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Assessment of public employment services and active labour market policies in Namibia

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Industrial Relations and Employment Creation)

Michael Mwasikakata
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Employment
and Labour
Market Policies
Branch



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Michael Mwasikakata
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Preface

The primary goal of the ILO is to work with member States towards achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all. This goal is elaborated in the ILO Declaration 2008 on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization which has been widely adopted by the international community. Comprehensive and integrated perspectives to achieve this goal are embedded in the Employment Policy Convention of 1964 (No. 122), the Global Employment Agenda (2003) and – in response to the 2008 global economic crisis – the Global Jobs Pact (2009) and the conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Reports on Employment (2010 and 2014).

The Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT) is engaged in global advocacy and in supporting member States in placing more and better jobs at the centre of economic and social policies and growth and development strategies. Policy research and knowledge generation and dissemination are essential components of the Employment Policy Department's activities. The resulting publications include books, country policy reviews, policy and research briefs, and working papers.

The Employment Policy Working Paper series is designed to disseminate the main findings of research on a broad range of topics undertaken by the branches of the Department. The working papers are intended to encourage the exchange of ideas and to stimulate debate. The views expressed within them are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the ILO.

Azita Berar Awad
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Foreword

Employment services play a critical role in the effective and efficient organization of the labour market with a view to the attainment of the long-term goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment. Employment services in a developing country context can assist in the implementation of employment policies, provision of labour market information and matching services and, with respect to the informal economy, promoting self-employment and formalization of such employment. In the latter case, employment services can provide information about various labour market programmes being offered, as well as ensure coordination of such services to maximize impact.

However, due to their low level of development and limited capacities of government and institutions in general, developing countries have not been able to develop and benefit from the immense potential of public employment services (PES). The view that public employment services would not be effective in developing countries where the informal economy is large and formal sector employment demand is weak is now being somewhat questioned, as many middle-income developing countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia, for example, have stepped up efforts to revitalize their public employment services in the light of significant labour market information asymmetries, as well as the need to support labour market reforms aimed at confronting the growing challenge of youth unemployment and underemployment. The ILO has seen renewed interest and demand for technical assistance from Member States in modernizing their employment services.

English speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, with a few exceptions, has been lagging behind other regions in Africa, both in terms of development of PES and documentation of the experience. This study is part of a sub-regional knowledge development strategy by the ILO through action-oriented research leading to development of customized tools to strengthen employment services in the region. PES assessments were thus commissioned in three countries, Namibia, Rwanda and Zambia, with the expectation of extending them to other countries in the coming biennium.

This report on Namibia examines the provision of employment services in the country by analysing the institutional, policy and legal frameworks. Policy coherence and institutional coordination emerge as the key issues. Namibia has instituted recent reforms through the enactment of the Employment Services Act in 2011, which establishes the Employment Services Board and Bureau. A range of specific recommendations are offered to the Government and constituents for the improvement of the PES. It is hoped that the implementation of these recommendations will kick start a long-term process of strengthening the employment service and ALMP provision, as part of the national strategy to address the high incidence of unemployment in Namibia, and its overarching goal of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all.

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Comments on the draft of the paper from the participants in the "Validation Workshop for the Assessment of Public Employment Services and Active Labour Market Policies in Namibia", held on 13 October 2017 in Windhoek, are acknowledged with appreciation.

The preparation of the working paper was coordinated by Michael Mwasikakata under the overall guidance of Azita Berar Awad and Sukti Dasgupta.

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List of Abbreviations

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
BDC	Business Development Centre
DE	Designated Employer
ESB	Employment Services Bureau
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HPP	Harambee Prosperity Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEIS	Integrated Employment Information System
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LMI	Labour Market Information
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MHAI	Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration
MHETI	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation
MITSMED	Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development
MLIREC	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation
MPESW	Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
MSYNS	Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Services
NASCO	Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations
NCCI	Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NDP	National Development Plan
NEF	Namibian Employers' Federation
NEP	National Employment Policy
NES	National Employment Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLFS	Namibia Labour Force Survey
NOSAS	Namibia Occupational Skills Assessment Survey
NOWS	Namibia Occupational Wages Survey
NSA	Namibia Statistics Agency
NTA	Namibia Training Authority
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
NYC	National Youth Council
PEA	Private Employment Agency

PES	Public Employment Service
PWD	People with Disabilities
TUCNA	Trade Union Congress of Namibia
VCS	Vocational Counselling Services

Executive Summary

This report is based on a mission by ILO officials to undertake an assessment of the Public Employment Service of Namibia in January/February 2017 following an invitation to the ILO by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) of the Republic of Namibia to conduct an assessment and offer recommendations for the modernization of the national Public Employment Service.

