NAMIBIA SKILLS MOBILITY REPORT

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Namibia Skills Mobility Report

Foreword

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) through the European-funded Southern African Migration Management (SAMM) project provided support to the production of a Skills Mobility Report for Namibia.

The **Global Skills Partnership on Migration (better known as GSPM)** is an initiative between ILO, IOM, UNESCO, IOE (International Organisation of Employers) and ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) to join forces and mobilise expertise. The key role of skills partnerships on migration has been recognised in intergovernmental consultations that led to the development of the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (better known as GCM) adopted in 2018 by 164 countries**. The GCM devotes **objective 18** to the issue of promoting skills mobility and calling for the establishment of skills partnerships.

Skills Mobility Partnerships **at local, sub-regional, national or international levels** can range from informal knowledge exchange and mutually beneficial skills development arrangements to formal bilateral or multilateral skills portability agreements including one or several of the following thematic areas:

- the recognition of labour shortages or labour market needs, also linked to the elaboration of lists of occupations in high demand and critical skills lists;
- skills transferability;
- improving the mechanisms (e.g. equivalence and comparability) to ensure the mutual recognition of foreign qualifications (diplomas, certificates) and non-formally acquired skills (e.g. job experience) in different sectors;
- student exchange programmes, scholarships, professional exchange programmes, trainee or apprenticeships;
- joint efforts to optimize upskilling for improving employability;
- collaborative programmes for partnerships between the private sector and educational institutions;
- training for job seekers, mentoring, and internship programmes; and,
- improving skills profiling and skills matching.

Skills Partnerships on Migration or Skills Mobility Partnerships, including the role of social partners and public-private partnerships, are an innovative mechanism for sharing the benefits of migration for both countries of origin and destination. GSPMs support governments, employers and workers as well as their organisations, educational institutions and training providers, and other stakeholders to rethink migration in a way that is of mutual benefit to all stakeholders; principally migrant workers, including those who return (with a particular focus on women and youth), employers in need of skilled workforce, as well as the countries of origin and destination.

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Acronyms

AEA	Agricultural Employers' Association
COSDEC	Community Skills Development Center
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HPP	Harambee Prosperity Plan
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISC	Industry Skills Committee
LAC	Labour Advisory Council
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MLIREC	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation
MHETI	Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation
MIRCO	Ministry of International Relation and Cooperation
MITSD	Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development
NQA	Namibian Qualifications Authority
NTA	Namibian Training Authority
NQA	National Qualifications Framework
NSA	Namibian Statistical Agency
NSFAF	Namibian student financial assistance fund
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
NEF	Namibian Employers Federation
NDP	National Development Plans
NEP	National Employment Plan
NSF	National Skills Fund
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SSP	Sector Skills Plans
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualification Framework
SAMM	Southern African Migration Project
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SDP	Skills development plan
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations
VTC	vocational training centres
TVET	Vocational Education and Training system
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WEF	World Economic Forum

1. Introduction

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) together with the Southern African Migration Management Project (SAMM) are working with various SADC countries to assist in the development and implementation of Labour Migration Policy Action Plans[1] which seeks to strengthen the links between employment, education and training and migration policies. More broadly, they are also assisting in facilitating the strengthening of systems to promote the recognition of migrant workers' skills and/or qualifications.

Additional interventions also included the implementation of Communities of Practice that support the sharing of experiences around the recognition of migrant skills and qualifications and the development of toolkits to assist practitioners, employers and unions in SADC. There are also processes underway to support SADC member states to put effective labour market information systems in place to support decision-making that ensures improved mobility in the region as well as initiatives to strengthen TVET systems to enhance alignment between supply and demand.

As part of this support and following a request by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation, the ILO and SAMM commissioned Singizi Consulting Africa to conduct research that would contribute towards the drafting of a skills mobility framework in Namibia, within the context of wider SADC initiatives.

This research report – which factors in the approach adopted in the National Labour Migration Policy - provides an indication of existing and anticipated skills shortages across key economic sectors and outlines the key interventions that have been put in place to mediate demand and supply. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for key elements that could constitute a skills mobility framework for Namibia.

2. Methodology

The methodology used by the research team involved:

- Desk-top research including the review of key documentation provided by a range of institutions and organisations such as the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the Namibia Statistical Agency (NSA), the Namibian Employers Federation (NEF), the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) and the National student financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) as well as general background research on the economic and skills development context of Namibia.
- Interviews were conducted with respondents across 15 stakeholder organisations. These included interviews with representatives from key government ministries such as labour, international relations, policy and coordinating bodies involved in higher education and skills development, labour unions, industry bodies, researchers and donor organisations. See Annexure A for the list of interviewees.

[1] Through the SAMM project, action plans were developed for several countries including, the Seychelles, Mauritius, Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Eswatini whilst such processes are currently underway in the Comoros and Madagascar.

3. Overview of Namibian economy

This section provides an overview of the demographics of the country as well as the Namibian economy and the labour market. Within this context, this section also explores whether the requisite skills exist to grow the economy, where skills shortages have been identified, in the formal and informal economy, and whether this shortage is being responded to through, amongst others, sourcing foreign workers with the requisite skills.

3.1 Demographics

Whilst Namibia is a middle-income country with a stable political environment and economic growth, income inequalities, poverty and rising levels of unemployment persist. About 49% of the population live in rural areas; children (910,081) account for 43% of the country's population whilst the remaining 57% being either young adults (15%) or people 25 years or older (42%) (UN, 2011).

Namibia has one of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in Southern Africa. The data from the last official 2018 Labour Force Survey indicates that 58% of the working-age adults in the country are between the ages of 15 and 34 (the age group broadly defined as "youth") and projections indicate that the number of 15 – 24-year-olds will have doubled by 2045 (Ighobor, 2013). This highlights that the youthful population could constitute a crucial resource, but this is dependent on the significant growth of the economy to ensure the creation of much needed jobs.

3.2 Socio-economic status

Of concern, given the youth demographics, is that in the period pre-2010, Namibia experienced robust economic growth, driven by sectors such as mining (diamonds and uranium), construction, and services. However, post 2010, Namibia's economic growth rate has slowed down which was attributed to various factors, including lower global commodity prices and volatility in the mining sector. This was exacerbated by the pandemic, which has had a marked impact on the economy. This is evidenced in the data provided by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), which indicates that the country's real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4.3% year-on-year by 2015. However, in 2016, annual growth was 0%, followed by -1.0% in 2017, 1.1% in 2018, and -0.6% in 2019. The Bank of Namibia has stated that the economy will have a slow recovery in 2023 and 2024 suggesting that weaker global demands as well as the war in Ukraine are likely to dampen growth efforts.

These persistent challenges are in part because the Namibian economy is still small and is largely dependent on natural resources: Namibia has in recent years, focused on trying to diversify the economy and shift reliance on its mineral resource complex. Further, the heavy reliance on natural resources exposes the country to commodity price fluctuations. Namibia is also very reliant on international trade and is a net importer of fuel, wheat, and cooking oil and the war has both made these goods more expensive and has also begun to effect food security. The economy also still has weaknesses in the manufacturing sector which has yet to build its capacity as until recent years, there was no attempt to ensure added value to raw materials produced in the country.

In addition to the formal economy, some efforts have been made to support the informal sector, which plays a significant role in terms of creating employment opportunities for a large portion of the population. Data on the informal sector is limited, however, there are a range of estimates on its employment impact. One report claims that 59% of jobs are in the informal economy making

it a crucial place of employment (Lubinda, 2015) whilst the UNESCO[2] report states that the SME sector – which is largely informal - make up about 12% of the GDP and employ about a fifth of the workforce. Namibia has introduced several policies to support the development of SMEs, but these have had varying degrees of success. Programmes have included business training for improving access to finance, small business loan schemes, SME business linkage programmes and the provision of better market sites for small retailers and small-scale manufacturers. Despite these programmes, respondents indicate that SMEs are struggling. Conversely, after the pandemic many companies moved into the informal sector as the costs of operating in the formal economy have become too high.

3.3 Broad policy framework

Vision 2030 was adopted by the government in 2004 and it provides a long-term perspective on growing the economy and transforming the country into a knowledge-based, industrialised nation with a high standard of living for all citizens. The 2030 vision is supplemented by National Development Plans (NDPs). The NDPs seek to provide a long-term strategic framework for the country and can span between 5-10 years. The sixth NDP (NDP6) covering the period 2025-2030 was launched in June 2023 and the National Planning Commission is currently holding countrywide consultations around the draft plan. Previous plans focused on ways to diversify the economy beyond traditional sectors such as mining and agriculture with efforts being made to promote sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, logistics, renewable energy, and ICT.

The NDP is supplemented by the Harambee Prosperity Plan, the latest of which is the Second Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPPII) that was launched in March 2021. The plan outlines the government's priorities and strategies to achieve economic growth, poverty reduction and other development goals. The plan focuses on job creation, infrastructure development, skills development, and attracting investment. HPPIII also highlights the need to grow and develop the green and blue economy.

