakeholders find this useful, especially those interested in collaborative approaches to economic security analysis in the context of government social protection targeting.



# Introduction

2018

Dialogue initiation between the Namibia Red Cross Society and relevant Ministries.

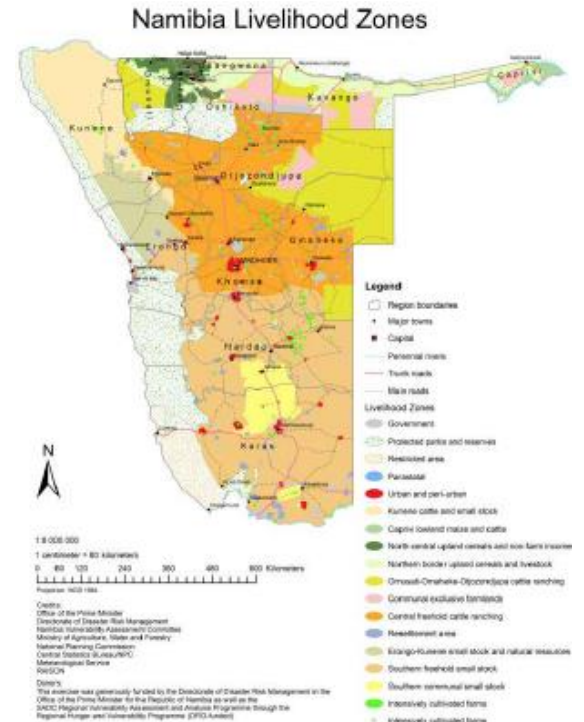
APRIL 2019

The Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MPESW) approached the Namibia Red Cross Society (NRCS) to backstop Food Bank (FB) targeting in seven densely populated, peri urban Windhoek constituencies.

The Government had conducted several revisions of the selection criteria since piloting the food bank approach, however previous exercises had not fully addressed inclusion and exclusion errors.

MAY 2019

Stakeholders agreed to adapt the [Household Economic Security \(HES\)](#) approach, and in May the NRCS mobilised a member of the British Red Cross HES team for a five-week secondment to MPESW to facilitate improved analysis, targeting and registration in Khomas Region. The NRCS-MPESW collaboration was the first time that the HES approach had been adapted to analyse social protection targeting.



This case study summarises the process and lessons learnt from the NRCS-MPESW collaboration, and complements two related documents:

- NRCS-MPESW economic security assessment report
- Household Economic Security (HES) technical guidance for assessment and analysis

# The Food Bank Programme

The MPESW Food Bank assists with monthly in-kind food parcels for poor households in urban and semi-urban areas, that are living below the minimum income threshold.

## Objective

The main objective of the Food Bank project is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the country, through the distribution of food parcels to the needy. The Food Bank will assist in bringing an end to severe hunger through food distribution and alleviation of other indispensable material needs to those households included in the lower bound severe poverty line. The Food Bank will not only provide a short-term solution to alleviate poverty for vulnerable families and communities, but also help in transforming them into long term solutions such as employment.

## Selection criteria



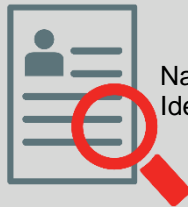
HH income below N\$400 or USD 29 per month (N\$4,800 or USD 349 per annum)



No access to other grants or benefits provided by the government



Poor households with more than 5 non-earning and/or vulnerable dependents



Namibian National Identity Card



Consideration will also be made on merit for other programmes such as orphanages and peri-urban schools with no school feeding programmes.

## Identification

The identification of beneficiaries is done with the assistance of the Street Committees at the Constituency Office level. This is a team of three members from the location that assist the Ministry in identifying, assessing vulnerability, and registering people in their locations.

## Registration

Since 2018 the Government is using a web-based registration system (SCOPE) with support from WFP (WFP is supporting national governments in many countries to develop such information systems).

## The revision process & Methodology: May – June 2019

Secondary data analysis

Key informant interviews

Workshop 1: preparation

Fieldwork

Workshop 2: analysis and recommendations

# Lessons Learnt

## 1.

Methodology

The **HES methodology is appropriate and useful to support targeting processes**. HES provides a disaggregation of socio-economic groups based on indicators that can be converted into selection criteria and support the development of proxy means tests. The disaggregated information enabled the team to prepare and advise on revised eligibility criteria to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors and produced recommendations for alternative solutions for other vulnerable groups.