Public Employment Services (PES) play a pivotal role in the implementation of employment policies, in ensuring a more efficient matching of the available vacancies and jobseekers, thereby increasing productivity and the capacity for creation of more jobs and promoting direct creation of jobs, through support for self-employment as well as participation in local boards that promote local economic development and employment. A strengthened and functional Public Employment Service, combined with networks with private and non-governmental providers, would support Namibia's commitment to the creation of full, productive and decent employment espoused in Vision 2030, the NDPs, the HPP as well as Namibia's Second National Employment Policy of 2013, to address the high levels of unemployment (34.0%, in 2016), particularly among the youth (43.4%).

The Public Employment Service (PES) of Namibia was revamped in 2011 following the promulgation of the Employment Services Act, which established the National Employment Service (NES) "to provide professional labour market services for the purpose of achieving full, productive and decent employment in Namibia". The main employment services provided by the PES are registration of jobseekers, vacancies, employers and training providers, including through a web-based system called the Integrated Employment Information System (IEIS). Additional services include the placement of jobseekers, job canvassing, school orientation talks, provision of advice on self-employment projects, vocational counselling and career guidance, psychometric testing, and training of psychological counsellors and intern psychologists.

Specifically, a total of 15,023 jobseekers were registered in 2016, of which a total of 1,371 were placed over the same period. An electronic jobs portal has also been active since 2014, having already registered nearly 60,000 jobseekers until the present. Despite its achievements, the PES of Namibia is faced with important capacity restrictions that prevent it from meeting its potential contribution in improving the functioning of the labour market. The following is a summary of the findings of the assessment.

The capacity of the Employment Services Bureau (ESB) is weak. The 29 employment officers in post, across the 14 large regions of the country, correspond to a ratio of approximately 90,000 people per officer. This is in striking contrast to the equivalent ratios of 3,000 people or less per employment officer in many developed countries. With an estimated front-line staff of 24 employment officers, each officer is associated with over 14,000 unemployed people, or 2,800 jobseekers. Moreover, the 18 regional offices cater for urban and semi-urban areas only, leaving out the more than fifty per cent of the population living in rural areas. Measures therefore need to be put in place to reach out to people in all geographical areas, yet without expanding the offices to an excessive extent.

The professional capacity of the ESB staff needs strengthening, as there is no systematic training plan in place. The last training was offered locally in collaboration with ILO over a decade ago and no refresher courses have been provided. Professionalization of the employment services staff is thus lacking and contributes to high staff turnover. Vocational Counselling Services (VCS) are provided independently of the PES, whence the need to establish a clear protocol regarding coordination of the Bureau's remit and the vocational counselling and LMI functions. The infrastructure of the PES is poor and does not present a good image to clients, particularly high-skilled jobseekers, young people and

employers. The image of the PES is one of the determining factors for success in attracting clients. Furthermore, the Bureau's budget is too low to meet the objectives set out in the Employment Services Act and there is no systematic performance management system in place.

The range of services offered by the ESB is narrow and basic. Functional public employment services tailor their products to the needs of their clients with the objective of empowering them to find jobs and make informed decisions about their careers and lifelong learning. At present, the Bureau offers a limited range of basic services not differentiated according to the needs of individual jobseekers relating to job search assistance, labour market information, advice on self-employment and regulation of private employment agencies. The Integrated Employment Information System has been running since 2014 and is still in operation, despite some teething problems – frequent system downtimes, slow pick-up, poor matching, and technical hitches such as maintenance of the live register. Active labour market policies (ALMP) are instrumental in increasing the efficiency of the labour market as well as enhancing employability. In Namibia the Bureau does not implement any ALMP, although they are, however, implemented by different institutions across the public and NGO sectors, albeit without any coordination with, or link to, the Bureau.