3.4 Key growth sectors

Based on data obtained from the NSA, GIZ[3] and the US-Based International Trade Administration[4], the industries which are major contributors to both economic growth and employment include mining (and quarrying)[5], agriculture, fishing (with plans to expand into the broader blue economy), tourism and services. However, expectations are high that the renewable energy sector will deliver significant growth and much needed jobs.

3.4.1 Agriculture

Significant opportunities exist for Namibia to expand its agricultural sector in view of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Currently, the sector employs more than 20% of the country's total workforce and as at 2022, the share of agriculture to the country's GDP was 8.38

[2] TVET, higher education and innovation policy review: Namibia, UNESCO (2016)
[3] https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz-2022-en-sector-brief-namibia-tourism.pdf
[4] https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/namibia-market-overview#:~:text=Mining%2C%20tourism%2C%20fishing%2C%20and,percent%20of%20Namibia's%20total%20imports.
[5] mining and quarrying have been at the forefront of Namibia's consistent growth over the last 40 years. Despite economic diversification in other sectors, the mining sector has maintained strong contributions to annual GDP figures. Average contribution since 1980 stands at 11%.

percent. A large percentage of food is still imported which raises concerns around food security and highlights the need to encourage small-scale farmers to not only produce foodstuffs but to explore ways of creating sustainable businesses. However, there are areas where there are exports, for example, meat products have an expected forecast of 5000 tons being exported to the USA by 2025. Efforts to strengthen the sector are being made and there are several government-initiated projects which have private investment support. For example, the green scheme irrigation projects which aim to increase local agricultural production. To better leverage private capital and ensure sustained production and productivity of the green schemes, the government has decided to lease the 11 green schemes using competitive outsourcing as the first option. The representative from Agricultural Employers Association indicated that there is significant expertise from South Africa and elsewhere involved in these projects.

3.4.2 Fisheries

Another growth sector is fisheries. In 2019, fish and fishery products made up over 30 per cent of EU imports from Namibia, worth €345 million, making Namibia one of the biggest African fish exporters to the EU. The fisheries industry which comprises industrialized marine, capture fisheries, recreational fisheries, inland capture fisheries, mariculture and freshwater aquaculture is a significant contributor to the country's GDP accounting for 4.5% of its GDP (Second quarter 2022_gdp_report 2022). There is also hope that it will grow as a sector with the greater emphasis on the blue economy where the policy is ready for approval by cabinet. This is intended to ensure that marine activities can be used to generate employment and be a space for education (Shigwedha, 2023). Presently, it constitutes about 15% of all exports and is the second largest source of foreign exchange in the country (€568 million). Over 90% of total unprocessed and manufactured fish products are exported.

The aquaculture sub-sector is also gaining importance. There are about 16,300 workers employed, of which 60% work at sea and 40% onshore, are directly employed in fishing and fish-processing activities and logistic[6].

3.4.3 Tourism

Pre-COVID, tourism was considered the fastest growing sector and employed over 100 000 Namibians, especially from rural areas – making the sector an important contributor to reducing rural poverty. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel and tourism contributed approximately 14.7 percent of GDP in Namibia, and 15.4 percent to total employment in 2019. Growth in tourism was interrupted due to COVID but it has adjusted post-covid and seems to be growing again with a focus on nature tourism (*Namibia - market opportunities* 2021).

3.4.4 Manufacturing and Processing

Key industries with growth potential are manufacturing and processing due to the government's push to reduce the number of products imported as final products. However, investment is required to begin to build local manufacturing capacity. To achieve the changes required in manufacturing, efforts have been made to improve the business environment, promote regional trade, and diversify the economy. This includes the launch of "Growth at Home", an initiative by the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development (MITSD), to reinforce the

[6] ILO: Sustainable supply chains to build forward better Advancing decent work in five global supply chains of key importance to the European Union for a fair, resilient, and sustainable COVID-19 crisis recovery. 2020

importance of accelerating economic growth and promoting job creation through the manufacture of products with added value. This initiative - launched in 2013 - places greater emphasis on the importance of commodity-based industrialization through strengthening local and national value chains and creating more efficient linkages to increase the ease of doing business. This along with other interventions such as moves to finalise the Industrial Policy Implementation Strategy forms part of realizing Vision 2030.

3.4.5 Energy

Namibia has the potential to become a leader in clean energy within the Southern African region and decrease its dependence on neighboring countries for electricity. The statement "Namibia has great potential for renewable power generation, including solar, wind, and biomass sources" (Namibia - Market Opportunities 2021) supports this idea. Namibia has entered a partnership with the Government of Botswana and the United States through the USAID's Power Africa initiative, which culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Intent in April 2021. With support from the global community, Namibia intends producing solar power which will complement the country's available green energy portfolio such as hydro-electricity – which already constitutes about two-thirds of installed power capacity.

In terms of green hydrogen, the country already has the necessary conditions to move into producing green hydrogen. In May 2023 the Namibian government announced that it had entered into a cooperation agreement with German investors for Namibia to build Sub-Saharan Africa's largest green hydrogen production project. The $10bn project is with Hyphen Hydrogen Energy, whose shareholders are renewable power developer Enertrag and infrastructure developer Nicholas. The plan is to build wind farms and photovoltaic plants with a total capacity of seven gigawatts (GW) to produce green ammonia, a hydrogen derivative which can be transported more easily. The project is intended to produce 2 million tons of green ammonia annually for regional and global markets. Namibia's president Hage Geingob[7] said the agreement kickstarted a "process that has the potential to transform the lives of many in our country, the region and indeed the world." The company said the project will create up to 15,000 new jobs during the construction phase, and 3,000 permanent jobs during its operation. Several respondents pointed to the potential of the green hydrogen sector and raised concerns that this project would put pressure on the existing skills pool whilst the unions emphasized to the need to ensure that the project will benefit Namibia.

3.4.6 Mining

Mining accounts for 11.3% of GDP, but only accounts for 2% of employment (NPC, 2018). Mining is also an industry that has voiced its demand for higher skilled artisans and a need for upskilling the Namibian labour force so that they are able to employ more citizens locally. Although, mining has not been clearly identified as an area of potential growth for the economy, there is still a space to increase employment within the sector through greater collaboration between educational institutions, government, and the mining sector to produce graduates who can address the demand currently present.

3.5 Education and the labour market

After gaining independence in 1990, the Ministry of Education undertook a comprehensive reform process, to make education more accessible for all its citizens. Namibia's journey to an inclusive and equitable education system remains ongoing. Whilst reforms like free primary and

[7] https://www.cleanenergywire.org/news/namibia-launches-10-billion-dollar-hydrogen-project-german-participation

secondary schooling in public institutions has led to increased enrolment rates, challenges in quality and resource availability persists. At the time higher education also did not have an established higher education system, and following independence, a significant number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were established, which is largely dominated by the private sector. Further, since independence the constitution prioritises education which has been backed by high levels of public expenditure.

Despite these changes as reflected in enrolment growth, a 2016 UNESCO[8] report entitled: "TVET, higher education and innovation policy review: Namibia" highlights the need for a stronger educational foundation to support effective Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education and innovation as reflected in the following: "Namibia's education system does not provide a strong enough foundation for VET, higher education and innovation. Thus, while these reforms have facilitated increased enrolment, particularly at secondary and tertiary level, the task of building an inclusive and equitable education system is unfinished."[9]

Improving equitable and inclusive access could be affected further by the teacher quality and availability of resources - both human and infrastructural. It is interesting to note that despite the progress what persists and is reflected in the breakdown of educational levels within the labour force is the unequal distribution of educational attainment between urban and rural populations. As of 2020, the data highlighted that 9% of the labour force have no education, 15% have not completed primary education, 24% have completed lower secondary, 21% have primary education, and 23% have upper secondary. Furthermore, 9% have post-secondary education. These educational distributions vary based on whether individuals reside in rural or urban areas.

Amid the prevailing challenges within the education sector, the country is concurrently grappling with significant issues pertaining to unemployment. The NSA's latest Labour Force Survey (2018), estimates Namibia's unemployment rate at 33.4% in 2018, compared to 27.9% in 2014. Whilst overall unemployment is at 33.4%, youth unemployment has gone up from 39% in 2014 to 48% (WFP Namibia Country Brief, April 2023 - Namibia 2023). The rising youth unemployment rate points to the need for comprehensive solutions addressing both education and job creation, which should be underscored by stronger links between education and the labour market. The building of stronger links between education and the labour market is partly reflected in the challenges facing graduates in accessing work (along with the need to grow the economy).

The extent of these challenges amongst graduates is evidenced by the finding that around 60% of graduates from vocational and technical colleges cannot find work. Whilst a graduate survey conducted by the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) amongst the four biggest HEIs shows that many graduates have found employment in the public sector – which might not be a sustainable option in the medium to long term. The survey found that graduates in 2021 were hired by the public administration including in defence as well as education[10], highlighting that presently the government is absorbing many of their HEIs graduates. This is reflected in the table below.