## 2.

SWOT analysis

The use of a **SWOT analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats)** as a complement to HES to analyse the programme has provided strong insights. A SWOT analysis was conducted at the beginning of the process, focused on the analysis of the programme; and after the fieldwork, focused on analysing the implementation of the targeting and registration process and to identify areas for improvement and opportunities. The recommendations contain essential results, including revised household definitions and programme eligibility criteria, along with suggestions on strategy, process, advocacy, evaluation, learning, and next steps.

## 3.

Socio-economic information

**When there is a lack of socio-economic information available**, it is necessary to conduct a full HES assessment. The information collected during a full HES assessment can fulfil immediate targeting information needs and more generally complement existing baselines. In the case of Namibia, it is still recommended that a full urban HES assessment is carried out to complement the rural baselines established in 2010 by the Namibia Vulnerability Assessment Committee (NamVAC).

## 4.

Secondary data

**Secondary data analysis to identify information gaps** remains a key step before primary data collection. Existing information can guide and justify primary data collection and can be aligned with the findings for greater coherence of results and recommendations (e.g. income data, poverty lines, gender roles, and expenditure baskets). During the preparation phase before going to the communities, it is important to ensure consistency to enable comparative analysis of the information whenever possible.

## 5.

Participant consultation

Information must be validated through **participant consultation**. Household livelihood and vulnerability analysis must be conducted with household members in intervention. This can be preceded with initial interpretation and hypothesis building, but team biases will be perpetuated if communities are not consulted.

## 6.

Targeting

**Community based targeting** can be strengthened by the participation of RCRC volunteers. Volunteers offer great complementarity to local governance groups such as street committees and development committees; there is great human, social, and political capital among these groups, all of whom are already mobilised for collective contribution and motivated to further their capacity.

## 7.

Empowerment

The entire process was documented in real time, with all participants contributing to data collection, analysis, synthesis, and report writing which resulted in participant **empowerment and ownership of the process**. It was an opportunity for participants to build on each other's ideas and contribute to collective, iterative understanding, while working in plenary tried to nurture ownership of the analysis and recommendations. The participants involved in the revision process reported findings, conclusions and recommendations to senior management within the Ministry and Namibia Red Cross Society.

## 8.

Context understanding

After the field work, revise **the initial understanding of the context and opinions formed**. In Namibia, findings about the socio-economic structure of the population influenced how the team defined **household** and the final targeting recommendations. In particular the findings influenced how **gender analysis** was applied, as it was identified that women have a disproportionate role in household food decisions and Food Bank interactions, and there are gendered discrepancies in access to income opportunities, including daily wages, skilled and unskilled labour.

## 9.

## Wide range of subjects

Expect to gather information about a **wide range of subjects**. The process and participatory engagement with households, beneficiaries, and other members of the same communities is an opportunity to share needs and priorities for the population; and can be an opportunity for the NS to identify needs, gaps and new interventions required. In Namibia, participants expressed a range of preferences, from cash and in-kind assistance to delivery schedules and programme communications.

## 10.

## Data analysis

**Data analysis and interpretation** also need to include a range of internal stakeholders, frontline staff, planners, managers, economists, senior leadership, and implementing partner agencies – which may ultimately help balance ambition with focus. **Assessment teams can build on the socio-political capital of their members** and civil society networks to mobilise stakeholders and involve them in analysing programmes and processes. This comes with additional **responsibility to feed results and plans back to stakeholders and participants**.

## 11.

## Ongoing process

There were **gaps in the process** and product as next steps could not be defined, but the process raised awareness and produced a report with revised eligibility criteria and significant primary qualitative data. The process also ensured that participants were fully involved, from design to recommendation building. The support for accurate targeting should be an **ongoing process**, based on a yearly review of eligibility criteria and registration process for ongoing improvement and to mitigate inclusion and exclusion errors.

## 12.

## Neutrality &amp; Impartiality

Community based approaches are also essential in maintaining informed, dignified relationships with programme households. Questions of eligibility and entitlement are sensitive and political. To ensure the **neutrality and impartiality of the RCRCM**, all fieldwork was conducted by Street Committees and MPESW team members only. In terms of knowledge management, this also ensured that the NRCS only played a backstopping role, without engaging fieldwork respondents directly.

## HES approach

*Household Economic Security (HES): Technical Guidelines for Assessment, Analysis, and Learning.*

- ✓ Disaggregate population(s) into different livelihood zones and socioeconomic groups. This typically includes geography, production, shocks, market access and marketplaces.
- ✓ Analyse the household economy and related vulnerabilities of different socioeconomic groups. This typically includes assets, gender roles, food and income sources, expenditure, prices, and critical market systems.
- ✓ Assess the capacity of different households to meet survival needs and protect livelihoods. This typically involves a minimum expenditure basket, economic security thresholds, and gaps in other forms of coping and external support.