Services to employers are weak, revolving around matching of jobseekers to notified vacancies. While commendable efforts have been made to engage the private sector after the new law was passed and following the launch of the online job portal, the Bureau has not yet developed a viable private sector strategy.

Institutional and systems coordination are lacking. Public employment services are responsible for implementing national employment and labour market policies and therefore need to form alliances and networks with other institutions. PES-Private Employment Agency (PEA) partnerships are even more important in the context of developing countries. Indeed, in the case of Namibia, there are only 18 PES offices countrywide. This impairs their ability to provide job opportunities to jobseekers, especially to those who in a more precarious situation, such as the long-term unemployed and youth. The Bureau has not yet seized the opportunity to forge partnerships with key organizations in the public sector.

Skills mismatch. There is evidence of mismatch between the skills provided by the education and training system and the skills demanded by firms, especially those creating new vacancies. This is related in part to the extent to which labour market information systems can inform the choices of education and training providers, on the one hand, and of individuals deciding on their careers, and establishing the education and training areas that they should pursue. Many practical skills can only be gained from work experience. In this context, internships can be a very interesting work relationship model to both speed up and improve the quality of the transition from school to work.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthening the institutional and human resources capacity of the Bureau

An analysis of human resource needs and training should be undertaken in order to establish a minimum staff contingent for the Bureau, draw up a short to medium-term training plan and to deliver an acceptable level of service to clients. A minimum frontline staff of 6 officers in Windhoek, 5 in Walvis Bay and 3 in other regional offices should be ensured. Support staff should be recruited or assigned to the PES. Use of interns would alleviate the current critical staff shortages. **Professionalization** of PES functions and jobs needs to be considered, carefully planned to ensure security of tenure of employment service staff.

The employment service centre at the Head Office in Windhoek needs to be relocated as soon as possible to a more spacious office (the vacant former Labour Commissioner's Office could be the best option in the short term). *Given the role employment services play in increasing the efficiency of matching jobseekers to vacancies, and thereby promoting productivity gains, the Bureau should work closely and possibly share offices with the National Productivity Unit.* A separate well-equipped **computer area/room** with printing and photocopying facilities should be provided for self-service, particularly the young. In the medium to long term, the Centre should be relocated to a more central site, with easy transport connections. Regional offices should also be improved along the lines of the main employment service centre, subject to available resources.

Recommendation 2: Modernizing and increasing the use of the Integrated Employment Information System (IEIS)

In the **short term**, the Bureau should work with the service provider to iron out the technical hitches and make improvements that do not need further substantial investment, including streamlining registration of jobseekers and vacancies to ensure a closer match, aligning CVs to job requirements, creation of reports customized to users, reducing downtime frequency, etc. In the **medium term**, the following improvements are recommended: develop a job matching system that allows automatic matching of jobseekers and vacancies, based on a revised and updated national standard classification of occupations; create linkages with the Ministries of Education and Home Affairs to ensure a one-stop attestation of educational credentials and criminal record checks respectively; development and installation of online career guidance materials and training materials for PES staff; extended coverage of jobs on the portal to informal/self-employment, such as registration of artisans, as is the case in India; expand the capacity of the server and internet connectivity; and re-launch the upgraded IEIS accompanied by online publication of user manuals, basic features of the portal and organize online and offline training sessions for employers and workers.

Recommendation 3: Enhance the central coordinating role of the PES as a key player in the labour market by improving the offer and delivery of services

A clear flow and sequencing of services should be developed from registration, profiling and assessment, counselling, job search assistance and enhancing employability, to matching and post-employment services. Development of tools and procedures for profiling and assessment, counselling and job search assistance should be prioritized in the short to medium term. The MLIREC should develop a working protocol between the Vocational Counselling Services (VCS) subdivision and the Bureau and enhance counselling services by empowering employment officers to provide basic counselling services to jobseekers and leaving specialized counselling to the professionals. In the medium term, the Act should be amended to properly incorporate the VCS in the Bureau.

The Bureau should create a link to existing Active Labour Market Programmes, firstly by undertaking a mapping of all such programmes in urban and rural areas and their providers. These should be made available on the jobs portal, establishing working relationships with programme providers and subsequently implementing some of the programmes in-house or through collaboration with other service providers. It should improve **services to employers** by constantly engaging the private sector, through the Namibian Employer' Federation (NEF), the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI), the Designated Employers (DE), as well as members of the Employment Services Board, to ensure that the IEIS is user friendly, that the turnaround from the Bureau meets employers' HR needs, including small enterprises. Particular attention should be paid to small employers who are outside the mandatory reporting requirements.