[8] TVET, higher education and innovation policy review: Namibia, UNESCO, 2016
[9] TVET, higher education and innovation policy review: Namibia, UNESCO, 2016
[10] Refer to the table below (table 10.7)

Table 1: Sectors where graduates are currently employed

Table 10.7 Economic Sector of Employment by Field of Learning (per cent; only employed graduates)

Economic sector of employment	Field of learning										Total
	Agri	Busi	Lan	Edu	Man	Soc	Law	Heal	Sci	Oth	
Fishing and fish processing on board	7	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
Mining and quarrying	3	2	0	0	10	0	4	2	3	0	2
Manufacturing	8	2	1	0	6	1	0	2	3	7	2
Electricity and water	1	3	3	1	12	4	0	0	3	0	3
Construction	2	3	1	1	18	1	1	0	1	24	3
Wholesale and retail trade	11	8	0	0	6	6	2	2	2	4	5
Hotels and restaurant	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	1	1
Transport and communication	1	8	17	1	11	5	4	0	9	3	5
Financial intermediation	5	22	13	1	8	6	6	0	13	4	10
Real estate and business services	5	4	1	0	2	3	4	1	4	18	3
Public administration and defence	23	25	25	4	10	36	74	5	17	13	19
Education	27	12	30	90	14	23	2	8	33	18	32
Health	7	7	7	1	3	13	1	81	7	6	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Count	92	983	69	675	193	287	101	333	179	71	2,983

National Graduate Survey 2021; Question M13: In which economic sector are you currently employed/self-employed?
Abbreviations: Agri - Agriculture; Busi - Business Studies; Lang - Languages; Edu - Education; Man - Manufacturing; Soc - Social Studies; Law - Law; Heal - Health; Sci - Sciences; Oth - Other

As indicated, this situation, where higher education students primarily seek employment in the public sector, is not sustainable, particularly as government announced last year that it intends to reduce the public service as part of its efforts to introduce fiscal constraint measures to address budget deficits and reduce public debt levels. Unemployed graduates have since been petitioning the Namibian government, demanding that they lift the freeze on hiring for government positions[11]. These findings confirm the view offered by labour analyst Sydwill Scholtz who estimates that Namibian higher education institutions are producing more graduates than the current market can accommodate. (The Namibian, 2023).

When reviewing the trends in terms of the participation of women in the labour market, this study found that in some sectors there has been increased participation of women. For example, in mining, manufacturing, and processing sector there has been an increase in the participation of women in the workforce from 17.8% to 28% between 2012 and 2019, as reported by the ILO. Whilst participation of woman is slowly increasing, it is noted that gender disparity continues with woman facing challenges not only in terms of a wage gap but in terms of limited access to managerial positions and they face higher rates of unemployment as compared to men.

Overall, there is a recognition that women and youth are most affected by unemployment and underemployment (Development of Namibia's 3rd Employment Policy to benefit from UN system support in Namibia 2022). These challenges highlight the importance of a greater focus being placed on building Namibia's private sector (as well as attracting investment) and suggests that there will need to be more effective measures to address the growing challenge of youth unemployment and to ensure the effective participation of women in the labour market.

Whilst the country is facing rising graduate unemployment, the data suggests that there is limited demand for foreign workers. For example, in the agricultural sector with migrants coming from

[11] Graduates give government ultimatum, The Namibian, 23 July 2018

Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. However, due to the informal and undocumented nature of the workforce it has been harder to track and determine the number of migrants and the type of work they are doing. Within the formal economy there has been a push to identify skills shortages and determine remedies within Namibia and through utilizing migrant workers, but much of the work is still in the preliminary stages. As part of this process, key stakeholders are engaged in the drafting of a National Employment Policy.

3.6 Skills anticipation: understanding demand

An overarching assessment of the labour market finds that it is characterized by a small number of workers employed in high-skilled jobs in the formal economy, while most workers are employed, often informally, in low-skilled jobs in subsistence farming, trade, or by private households. Despite high unemployment the research suggests that the economy cannot attract some of the skills it requires from the local labour market. In this context there is a view that when secondary students are looking at what to study there is a need for increased career guidance. In other sectors, such as construction, many low skilled and medium to high skilled jobs are no longer available to local workers as large contracts have gone to foreign companies who tend to bring in their own labour.

Numerous reports and studies point to the shortage of specialised skill labour as being one of Namibia's obstacles to growth. For example, the 2018 Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks the country very low in terms of innovation and the availability of specialised skills. An assessment[12] of skills in three sectors (agriculture, blue economy and tourism) was conducted during the pandemic as part of the Skills in Africa Initiative. As part of the survey, respondents were asked their views on whether a skills shortage existed. The following emerged:

- 30% of respondents believed there were significant skills deficits, while a further 20% thought that generally workers did not have the skills demanded by businesses.
- 27% of respondents believed that there were only minor skills deficits, while 13% thought generally workers have the skills demanded by businesses in Namibia.
- 37% of respondents from large enterprises thought there were significant skills gaps, while 24% of SMEs, 27% of informal enterprises and 32% of employees also felt this way.
- Skills deficits were most acutely felt by respondents in the health industry and in financial services.

Mixed views emerge from interviewees from across key stakeholders. Some acknowledge that despite the high level of unemployment, and in particular youth (and graduate) unemployment, skills gaps exist across some sectors whilst in other sectors there is an oversupply of skills. Other respondents suggest that the skills gap is exaggerated although there are concerns in a limited number of occupations that there is a scarcity of highly qualified persons. In addition, some respondents argue that the sourcing of workers from elsewhere is not that prevalent. Conversely, in terms of trends around emigration, reports indicate that there is a significant "brain drain".

Skills anticipation is made more difficult because there is currently no tracking of the numbers of professionals leaving Namibia. The Ministry of International Relation and Cooperation (MIRCO), as part of developing a diaspora policy and programme, wants to begin to track where Namibians are and what kind of jobs they are performing. This will lay the basis for a programme that targets these individuals with the aim of bringing their skills and expertise back into the Namibian economy.

[12] Rapid assessment of skilling and reskilling needs arising from the effects of COVID-19 – Namibia, Skills Initiative for Africa, 2021

Similarly, there have not been consistent skills surveys of current skills levels or levels of demand conducted for many years. According to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) the last official skills audit completed was in 2008. This lack of data leads to uncertainty as to whether a skill is in fact in demand: some interviewees suggest that there is an oversupply of artisans, while others argue that there is a greater need for high-level vocational graduates.

All stakeholders acknowledge that the absence of accurate and available data is of concern. It is noted that despite the absence of national data sets, the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), draws on the Sector Skills Plan to compile an overarching Skills Development Plan (SDP). Based on the SDP for the period 2022-2026, several key occupations in high demand have been identified across ten sectors. Based on the analysis, overall demand is in the region of 51 740 workers across the sectors. In terms of the cross-cutting occupations the following emerges:

Table 2: Overview of skills in demand which were targeted for training

Occupation	**Numbers required training**
Customer Care Services	15 000
Employability skills	15 000
Entrepreneurship	15 000
Environment for sustainable development	5 000
Supervisory skills	1 500
Upskilling of trainers	240

Table 3: Breakdown of skills in demand per sector

Sectors	**Numbers to be trained**
Agriculture and forestry	6 100
Business and finance	2050
Fisheries and Maritime	480
Health care and social services (excluding doctors and health professionals)	3 525
Manufacturing, automotive sales	1250
Mining, quarry, energy, waste, sanitation	440
Post and telecommunications	820
Tourism and hospitality	1100
Transport and logistics	2 415
Wholesale and retail	5 840

The interviews confirmed that skills shortages exist in health, tertiary education, hospitality and tourism, finance and agriculture. A deeper dive into these sectors, points to the following:

Agriculture: What emerges is that there is a demand for unskilled workers in agriculture. At the same time, some agricultural employers indicate that there is a need for there to be some capacity building to upskill both farmers and their staff and that more professional services are required.

Hospitality/tourism: This sector is facing a shortage in different categories of employees, but the most current demand is for supervisory level up to middle management. These shortages have

emerged in the post COVID period as a significant number of employees were retrenched or left during this period because of uncertainty in the sector. Employers indicate that they experience challenges in recruiting people into the sector as Namibians do not want to enter this sector. The employers in this sector recognise that they need to do more to create awareness, especially amongst the youth, around the possible career opportunities in this sector. The possibilities for addressing these challenges are also highlighted by the way in which the shortage of chefs was addressed where the sector successfully undertook a significant amount of training to address this shortage.

Mining: The indications are that mining could, in the future, face a shortage of process engineers, mechanical engineers and metallurgists. There is also a concern that as the green hydrogen and oil/gas projects gear up there will be further competition for the limited pool of individuals with the relevant experience that have such occupations. The mining industry indicated that it is one of the largest suppliers of apprentices.

Finance: Actuaries have been identified as a scarce skill required by the economy and specifically in the finance sector.

ICT: Data scientists, computer engineers and more generally coding and data people are identified as being scarce skills in this sector.