- ✓ Analyse response options and recommendations for improving livelihoods, food security, and resilience.
- ✓ The HES approach concentrates on households as the unit of analysis.

# Recommendations

The experience in Namibia gives proof of concept for other RCRC National Societies considering similar initiatives with line ministries and social protection programmes, at a time when global discourse on shock-responsive systems and humanitarian cash safety nets is multiplying.

- Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies perform an auxiliary role to their governments as an impartial and independent agency working toward related objectives. It is appropriate for National Societies to offer technical input and collaborate with state institutions on social protection and safety nets, but nevertheless, make sure to conduct a risk analysis and ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles as for any partnership.
- Stakeholders need clarity in analytical purpose, product, and process – and for commitments to be formalised in a memorandum of understanding. They should define clear objectives and outputs as well as roles and responsibilities, while committing themselves to act upon the recommendations that will be drawn from the results of the analysis. Without such ownership and accountability there is no purpose in deconstructing programme processes or investing in research that does not inform practice.



It is important to **dedicate enough time and human resources** to the partnership and its activities. This includes staff from different roles, sectors, and seniority – without which results might be refuted or misunderstood, or might not respond fully to expectations or guiding strategic questions.



**Work with partners** and involve other stakeholders in the process, that have **complementary** expertise and resources. Other stakeholders should also be included in information sharing related to technical coordination, especially if they are also involved in the programme or engaged in complementary work, policy, or advocacy. This includes other ministries; national vulnerability assessment committees; and principal UN, NGO, and civil society actors.



**Aim for a long-term partnership**, beyond supporting data collection, targeting and/or registration. NS have a unique ability to support the improvement of targeting systems through their network of volunteers, community presence, understanding of vulnerabilities and experience in selecting and delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. While this is a good entry point, NS should also aim to be a partner in decision making. Influencing the objective and scale of the government's social protection programme, targeting criteria and selection processes, can lead to improved programme quality and mitigation of inclusion and exclusion errors while also positioning the NS as a key player in this arena.



In addition to the use of HES information for targeting purposes, HES assessment and analysis provides complementary information that can support the identification of Cash Plus and livelihoods interventions and so lead into **new areas of collaboration with social protection systems.**



NS can play a critical role in **advocating for the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA)** as the preferred modality. The RCRCM has significant experience in using cash and voucher assistance and can support NS in that advisory role to advise institutions for moving from in kind assistance to other modalities such as cash and vouchers e.g. NS can support CVA feasibility studies to gather evidence on its benefits.



To make informed decisions on the most appropriate modality of assistance, conduct a **cost effectiveness analysis**, for example comparing the cost of an in-kind food parcel with that of a restricted commodity voucher or cash. Combined with new eligibility criteria, this can address concerns with targeting and affordability of the programme.

## To find out more

- The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is developing its capacity in the use and implementation of **Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)**. This is a weakness of many programmes that NS can help tackle by facilitating a more participatory approach and supporting the collection of feedback and continuous monitoring of the programmes. The revision and support for targeting and registration will also require important responsibilities to ensure transparency and accountability. For more resources on CEA, visit the [Community Engagement Hub](#).
- For additional support, there are **resources available within the RCRCM**. HES surge capacity is available globally through British Red Cross and Livelihoods Resource Centre with an established community of practice and a complementary five day certificate course in [emergency and recovery livelihoods assessment \(ERLA\)](#). In some cases RCM partners may also be able to mobilise financial resources for pilots, workshops, assessments, or technical support appropriate to the context and the collaboration.



# Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Guidance on Social Protection is available in EN and FR

<https://cash-hub.org/resources/cash-and-social-protection/>

- For National Societies advocating to governments on the use of Cash and Social Protection during COVID-19
- Orientation guidance for Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies
- Social protection in the age of COVID-19

---

## Acknowledgements

British Red Cross would like to thank all those who contributed their time and experience to inform this case study, including representatives from the Government of Namibia and the Namibia Red Cross Society, without whom this case study would not have been possible.

## Contact information

For more information on this case study please contact:

### **Namibia Red Cross Society:**

Mrs Glynis Harrison, Secretary General  
of Namibia Red Cross Society

t: +264 61 413 750

e: [glynis.harrison@redcross.org.na](mailto:glynis.harrison@redcross.org.na)

### **British Red Cross:**

Marta Alejano, Country Cluster Manager  
Southern Africa

t: +263 772 412 224

e: [MAlejano@redcross.org.uk](mailto:MAlejano@redcross.org.uk)