One-stop services for verification of certificates with the MHETI as well as criminal record checks with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (MHAI) should be provided. As the NIEIS matures, the Bureau should initiate discussions to ensure linking of the relevant government databases and establish a mechanism for authentication of credentials for employers. In addition to the IEIS, the Bureau should develop innovative outreach programmes, such as kiosks in strategic places in urban and rural areas, mobile employment centres, and partnerships with NGOs operating in rural areas, technical schools and universities, etc. to ensure universal access and equity.

Furthermore, the Bureau should review the communication strategy and create alliances with different stakeholders, trade unions, NGOs, employers' associations, etc., to spread the word about the services it provides. In the medium term, strengthen PES capacity to act as the information hub for jobseekers, employers, training institutions, private employment service providers and other stakeholders. The capacity of the PES to act as coordinator of labour market players should be strengthened, to ensure optimal organization of the labour market to achieve full, productive and decent employment. Discussions should be initiated to review the functional model of the PES that may include a network of other service providers.

Recommendation 4: Strengthening partnerships with other service providers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors

As all private employment agencies are required by law to register with the Bureau, the latter should engage with them and identify areas for possible cooperation. These might include pooling of information and use of common terminology so as to improve transparency of the functioning of the labour market; exchanging vacancy notices; launching of joint projects, e.g. training; concluding agreements between the public employment service and private employment agencies for the execution of activities, such as projects for the integration of the long-term unemployed; training of staff; consulting regularly with a view to improving professional practices (ILO Recommendation No. 188) .

In the short term, the Bureau should encourage the posting of PEA' vacancies on the portal, while in the medium term, when the PES has built up the capacity to implement ALMPs and manage contracts, it should explore the possibility of contracting out services to private and third sector organizations.

Recommendation 5: Addressing skills mismatch through promotion of internships as stepping stones towards productive employment

The Ministry of Higher Education and the Namibia Training Authority should finalize and adopt the Internship and Apprenticeship Policy, providing detailed guidelines for stakeholders across all sectors of the economy. If necessary, the Government should enact legislation to enforce the provisions of the policy. Furthermore, traineeships should be incorporated in the IEIS portal and the Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations should be updated as a matter of urgency to better align training to labour market demands.

Recommendation 6: Generating and analysing additional and more up-to-date labour market information

The Bureau should produce regular and comprehensive labour market reports based on the Integrated Employment Information System, covering registration of jobseekers and vacancies, and also successful matches disaggregated by region, sector, occupational group, salary level, and jobseeker's sex, age group and educational level. Partnerships should be developed with schools, training centres and universities, for possible linking of databases and conduct of tracer studies or graduate surveys. Furthermore, in collaboration with the LMI Division, it should build capacity for analysis of labour market information based on

various sources, including from the LMIS central databank once developed and operational. It should fill data gaps, in liaison with relevant agencies, relating to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including in the informal sector.

Recommendation 7: Ensuring sustainable financing of the PES

Experience shows the PES and active labour market policies can be financed in a variety of ways, such as through the government budget from taxes, social security funds and unemployment benefit funds, as well as specialized funds at national and sectoral levels. Successful implementation of the recommendations in this report would require a substantial increase in the Bureau's resources.

The Government should consider establishing a separate vote for the implementation of the Employment Services Act covering the operations of the Employment Services Board and the Bureau, based on a costing of priority activities and innovations submitted by the latter. In the short run, given the PES's potential value in facilitating various priorities of the Harambee Prosperity Plan¹, including the establishment of the productivity centre, the Government should consider allocating some of the funds earmarked for the implementation of the Plan to the Bureau, based on specific activities suggested by the latter.

Furthermore, the Government should consider allocating a percentage of the Training Levy Fund and the Pension Fund, once established, for the purpose of financing the PES and ALMPs. In the medium term, the Bureau could have access to the *Development Fund* managed by the Social Security Commission.

¹ See Box 1 below: Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP)

1. Introduction

This report is based on a mission by ILO officials to undertake an assessment of the Public Employment Services of Namibia in January/February 2017. This mission followed an invitation to the ILO by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) of the Republic of Namibia to conduct an assessment and make recommendations for the modernization of the national Public Employment Service.