Health: Specialist doctors such as physiotherapist, medical technologists.

Renewable energy: It is not yet clear what skills will be required by this sector. An employer commented that, "we only know solar at the moment, and we have not gone beyond that so at present the skills do not exist, but at the same time, we do not know what skills will be required." It is noted that there are several studies being completed to ascertain these skill needs. Further clarity will be available once these are completed but it seems likely that the sector will require skills not available in the country. This includes those skills referred to as green skills as well as general digitization skills.

Studies also point to an oversupply of graduates such as those who have studied general business, business administration, human resources, teachers and artisans.

3.7 Migration trends

In 2016, Namibia launched a National Migration Profile to assess migration patterns and collect data for evidence-based decisions. The profile recommended the development of a National Labour Migration Policy. Subsequently, a stakeholder-driven Technical Working Group (TWG) was formed to craft this policy, which was officially launched in 2020.This policy seeks to ensure the sound development and implementation of a labour migration system that impacts on human resource development, economic growth, and decent work for all[13].

The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) state that through the National Labour Migration Policy, the government seeks to support steps aimed at

[13] The policy reflects on a shortage of critical skills and a mismatch of skills, as many people acquire qualifications but not necessarily for occupations where their skills are required. The Policy also aims at addressing a deficient institutional framework informing labour migration, labour immigration, labour emigration, return and reintegration; public and private employment agencies, the Namibian diaspora, remittances; human resource management, skills development and training, migration health and well-being; irregular migrants and human trafficking, refugees and asylum-seekers, social security protection of migrant workers, the regional (SADC) integration and harmonization context, and data concerns.

strengthening the Namibian skills environment[14]. Measures to achieve this, include the reform of the education sector, investing in and streamlining job creation initiatives with training opportunities; improving the data environment in support of enhanced skills development; inclusion of relevant stakeholders in curriculum development; utilising immigrant labour and Namibian workers abroad to enhance skills development in Namibia; and improving the skills of Namibians to bridge the skills gap in the country through training (including internship, mentorship and apprenticeship programme) and projection of demand and supply of human resources.

During this research key constituencies suggest that there are times where there is a need to recruit workers from outside of Namibia, suggesting that this is a requirement if industry is to function optimally. An analysis of the 2018 Labour Force Survey reflects that out of a population of 2 410 310, in the region of 60 477 are non-citizens and of these, 51 025 non-Namibians are employed in the labour market. The data indicates that most non-Namibians working in the labour market come from Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. A few respondents suggest that the trend, regarding countries of origin, is shifting and that for example fewer migrants are coming from Angola and instead, with changes in ownership of companies, there are an increasing number of migrants that come from China. Data obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security, indicate that the majority of migrant workers come from Zimbabwe and China followed by South Africa.

In general respondents in this research suggest that individuals from outside of Namibia are generally recruited where they have higher levels of skills. One employer respondent commented that where they wish to recruit migrants with lower levels of skills this is typically denied by the immigration selection board. However, the available research suggests that despite this, most migrants are employed in low skills jobs such as in the agricultural sector and domestic work. This appears to be in part because these jobs are not well paid, and Namibians do not want to do them at those wages and that many migrants working in these lower skills jobs do so without proper work permits. One employer representative indicated that many migrants who do not have proper work permits or who have temporary legal status are in the informal sector, which is also traditionally characterized by low wages, limited social protections, and a lack of job security.

A union official commented that in his experience many low-skilled migrants are being recruited into construction while others are recruited into financial institutions, auditing companies and some are lecturers in tertiary institutions. The official confirmed the view that Chinese owned companies are recruiting Chinese migrants stating that they are bringing in electricians although there are Namibians who could perform these jobs. These realities further complicate the extent to which current data provides a real picture of the number of migrants participating in the labour market.

[14] The objective of this Policy is to ensure the sound development and implementation of a labour migration system that is suitable for Namibia, thus having a definite impact on human resource development, economic growth, and decent work for all. The policy reflects on a shortage of critical skills and a mismatch of skills, as many people acquire qualifications but not necessarily for occupations where their skills are required. The Policy also aims at addressing a deficient institutional framework informing labour migration, labour immigration, labour emigration, return and reintegration; public and private employment agencies, the Namibian diaspora, remittances; human resource management, skills development and training, migration health and well-being; irregular migrants and human trafficking, refugees and asylum-seekers, social security protection of migrant workers, the regional (SADC) integration and harmonization context, and data concerns.

4. Policy and Regulatory Framework governing skills ecosystem

4.1 Structures and bodies governing and financing the supply of skills in the labour market

The key structures with responsibilities in this eco-system includes the NTA, Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the National Planning Commission (NPC), the Labour Advisory Council, the Employment Equity Commission and the Ministry of Employment Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation together with other key ministries such as higher education (MHETI), international relations and home affairs.

These bodies carry responsibility for the multiple policies and strategies that are in place to govern the supply of skills in the labour market. As highlighted at the outset overarching plans include the National Employment Policy, the National Human Resources Plan (which is guided by the National Planning Commission), the National Labour Migration Policy, the revised National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy which seeks to rejuvenate the country's TVET system and the National Skills Development Plans which are produced by the Industry Skills Committees that have been established by the NTA across ten key sectors[15].

According to the NTA, members of the industry skills committees (ISC) are drawn from employer organisations and unions based on their qualifications and experience in terms of being able to guide the industry. In view of their involvement in the ISC's they, therefore, make input on curriculum and the type of programmes that are being implemented across the colleges. One respondent pointed out that the ISC's "could be a bigger animal" and play a more strategic role in mapping what sectors require and based on this analysis, identifying what qualifications are required.

The NCHE is then responsible for regulating all non-vocational post-secondary education and training (higher education) institutions and programmes and registering private higher education institutions. The NCHE states that industry is involved in the developing of curriculum. Interviews with both unions and employer organisations confirm their participation in the overall governance of the TVET colleges, although a union official indicated that they are involved with the colleges but not with the universities. Despite this involvement respondents state that in practice by the time students graduate, industry is no longer interested in absorbing them. A respondent observed that the challenge in terms of alignment is that industry needs are constantly evolving and "there is always going to be a lag."

Financing of skills development: The organisations involved in the financing of skills development include the NTA, the NTF, NCHE and the National Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF). The NTA collects a 1% skills levy of turnover from companies (with a turnover of $N1m) and that money is used to fund training undertaken by 108 vocational training providers. The NCHE is responsible for the funding of universities and other private colleges which deliver tertiary qualifications. Then there is the NSFAF which provides loans to learners in both vocational colleges and universities. The NSFAF used to provide grants but has in recent years shifted to loans. The UNESCO report highlighted several concerns in relation to how the funding

[15] Transport, Warehousing & Logistics; Wholesale & Retail Trades; Post & Telecommunications; Manufacturing, Automotive Sales, Arts & Crafts; Mining & Quarrying, Construction, Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & Sanitation; Hospitality & Tourism; Fisheries & Maritime; Financial & Business Services; Agriculture & Forestry and Health Care & Social Service.

of skills development had been functioning and following the report, there have been attempts to streamline processes. The extent to which this has resulted in change still needs to be reviewed.

Setting Standards: As indicated, the NTA regulates all training and any institutions operating in the vocational sector. As part of this responsibility, it regulates vocational qualifications on the NQF from level 1-6. The NTA is responsible for 120 qualifications registered on the NQF and this translates into 1 500-unit standards. The NTA is also responsible for both assessment and certification for those who have acquired the requisite skills and knowledge. It also verifies qualifications obtained outside of Namibia. In essence, the NTA is involved in setting standards, ensuring quality assurance, and monitoring compliance with industry requirements by training providers. Subsequently, it conducts assessments and certifications. The industry skills committee, previously mentioned, is also engaged in the establishment of standards, involving industry participation.

Skills recognition: The NTA indicates that the country has a "generational gap" of a large group of older people who during colonial times did not have the opportunity to study and indicate that it was on this basis that the need for RPL had been identified as critical. However, respondents indicate that RPL "is still struggling to get going. It is not getting enough traction." The NTA added that while they focus on vocational skills, the current system does not allow for the recognition of shorter courses that build up to a qualification. A union representative stressed the importance of RPL, stating that people had gained 'indigenous' skills over time and these skills need to be recognized. The NQA – which is responsible for setting up and managing the NQF - acknowledges that "there is much room for improvement" in terms of the implementation and uptake of RPL. However, the respondent noted that RPL is "expensive and unknown."

4.2 Overview of the visa system

A report highlighted that there is constant "criticisms of the current allocation of work permits with some role players stating that they are too easy to obtain on the one hand and sometimes impossible on the other."[16] This view has been reinforced in interviews although, in the main, respondents concur that the "process around getting visas is a mission and there are so many steps to follow and criteria to meet and it's a cumbersome process." There was however, one employer representative who indicated that the process had improved indicating that the delays have been reduced substantially and one union official who said these processes could be circumvented if one had "access" to the right people.

The process of securing visas is done through the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration and Safety and Security as entry point through the Immigration Selection Board. This is a body constituted by different ministries such as Education, Labour and the Investment Promotion Board. The body is responsible for considering work permits. In terms of the process, foreign nationals can apply for either a work permit or a work visa. A work visa allows the employee to stay in Namibia for relatively short-term assignments for a maximum of three months. A work permit allows the employee to stay and work in the country for one to three years. In some cases, employers may need to demonstrate that they have made efforts to recruit locally and have been unable to find suitable candidates before considering migrant workers. In terms of recruiting migrants, employers either recruit through international recruitment agencies, advertise in foreign newspapers, through LinkedIn or for example, in the mining industry, at various mining indabas or word of mouth.

[16] Namibia's Skills Deficits: Cross-Sectoral Perceptions and Experiences

4.3 Overview of the skills succession programme

Emerging from this study is the view that the skills transfer process has not been effective despite provisions in the Affirmative Action Act 29 of 1998. The Training Policy for the Public Service of Namibia (Directorate Human Resources Development, 1999, p.18) states "expatriate personnel have to ensure the transfer of skills to local personnel by including a deliberate program designed to facilitate this transfer". Therefore, the onus lies with the company that recruits expatriates to ensure that they are willing and capable of transferring skills to Namibians. The law further recommends the training of a Namibian understudy, to work alongside the expatriate with the intention of bridging the skills gap in the long run. Another requirement by law is that all relevant employers are obliged to submit an affirmative action report as per section 27(1) of the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act, and amongst the contents of the report shall be a list of the names of every non-Namibian citizen employed by the employer and Namibian citizens trained.

The understudy programme is aimed at training up professional and technical skill, to speed up the replacement of hired non-Namibian employees with Namibian trained employees. Research conducted by the National Human Resources Plan (National Planning Commission of Namibia, 2012) have shown that sustainable understudy and skills transfer programs are not yet completely operationalized. The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation has also confirmed that the program has been not as effective as they had hoped.

The findings[17] of a Namibian Roads Agency case study states that the programme was hampered by a lack of commitment, awareness and communication, and personal growth and development opportunities. The case study suggests that there is a need for a formal training programme to enable skills transfer and that this should include tacit on-the-job knowledge transfer which is monitored by management on a regular basis. The program should be tailored to suit the employees' training needs. In addition, regular information sessions should be conducted to sensitize all parties involved concerning the understudy policy and Affirmative Action Act, No.28 of 1998."

4.4 Bilateral agreements

The Ministry of International Relation and Cooperation is responsible for the facilitation of Bilateral Agreements. However, there is no central point (body or institution) dedicated to coordination in terms of developing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Labour bilateral agreements. There are currently several bilateral agreements in place for example, there is a bilateral agreement with Cuba which governs the supplies of doctors to Namibia. Similar agreements have also been in place with countries such as Russia.

5. Interventions to meet demand: What is happening on the supply side?

This section explores what government, the private sector and donor organisations are doing to improve the supply of skills in the labour market. As part of this, the section will provide an overview of enrolment figures in both TVET and Universities and the key areas of study.

[17] Kasika, CG, Dangarembizi, F: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Understudy Programs: The Case of the Roads Authority Namibia

5.1 Government interventions

5.1.1 Overview of TVET system

As indicated previously, the NTA is responsible for regulating and funding the TVET sector including all vocational training up to level 6 on the NQF. There are a total of 108 training institutions that are operating in the TVET sector, the majority of which are private providers such as the Namibian Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT) which produces a large number of artisans. There are seven public vocational training centres (VTC) which are funded by the NTA. The public VTC's are in Windhoek (1) and the others in the northern regions. In addition to the formal provision there is non-formal training that is delivered by eight community skills development centres (COSDEC) spread across the country.

Enrollment in TVET colleges increased dramatically in the years leading up to the pandemic, with on average, over 30 000 learners enrolled per annum between 2018- 2020. Enrollment declined during the pandemic and then picked up from 2022 to just over 23 000. The number of graduates for that period ranged between 8 944 (2018) to 9134 (2021).

However, the review of the TVET system conducted by UNECO in 2016 found that "Namibia's VET system is fragmented between different types of providers and does not constitute a comprehensive and consistent network. The system has poor linkages with basic education, with higher education and between its own components."[18] Again the extent to which changes have been made to transform this situation is not well documented but respondents in these interviews do not suggest that the challenges have been resolved and there are concerns raised about the absence of practical training for students and the quality of graduates.

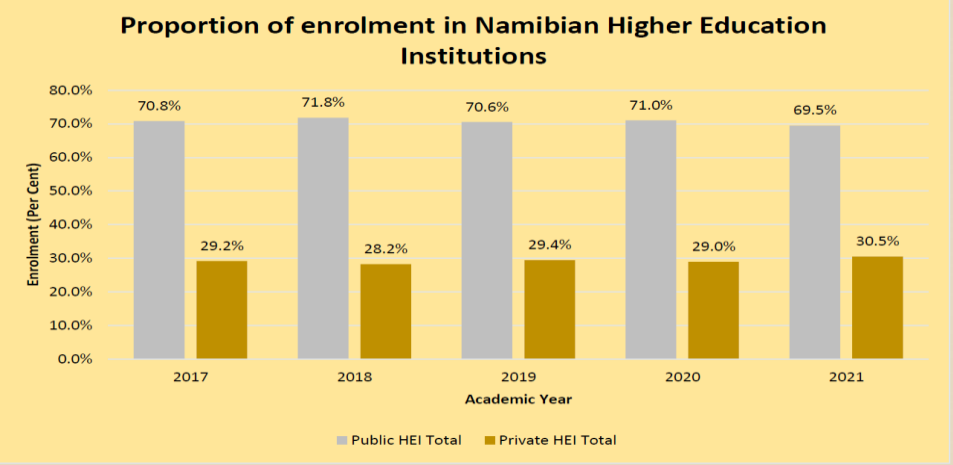
5.1.2 Higher Education Institutes[19]

The NCHE is responsible for the coordination of higher education. Their mandate includes quality assurance; programme accreditation and institutional audits, the management of the HE information management system (collate and manage statistics of learner intact across the public institutions), administering the funding framework for the funding to public HEIs and the registration of both private and public providers for Higher Education. There are 18 higher education providers with three universities – two public and one private. According to data provided by the NCHE, most learners are enrolled in the public HEIs as reflected in the graph below. In 2021, there were 68,932 students studying in HEIs, with over 60% of them studying in Public HEIs. Of the total number of students, 34.7% were male and 65.3% being female.

Graph 1: A comparison of enrolment figures between private and public HEIs

[18] Other key issues emerging from the report include concerns regarding quantity, quality, and relevance, which explain why the VET system produces very small numbers of adequately skilled workers, reinforcing the dual nature of Namibia's labour market: In relation to quality, the system lacks capacity to enroll sufficient numbers of trainees, given the large youth population of the country, and largely excludes young people who did not complete basic education. Lifelong learning opportunities exist but need to be scaled up. In terms of quality: many trainees lack foundation skills and face precarious living conditions, which hampers their ability to learn. Initial qualifications and training of trainers appear inadequate. The equipment of training centres is sometimes deficient and outdated. In terms of relevance, VET does not guarantee a smooth transition to employment or to entrepreneurship. Trainees face challenges finding job placements, while formal firms complain that VET does not respond to their demand for skills. Support for young entrepreneurs remains limited.

[19] In the Namibian context, "higher education" means all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than grade 12 or its equivalent, and includes tertiary education as contemplated in Article 20(4) of the Namibian Constitution but does not include vocational education and training and open learning provided by NAMCOL as defined in the Higher Education Act, Act 26 of 2003. Consequently, this document includes student enrolment and graduation information from HEIs that deliver programmes registered by the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) on the National Qualification Framework (NQF). (NCHE, 2021)



In terms of field of study, the majority were in education, training and development and account for 45% of the students, followed by business, commerce and management studies with 20.8%. Health Science and Social Services account for 11.7%. There are a variety of other degrees that students studied but these programmes have smaller numbers. This is seen in the table below:

Table 4: Breakdown of fields of study at HEIs

	Enrolment by NQF Field of Learning									
Number of students	Agriculture and Nature Conservation	1,102	2.0%	1,049	1.8%	1,279	1.9%	1,231	1.9%	1,409	2.0%
	Business, Commerce and Management Studies	16,899	30.2%	15,093	25.5%	15,634	23.5%	14,560	21.8%	14,326	20.8%
	Communication Studies and Language	1,601	2.9%	1,690	2.9%	2,036	3.1%	2,281	3.4%	2,182	3.2%
	Culture and the Arts	56	0.1%	38	0.1%	902	1.4%	796	1.2%	851	1.2%
	Education, Training and Development	22,552	40.2%	26,215	44.3%	29,428	44.3%	30,682	46.0%	30,991	45.0%
	Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology	1,499	2.7%	1,719	2.9%	2,017	3.0%	1,911	2.9%	2,386	3.5%
	Human and Social Studies	1,939	3.5%	1,801	3.0%	865	1.3%	1,172	1.8%	1,216	1.8%
	Law, Military Science and Security	1,434	2.6%	1,773	3.0%	1,790	2.7%	1,903	2.9%	2,204	3.2%
	Health Sciences and Social Services	3,852	6.9%	4,842	8.2%	5,993	9.0%	6,648	10.0%	8,079	11.7%
	Physical, Mathematical and Computer Sciences	4,141	7.4%	3,684	6.2%	4,897	7.4%	4,040	6.1%	3,828	5.6%
	Physical Planning and Construction	729	1.3%	1,009	1.7%	870	1.3%	987	1.5%	1,033	1.5%
	Services and Life Sciences	243	0.4%	295	0.5%	717	1.1%	445	0.7%	427	0.6%