The Public Employment Service (PES) of Namibia is an established public agency, delivering a number of valuable services to jobseekers, firms, and other stakeholders. These services include jobseeker and vacancy registration, matching, and vocational counselling. A total number of 39,476 jobseekers were registered in 2016, of which a total of 1,997 were placed over the same period. An electronic jobs portal has also been active since 2014, having already registered over 60,000 jobseekers until the present.

Despite its achievements, the PES of Namibia is faced with important capacity constraints that prevent it from fulfilling its potential contribution to improving the functioning of the labour market. The 24 employment officers in post, across the 14 large regions of the country, correspond to a ratio of approximately one million people per officer. This is in striking contrast to the equivalent ratios of 3,000 people or less per employment officer in many developed countries.

Moreover, Namibia is faced with high levels of unemployment (34% in 2016), particularly amongst the young (43.4%). There is also evidence of a degree of mismatch between the skills provided by the education and training system and the skills demanded by firms, especially those creating new vacancies.

In this context, progressively increasing the capacity of the PES, exploiting opportunities for partnerships with existing stakeholders and taking advantage of the potential of information technologies, offers the perspective of a better functioning labour market and higher levels of employment. Despite the significant macroeconomic and sectoral factors underlying unemployment in Namibia, the PES can contribute to reducing unemployment, increasing employment, and faster and more inclusive economic growth – job creation is increasingly recognized as one of the most important drivers of sustainable development.

Indeed, the experience of a number of countries that have expanded and modernized their PES shows that investment in these public agencies can lead to faster and better matching between jobseekers and vacancies. This in turn increases employment levels as vacancies are filled faster, last longer and are also more likely to be created in the first place. This positive effect of PES in terms of matching is particularly noteworthy as PES labour market penetration increases and becomes more diversified. In fact, employment tends to jump more than proportionately compared to the increase in vacancy and jobseeker registrations, as there is greater scope for successful matches between labour demand and labour supply.

Employers and workers also benefit from better matching facilitated by the PES in terms of higher productivity and profitability and better pay and working conditions. Moreover, governments benefit, as income tax and social security revenues also increase in line with employment, potentially more than repaying the original investment in the expansion of the PES. Furthermore, when the PES makes information about vacancies available in a transparent manner to all jobseekers, regardless of their social networks (families and friends) or length of unemployment, this also promotes greater equality, the erosion of discrimination, and a more balanced relationship between employers and workers.

Given the specific circumstances and general themes described above, this report makes a number of recommendations for the expansion and modernization of the PES of Namibia. These recommendations draw on the achievements of the PES and take into account the views expressed by a wide range of stakeholders consulted during a mission in January/February 2017, listed in Appendix 4, as well as the experiences of other countries and a number of reports and publications, listed in Appendix 5.

These recommendations seek to provide a roadmap for consideration by the MLIREC, and all relevant stakeholders. The proposals seek to be of a practical nature, outlining clear specific steps, to facilitate discussion, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These recommendations should also be regarded as an interconnected set of proposals, and not in isolation, as the impact of each recommendation will typically only be maximized if the other proposals are likewise implemented.

The recommendations are structured around the following seven main topics: 1) strengthening the institutional and human resource capacity of the Bureau (PES); 2) modernizing and increasing the use of the online jobs portal; 3) Enhancing the core role of the PES in the labour market by improving the offer and delivery of services; 4) strengthening partnerships with other service providers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors; 5) addressing skills mismatch through promotion of internships as stepping stones towards productive employment; 6) generating and analysing additional and more up-to-date labour market information; and 7) ensuring sustainable financing of the PES. Following an overview of the theme, each main recommendation includes several other specific recommendations by way of activities and steps required.

2. The national context

Namibia has achieved much in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction over recent years, reaping the rewards of political stability and sound economic management. Between 2010 and 2015, the economy grew at an average annual rate of 5.9% per annum. However, growth fell back significantly in 2016, to only 0.2%, driven by a drop in investment in the mining sector on the back of low global commodity prices. According to the African Development Bank, economic growth is expected to remain subdued in 2017, as fragile external demand dims the outlook, with the consequent impact on unemployment.