When looking at those graduating, the percentage figures correspond with those participating in programmes in these fields. Education, training and development account for 40% of graduates in 2021 (4 103 graduates) and with the second biggest field being business, commerce and management studies accounting for 21.1% of graduates (2 129 graduates). Further, many graduates came from the business administration department, even though currently Namibia has an oversupply of business graduates and not enough demand. (NCHE, 2023)

However, there is a drop in the number of students who have graduated between 2020 and 2021. With 12 614 students graduating in 2020 (with 8 997 being female and 3617 being male) to 10108 in 2021 (7212 being female and 2816 being male).

Table 5: Number of graduates completing their studies between 2017-2021

Indicator		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
		3,248	6,539	3,607	7,184	3,663	7,865	3,617	8,997	2,896	7,212
Graduates	Total Graduates	9,786		10,791		11,528		12,614		10,108	
	Graduates by NQF Field of Learning	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Agriculture and Nature Conservation	251	2.6%	207	1.9%	232	2.0%	196	1.6%	204	2.0%
	Business, Commerce and Management Studies	3,794	38.8%	3634	33.7%	3,149	27.3%	3,318	26.3%	2129	21.1%
	Communication Studies and Language	323	3.3%	347	3.2%	303	2.6%	212	1.7%	195	1.9%
	Culture and the Arts	15	0.2%	9	0.1%	143	1.2%	129	1.0%	124	1.2%
	Education, Training and Development	2,913	29.8%	3602	33.4%	4,930	42.8%	5,702	45.2%	4103	40.6%
	Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology	276	2.8%	333	3.1%	325	2.8%	254	2.0%	267	2.6%
	Human and Social Studies	333	3.4%	334	3.1%	172	1.5%	182	1.4%	129	1.3%
	Law, Military Science and Security	323	3.3%	372	3.4%	276	2.4%	399	3.2%	358	3.5%
	Health Sciences and Social Services	650	6.6%	808	7.5%	768	6.7%	1158	9.2%	1885	18.6%
	Physical, Mathematical and Computer Sciences	710	7.3%	755	7.0%	849	7.4%	672	5.3%	424	4.2%
	Physical Planning and Construction	140	1.4%	216	2.0%	188	1.6%	188	1.5%	182	1.8%
	Services and Life Sciences	59	0.6%	67	0.6%	193	1.7%	204	1.6%	108	1.1%
	Graduates by NQF Qualification Type										
	Certificate	927	9.5%	986	9.1%	1,084	9.4%	1,550	12.3%	1,365	13.5%
	Diploma	2,692	27.5%	2,983	27.6%	3,503	30.4%	3,503	27.8%	2,577	25.5%
	Bachelor Degree	1,547	15.8%	1,666	15.4%	1,842	16.0%	1,968	15.6%	1,852	18.3%
	Bachelor Honours Degree	3,403	34.8%	3,451	32.0%	3,774	32.7%	3,939	31.2%	2,915	28.8%
	Professional Bachelor Degree	621	6.3%	736	6.8%	636	5.5%	767	6.1%	926	9.2%
	Post-graduate Certificate/Diploma	324	3.3%	480	4.4%	244	2.1%	429	3.4%	261	2.6%
	Masters Degree	251	2.6%	476	4.4%	422	3.7%	383	3.0%	200	2.0%
	Doctoral Degree	22	0.2%	13	0.1%	23	0.2%	75	0.6%	12	0.1%

As indicated previously in this report, there is a concern about the high numbers of unemployed graduates, and this suggests that the emphasis must be on demand as well as on guiding learners into the relevant programmes.

5.1.3 Interventions by government to reskill and upskill

The government has introduced a range of interventions to address the mobility of workers and the implementation of skills transfer programmes. A brief overview of these programmes is provided in this section.

A programme to develop skills and entrepreneurship opportunities for green jobs (2013/2014) (ILO,2020). Further, the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact[20] with Namibia was a five-year investment (2009-2014) of $304.5 million which led to the creation of the National Training Fund (NTF), grants for high priority vocational skills training and the "expansion and improvement of seven Community Skills Development Centers (COSDECs) and training of the Community Skills Development Foundation's management staff" (Measuring results of the Namibia Vocational Education and skills training activity 2016).

With the establishment of the NTF, the government introduced a training/skill levy and the funds collected are used, in part, to fund training for key priorities identified by stakeholders. These grants are used to assist with skills development and educational training of new entrants as well as address the need for upskilling the existing workforce. An example of the kind of priority grants allocated has been to train apprentices to work across the economy. The funding from the NTA is allocated to those companies who agree to host apprentices. In turn the money is spent by the company to find a training provider from amongst the 108 registered and accredited providers as well as to pay a minimum stipend of $N2 500 per month to the learners. Companies must ensure that they have mentors in place to support the apprentices. The NTA indicated that it assesses and provides capacity building to ensure the mentors can support the learners. Key to this programme is ensuring quality workplace experience for the apprentices. The NTA plans to embark on a tracker study starting in July 2023. However, according to the NTA close to 70% of the apprentices have been taken on full-time by the companies.

Aside from the funding from the NTF, there are incentives for manufacturing companies to invest in technical training for their employees, such as a tax deduction of up to 25%. Meanwhile, the NSFAF provides loans and scholarships for students enrolled in vocational studies or tertiary education programs. An estimated 14,179 students were awarded loans for the 2020/2021 financial year as compared to 13,139 in the previous financial year.

MLIREC offers career counselling and guidance to learners/students and the public at large. Career guidance is supposed to be offered through psychometric testing at school or youth centres. It is understood that there are around 17 multi-purpose centres and five youth skills training centres. Career guidance is supposed to be offered countrywide but due to staff shortages, it is only provided regularly in 9 of the 14 administrative regions where there are Psychological Counsellors. Furthermore, the Ministry developed a career guidebook which is subsequently updated every four years. This book provides valuable information regarding career planning, the list of training institutions and training courses they offer. To date, there has been no programme evaluation conducted, hence the impact is yet to be assessed.

Finally, there has also been the establishment of the decent work programme, together with the ILO, in the informal sector, though there has been an issue of management and implementation since its inception. As highlighted previously, the informal sector plays an important role in the Namibian economy and interviews across a range of stakeholders have called for measures to be put in place to not only capacitate the sector but to ensure proper monitoring of the sector.

[20] The MCC is an organization supported by the United States of America government.

5.2 Employer interventions

Interviewees explain that the role of the private sector in skills development very much depends on the size of the company as well as the sector. For example, mining, fishing and the financial sectors have strong traditions of doing their own training. However, there is a concern about the extent to which employers are conducting training and the NEF notes that only a few employers are using the Skills Development Fund and even fewer SMEs utilise the fund.

A study[21] conducted during the pandemic in three sectors (tourism, the blue economy and agriculture) found that three-quarters of businesses (74%) provided training to employees to deal with the new working arrangements. Most businesses in the sample (83%) provided training focusing on health and safety at work; 42% provided training on how to manage a wider range of tasks than before, 37% provided training in the use of digital communication platforms; and 33% provided training on new ways to deliver goods and services to customers. Less than one-in-four (23%) provided training in using digital technologies to maintain internet connections and assessing computer resources; and 27% provided training on working as teams from remote locations.

When surveying employees in these companies it emerged that: 50% of respondents indicated that they have received some kind of relevant training in their field of business, and 48% had apparently never received any training pertinent to their field. Respondents from large enterprises seemed to be the best trained, with 80% having received some manner of training. Only 23% of respondents from informal enterprises had received training relevant to their field, though the number was higher for employees, at 43% and 39% of respondents from SMEs. As might be expected, respondents in forestry and agriculture received the least training, with 71% indicating they had none. In addition, 56% of respondents in wholesale and retail trade also had not received training.

5.3 Interventions by donor organisations

There are several donor organisations which are involved in seeking to strengthen the broader skills ecosystem in Namibia. Organisations and agencies include UNESCO, GIZ and the KfW Bank. The GIZ team has been very involved in trying to assist in terms of the TVET reform process as well as advising in relation to the direction of labour market institutions such as the NTA.

6. Factors impacting on the match between supply and demand

As emerging from this study, the skills mismatch has been attributed to a range of factors from an overreliance on tertiary education coupled with an insufficient focus on both career guidance (and dealing with youth aspirations), proper mechanisms to ensure skills anticipation and improving processes around qualification development to allow for more specialized fields. Linked to skills anticipation is the question of data and how key constituencies engage to ensure "demand and supply" speak to each other. A theme throughout this report is the lack of accurate and up-to-date data (as well as having some form of guide in terms of a critical skills list) which is critical for both planning and policy recommendations.

The other key theme to emerge relates to access - in terms of relevant training, more up-to-date qualifications, the geographical location of such training and access to relevant and quality

[21] Rapid assessment of skilling and reskilling needs arising from the effects of COVID-19, Skills Initiative for Africa, 2021

workplace experience. In relation to access, concerns were raised around the need to capacitate key stakeholders in the informal economy to upscale their businesses to be more sustainable and thereby generate more jobs. Linked to this is the need to also entrench RPL as well as a culture of entrepreneurship. As a union official pointed out there many Namibians who did not have an opportunity to study before independence but had gained indigenous skills which should be recognized and built upon especially for those working in the informal sector who required upskilling to build sustainable businesses. In relation to relevant and quality workplace experience, several respondents pointed to the fact that the depth of skills in Namibia reflects the structure of the economy. Hence, they argue, industries have not developed enough capabilities and experienced people to mentor young professionals to grow their skills base. A case in point is data scientists or computer engineers. This creates a double-edged sword; companies might need certain skills, but they do not have the support and mentorship capability to accommodate these employees.

7. Towards a gender-sensitive Skills Mobility Framework

This study has provided an indication of immediate and anticipated skills shortages coupled with the interventions that have been put in place to mediate supply and demand. What emerges is that there might be very specific circumstances where the recruitment of foreign workers might be required whilst at the same time building local human resource capacity (including deepening expertise and knowledge in sectors such as the blue and green economy). Stakeholders interviewed as part of this study suggest that such a process should be better managed through a Skills Mobility Framework.

The aim of such a framework is to give effect to the National Labour Migration Policy and create a balance between addressing the need for building an appropriate local skills pipeline (and protecting local workers and preventing a brain drain), whilst recruiting foreign labour where required, in a manner that ensures that this is undertaken in ways that supports fair recruitment and workplace conditions and that supports the sectors to efficiently access the requisite skills. Such a framework is to ensure that the positive developmental effects of improved mobility of skills benefits migrants and local workers (including their trade union representatives), employers and the overall development of the economy.

This draft framework considers the priorities highlighted in an action plan which was developed by the ILO/SAMM (and has been circulated to social partners) to ensure migrants are able to play a role in addressing skills gaps and mismatches for the short to medium term in the local labour market. In addition, these recommendations, once endorsement by the social partners, should form part of broader deliberations and implementation of the National Labour Migration Policy.

7.1 Cross-cutting principles underpinning the Framework

Based on this research process, three cross-cutting principles should underpin and guide the realisation of the intentions of this Gender-Sensitive Skills Mobility Framework:

- Facilitating social dialogue on skills mobility in Namibia
- Enhancing local skills development and capacity building
- Strengthening labour migration governance (including circular migration)

Facilitating social dialogue on skills mobility in Namibia: Social dialogue – within tripartite structures – is the cornerstone of the implementation of this Framework. As such, an appropriate

tripartite structure - which has the capacity and trust of all key stakeholders – is identified to facilitate regular/periodic social dialogue on skill mobility to ensure an exchange of information and ensure monitoring of implementation. This could, for example, as suggested by some respondents, be the Technical Working Group for the implementation of the Labour Migration Action Plan. Whichever, structure is identified, such a process should involve: the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) and other key government departments which form part of the "economic cluster" as well officials from the key labour market institutions such as the NTA and the NCHE (and other education and training providers) employers and workers organisations' representatives, as well as international affairs and home affairs' representatives and relevant civil society representatives.

This principle recognizes that for such a framework to contribute towards achieving employment, productivity and inclusive growth, it will require collaboration among the various constituencies to develop and implement the framework, aligning it with labour market needs, industry requirements, and educational policies. Such collaboration will require that the key constituencies, within a tripartite structure, discuss what actions should be prioritized, reach a shared understanding of how these can be implemented (with each constituency indicating what they will be responsible for in terms of implementation) and the timelines for delivery. It should be noted that these actions should be implemented in a coordinated and sustained way – with collaboration being key.

Enhancing local skills development and capacity building: The second cross-cutting principle focuses on the need to ensure that enhancing local skills development is integral to migration. Key actions, as outlined in draft framework (in the next section), seek to ensure the building of a local skills pipeline so that in the medium to long term the country will have the requisite skills to meet demand. The other dimension of this principle pertains to the need to ensure that all stakeholders have the capacity to engage in the different processes and engagements outlined in the Skills Mobility Framework. Giving expression to this principle requires a mechanism to be in place within the country that ensures all stakeholders have the information they require about the topics under discussion and the space to internally reflect on these issues to be able to effectively engage.

Strengthening Labour Migration Governance: The third principle guiding the Framework relates to the need to ensure that there is good governance of all labour migration policies, plans and interventions. This includes the imperative to give expression to the shared commitment to migrant workers' human and labour rights including the eradication of gender-based discrimination with the aim of moving towards gender equity. As part of operationalizing this principle is ensuring the fair, ethical and transparent recruitment of foreign labour to fill immediate skills gaps and on the other hand to ensure that migrant workers contribute to skills transfer programmes and support succession planning as part of a commitment to implement circular migration programmes as well as exploring BMLAs.

7.2 Key elements of a Gender-responsive Skills Mobility Framework

The previous section (7.1) outlines three cross-cutting principles which will underpin, guide and support the implementation of the Framework. In giving effect to these principles, this section unpacks the core components and associated elements (actions) of the proposed Framework:

Component 1. Addressing Labour and Skill Shortages at all Skill Levels

Element 1.1. Enhancing the identification of immediate labour shortages as well as the medium to longer-term labour market needs at different occupational levels within the context of different industries and utilize this data to develop lists of occupations in high demand or critical skills lists.
Element 1.2 Improving skills profiling of the national workforce as well as of foreign workers through labour market information systems (LMIS) that support improved labour migration statistics (including data that is disaggregated by gender).
Element 1.3. Establishing systematic information flow between business and educational institutions to support providers to better meet industry needs.

Component 2. Developing, Attracting and Retaining Skills in Demand

Element 2.1. Strengthening secondary and tertiary education systems particularly through vocational and professional training as well as technology programmes.
Element 2.2. Implementing student exchange programmes, international scholarships, and professional exchange and skills development programmes, (such as training and mentoring and internship programmes) between countries.
Element 2.3. Fostering skills transferability between migrant and national workers as well as migrant entrepreneurs.
Element 2.4. Reviewing existing conditions of employment to ensure parity between wages paid to locals and migrants.

Component 3. Ensuring Skills Recognition and Employability

Element 3.1. Improving the portability of skills[1] (e.g. equivalence and comparability) by ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications (diplomas, certificates) and non-formally acquired skills (such as those acquired through work experience) through a range of recognition mechanisms such as credential evaluation, mutual or bilateral skills recognition agreements, qualification frameworks, the harmonization of occupational labour standards and the recognition of prior learning systems.
Element 3.2. Promoting joint efforts to ensure that recognition processes, including those offered to migrants, are coupled with processes to upskill individuals where they are missing certain skills as well as initiatives to improve the employability of national and migrant workers.

Component 1. Addressing Labour and Skill Shortages at all Skill Levels (low-skilled, semi-skilled and highly skilled)

Element 1.1. Enhancing the identification of immediate labour shortages as well as the medium to longer-term labour market needs at different occupational levels within the context of different industries and utilize this data to develop lists of occupations in high demand or critical skills lists.

The strengthening of skills anticipation systems is critical to support planning for immediate and medium to long-term skills needs. Such an approach should consider a gender-sensitive approach and the imperatives of changing technology (digital skills) and other transitions related to the future of work (such as the green economy (green hydrogen) and the blue economy).

These systems should explore how to factor in the involvement of the industry skills committees (set up under the NTA)) with the aim of strengthening these structures to enable them to play a more proactive and strategic role in identifying the skills are in demand across each sector. These skills needs could be reflected in different skills lists including critical skills lists that indicate where migrants are required and a wider list of skills in demand that informs the prioritization of skills programmes.

Element 1.2 Improving skills profiling of the national workforce as well as of foreign workers through LMIS that support improved labour migration statistics (including data that is disaggregated by gender).

This requires developing a reliable labour market information system that can be used as part of the skills anticipation system, as highlighted above, to understand immediate and long-term skills needs. These skills needs should be captured in ways that support different forms of interventions, for example where immediate skills are required it will be important to develop a critical skills list that can guide migration (which should be updated periodically) and shared in ways that help shape skills programme interventions that are offered in order to develop these skills locally. These skills should therefore also be used to inform the courses and qualifications offered by both HEIs and TVET. Key to a strong labour market information system is ensuring the relevant institutions are producing (and collaborating) up to date skills and labour migration data which is disaggregated in a way that takes gender into account.

Element 1.3. Establishing systematic information flow between business and educational institutions to support providers to better meet industry needs.

This process should ensure that key government departments responsible for growing the economy engage and interact with skills providers/education and training institutions and industry and union representatives to ensure higher levels of coordination and alignment between education and vocational training centers' curriculums and the local job market.

Such processes should not only explore potential growth sectors but map out key emerging occupations and consider the implications for skills in demand to inform a review of relevant qualifications and curricula. Where required, training institutions should explore partnerships to build capacity for lecturers as well as to provide learners with wider access to other institutions in the region and elsewhere. Similarly, such institutions/stakeholders could explore sourcing qualifications/curriculum within the region or elsewhere to reduce the time and costs of developing qualifications for new emerging skills/qualifications.

Key to this activity is a review of existing career counselling interventions with the aim of strengthening and expanding such interventions so that youth are sensitized to the changing needs of the labour market – with a focus on the priority and emerging new sectors such as those in relation to the Just Energy Transition as well as the value of vocational and technical training. An action proposed by the hospitality and tourism sector to explore offering youth a gap year where they can explore different pathways which could be linked to the national youth service, is an option to consider and apply to other sectors.

Component 2. Developing, Attracting and Retaining Skills in Demand

Element 2.1. Strengthening secondary and tertiary education systems particularly through vocational and professional training as well as technology programmes.

Linked to the action proposed in 1.3 above, stakeholders need to continue efforts to enhance the quality of TVET to ensure that Namibians can transition into different occupations (including the renewable energy sector) within the labour market. As part of strengthening TVET, ensure the provision of internships and other workplace learning opportunities such as apprenticeships.

In the case of apprenticeships (as in the case of the NTA's apprenticeship programme) and internships, industry should therefore be encouraged to offer and provide quality workplace experience (or other interventions explored as outlined below in terms of the role of BLMAs). And

where necessary, capacity building should be explored to assist industry to train mentors as is provided for in the case of apprenticeships and should be extended to the case of internships.

A linked activity is profiling of the skills possessed by youth, unemployed, women and unemployed graduates to determine their level of education which will inform the design of programmes for upskilling and reskilling of these unemployed categories.

Further, stakeholders need to explore and review why companies are not utilizing the Skills Development Fund and what support SMMEs need to conduct training and how those in the informal economy can access training opportunities whilst such activities should also focus on entrepreneurial training and education, with a focus on technology.

Element 2.2. Promoting and implementing student exchange programmes, international scholarships, and professional exchange and skills development programmes (such as opportunities for training and mentoring and internships and other upskilling opportunities) between countries.

Actions to give effect to this element should focus on ensuring Namibians – both youth and those that require building specialized skills - are able to access workplace experience and learning. Where such opportunities are not available inside Namibia, stakeholders need to explore – through BLMAs – opportunities in other countries such as traditional trading partners or where mutually beneficial relationships can be developed.

BLMAs should be explored together with key stakeholders and should be managed so that expertise developed outside Namibia ultimately benefits the Namibian economy and labour market. In addition, a well-coordinated structure should be established to ensure monitoring and enforcement of such agreements that protect Namibian labour migrants and the respect for their rights under international law.

Element 2.3. Fostering skills transferability between migrant and national workers as well as facilitating migrant entrepreneurs.

Giving effect to this element and in line with the National Labour Migration Policy (which is focused on the temporary importation of high-level skills to train Namibians to take over these positions) a review of the understudy programme is necessary to identify the challenges around implementation including what is required to ensure the monitoring of companies to ensure compliance. Linked to this, a review should be conducted of existing and future contracts awarded to foreign owned companies to ensure there is a commitment to skills transfer as well as an adjustment of the ratio of foreign/labour local content to prevent job losses for locals and that locals benefit from such arrangements.

A related activity is ensuring the proper tracking of professionals leaving the country (including their skills levels) to lay basis for exchange programmes (as part of a Diaspora Programme) to encourage knowledge/skills transfer back to benefit the Namibian economy.

Finally, explore how foreign workers coming into Namibia with specialised skills (not in existence in Namibia) who eventually set up their own businesses can contribute towards skills transfer, employment generation and much-needed economic diversification. As part of this, consideration could be given to their involvement in developing a knowledge depository/innovation hub.

Element 2.4. Review existing conditions of employment to ensure parity between wages paid to locals and migrants.

Social partners to monitor and ensure parity between the wages and employment conditions between Namibian and foreign workers. Key to this activity is ensuring that the services provided by Public Employment Services (PES) are extended to foreign workers. This will require boosting the capacity of PES to provide such services as well as popularizing such services amongst foreign workers.

A related activity (and highlighted in the National Labour Migration Policy) is ensuring the fair and effective recruitment of migrant labour. To action this, Namibia can draw on a draft code of conduct and assessment tool which is being developed at a SADC level in relation to this issue. At the same time, key stakeholders should jointly develop an "awareness raising" campaign to highlight the role played by foreign workers in terms of their contribution to the development of Namibia.

Component 3. Ensuring Skills Recognition and Employability

Element 3.1. Improving the portability of skills[22] (e.g. equivalence and comparability) by ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications (diplomas, certificates) and non-formally acquired skills (such as those acquired through work experience) through a range of recognition mechanisms such as credential evaluation, mutual or bilateral skills recognition agreements, qualification frameworks, the harmonization of occupational labour standards and RPL.

Promote RPL for both local (and foreign) workers to ensure the optimum utilization of existing labour as well as review and ensure capacity is in place for such assessment processes.

A stakeholder driven process is needed to explore how the skills recognition processes can be strengthened and are able to ensure new skills and occupations (especially those linked to new technology and specialised skills which are in demand) of both foreign and local workers can be recognised on the NQF. Stakeholders need to proactively explore what is required to achieve this such as establishing standards, guidelines, and assessment criteria to evaluate the quality and relevance of skills or to collaborate with other countries in this regard.

Element 3.2. Promoting joint efforts to ensure that recognition processes, including those offered to migrants, are coupled with processes to upskill individuals where they are missing certain skills as well as initiatives to improve the employability of national and migrant workers.

Upskill and reskill workers by encouraging industry to offer and provide quality workplace experience such as internships as highlighted in component 2. A related activity is utilizing BLMAs with other countries either within SADC or beyond to ensure young Namibians can access internships and workplace learning opportunities to improve their access into the labour market especially in the case of new and emerging sectors as well as in the case of specialized skills.

[22] The ILO Human Resources Development Recommendation concerning human resources development: education, training, and lifelong learning, 2004 (No. 195) defines portability of skills along the following two dimensions: (a) employable skills which can be used productively in different jobs, occupations, industries; and (b) certification and recognition of skills within national and international labour markets.

8. Conclusion

This draft Skills Mobility Framework reflects on the key elements of the National Labour Migration Policy as well as the findings which emerged from the study. The process moving forward is ensuring discussions and engagement amongst the key stakeholders to agree on a shared vision for implementation which could include programming the identified activities in terms of what to prioritise and determining how the various social partners will support implementation and timelines for implementation. Ultimately, implementing such a framework in a coordinated and integrated way (together with other key policies) could ensure that the key sectors in the economy have the skills necessary for industrial transformation and growth leading to overall development in the country.

ANNEXURE A: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

ORGANISATION	NAME	DESIGNATION/ROLE
Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation	Ms Wilhelmine Shigwedha David Ligonda Josephina Sifani	Chief economist Deputy Director: Labour Market Information Deputy Director: Employment Services
Ministry of International Relation and Cooperation (MIRCO)	AvShalom Nghifitikeko Valombola Kalomoh, Penohole Brock Paulina Amupolo Tania Tait	Director: Multilateral Relations and Cooperation
Namibia Statistical Agency	Liana Y. Koita Onesmus Shalonda Elina Sheehama	Statistician
Namibian Qualifications Authority	Franz Gertze	Director
Namibia Training Authority	Indongo Indongo	Manager: Research and Planning
Namibian Student Financial Assistance Fund	Johanna Shidhika	Manager: Awards
National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	Eben-Eser Makar Agnes Nicodemus	Chief Education Officer: Policy Planning & Funding
National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW)	Job Muniaro	General secretary
Survey warehouse (researcher)	Christie Keulder	Researcher
National Employers Federation	Helene Ochs	Director
Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations	Gitta Paetzold	CEO of the Hospitality Association of Namibia
Chamber of Mines Namibia	Brumilda Britz	Director: Human Resources
Agricultural Employers' Association (AEA)	Eckart Förtsch	Member of the Industry skills committee on behalf of the AEA
Confederation of Namibian Fishing Associations	Ron Wolters	Secretary
GIZ	Martin Wilkinson	Senior Technical Expert – Industry Cooperation: Promotion of Vocational Education and Training (ProTVET)

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