In any case, as in other sub-Saharan African countries, economic growth has not led to major levels of job creation and reduction in unemployment, as the economic expansion was driven by extractive projects and strong export prices. Moreover, very high social and economic inequities created in the past persist, despite significant spending on social programmes: Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.597.

In fact, limited demand for unskilled labour in manufacturing or services may explain the still very high percentage of the workforce in low-productivity subsistence agriculture with the resulting low income levels. At the same time, according to the World Bank, all major production sectors, mining, tourism, livestock and meat production, and fisheries, are vulnerable to external economic and ecological shocks. Foreign demand in each industry is cyclical, seasonal, or unpredictable, with downstream effects on employment, incomes and government revenues.

In reality, the relatively strong economic growth until 2015 was not sufficient to overcome poverty and inequality, and reduce unemployment. Using the national poverty line of N\$ 377.96, the Namibian poor made up 28.7% of the population in 2009/10, following a 9.0 percentage point fall from 37.7% in 2003/04. The reduction was driven by gains in rural areas. Based on international poverty lines, 19.7% of the population was living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2015 compared to 21.9% in 2010. In 2015, 42.9% were living below the \$3.10 per day poverty line, compared to 45.1% in 2010.

3. PES policy and strategy

In common with many countries in English-speaking southern Africa, the Public Employment Service in Namibia had long existed within the MLIREC as part and parcel of the activities of the labour offices, but with remarkably low capacity and almost negligible services. It was neither linked to the broader economic and employment policy framework, nor was its existence and mandate anchored in a solid legal framework. A decade ago, for example, the Namibia Occupational Skills Assessment Survey (NOSAS) (2006) found that of the 3,474 employers surveyed across the country, less than one per cent (0.9%) were recruiting through MLIREC. The majority (42%) used newspapers, 20% direct job application and 11% were through radio adverts. This, however, changed with the promulgation of the Employment Services Act in 2011, which established the National Employment Service (NES) “to provide professional labour market services for the purpose of achieving full, productive and decent employment in Namibia”.

The revitalization of the public employment service in the years following the global economic crisis was the realization at policy level that growth alone was not enough to ensure sustainable productive job creation, and that there was a need for an institutional framework to facilitate employment-rich and inclusive growth. The PES policy and strategy is thus rooted in the overall employment and legal framework discussed below.

3.1. The policy framework

Public Employment Services (PES) are the main vehicle for implementation of national employment policies in developed countries, but recently the trend has been extended to emerging and developing countries. On the other hand, PES also inform policy development, mainly through the labour market information that is generated and analysed through their activities. Employment services and active labour market policies form part of the overall employment policy framework for promoting full, productive and decent employment.² The PES in Namibia draws its policy mandate from the National Employment Policy of 2013 (NEP). The policy, whose goal is to “to promote full, productive, decent and freely chosen employment which will eradicate poverty and reduce income inequality”, has nine objectives, including policy harmonization and coherence, creating over 90,000 permanent jobs, skills and employability, as well as strengthening labour administration and social dialogue. Within the latter objective, the NEP particularly notes the weak human and institutional capacity of the public employment service and the need to strengthen it and to increase the level and quality of services provided, including the administration of active labour market policies (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 2013b).

At the broader macro level, the PES, through the NEP, is informed by, and contributes to, national development plans and strategies. Namibia’s ambitious goals, embodied in its Vision 2030 adopted in 2004, include, among other things, achieving industrialized nation status where: “The country has a critical mass of knowledge workers and the contribution of the small and medium-size enterprises to GDP is not less than 30 percent. Unemployment has been significantly reduced to less than 5 percent of the work force” (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 2004). Vision 2030 is implemented through the five-year National Development Plans (NDP). The NDP4, evaluating the performance of NDP3, noted that, while the country managed to achieve some moderate economic growth compared to the set targets, performance in employment was dismal, as unemployment increased by almost 20

² The International Labour Conference second general discussion on employment in 2014 adopted a resolution on Comprehensive Employment Policy Framework encompassing macroeconomic policies, structural and labour market policies and institutions.

percentage points. The Government thus concluded: “This suggests that, during the NDP3 period, economic growth did not translate into job growth; therefore, there is a vital need to foster inclusive, job-enhancing growth.” (NDP4, p.9). This would be achieved both by boosting medium-term aggregate demand and short term-employment creation policies. The NDP4 targeted creation of 91,000 sustainable, long-term jobs. The NDP4 comes to an end this year and the preparation of NDP 5 is still in progress. A comprehensive assessment of NDP4 is yet to be made public. The PES can play a pivotal role in the implementation of employment and labour market policies.

The Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), adopted in 2016, is the current administration’s interim blueprint to achieve prosperity for all Namibians. It is a targeted action plan to accelerate development in five clearly specified priority areas: effective governance; economic advancement; social progression; infrastructure development; and international relations and cooperation. It complements the NDP in reaching the goals of Vision 2030. The PES can contribute significantly to the achievement of the HPP targets and should position itself accordingly and demonstrate its potential to add value to this process (See Box 1 below).

Box 1: Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP)

Adopted in 2016, the HPP is President Geingob’s targeted action plan to accelerate development in five clearly specified priority areas: Effective governance (promoting transparency and accountability and improving performance and service delivery); Economic advancement (comprising macroeconomic stability, economic transformation, youth enterprise development and economic competitiveness); Social progression (vocational education and training, hunger and poverty reduction, land, housing, infant and maternal mortality); Infrastructure development (energy, water, transport and ICT); and International relations and cooperation. It complements the NDP in reaching the goals of Vision 2030 which includes attainment of a 5% unemployment rate.

The Government is currently implementing a robust fiscal consolidation programme to rein in public debt which has reached over 35% of GDP (still below the 60% threshold set by the SADC macroeconomic convergence framework) and therefore budgetary allocations for government institutions have been reduced. This is coming at a time when the PES is trying to rebuild. Nonetheless, the PES can contribute significantly to the achievement of the HPP targets and should position itself accordingly and demonstrate its potential to add value to this process. The PES could significantly contribute to the following priorities:

- a) Economic transformation and youth enterprise development: providing labour market intelligence regarding skills required and available on the labour market, the acquisition of those skills through rapid training programmes under the *Industry Growth Programme* where 10 industries are earmarked for support; providing information and publicity to jobseekers and potential start-up candidates, through its support for self-employment activities, about the Equipment Aid Facility, Local Sourcing Scheme and Business Incubation Scheme, access to finance for youth through the Youth Development Fund, the Rural Youth Enterprise Development initiatives and refer potential candidates to the relevant authorities (Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development (MITSMED), provide human resource services to small enterprises, particularly the targeted 121 enterprises to be created in rural areas by youth in collaboration with local government and the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Services (MSYNS) ;
- b) Economic competitiveness: provision of labour market intelligence about scarce skills in the country, referral and provision of practical training in industry in collaboration with the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), promotion of enhanced productivity in industry and the economy by upgrading jobseekers’ employability, lifelong learning, human capital development for vulnerable groups and the long-term unemployed;
- c) Social progression: gradual activation of social assistance programmes to ensure sustainability in collaboration with the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation, promote skills acquisition and supply of workers to the mass housing programme and sanitation programmes, provide feedback into the VET system on labour market requirements and skills mismatches, identification of work experience programmes for jobseekers, particularly youth (internships, learnerships, apprenticeships, work experience, and job rotation, etc.); and
- d) Infrastructure development: promotion of skills acquisition for development of various infrastructure, supply of workers for the construction of infrastructure, implementation of labour mobility programmes to areas of labour demand, etc.

It is evident therefore that PES has huge potential to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the HPP, including establishment of the National Productivity Centre and the implementation of productivity enhancing measures.

The transition from education to permanent employment can be particularly challenging for young graduates and school leavers. This is clearly the case of Namibia, as the unemployment rate in the age group 15-34 is 39.2%, according to the Labour Force Survey of 2014. In many cases, schools and especially universities provide skills in specific areas of knowledge but not necessarily all the skills to perform a specific job. Many of these skills can only be gained from work experience. These include non-cognitive skills, such as teamwork, motivation, interpersonal relations, etc., which can also play a key role in how someone fits into the workplace. In other words, work-based learning tends to be an important factor in a successful transition from the education and training system to the labour market.

After independence, the Government phased out the apprenticeship system, such that there is currently no policy framework in place to provide guidance to stakeholders in implementing and managing internships. In practice, however, training institutions collaborate with employers and provide internships and apprenticeships to graduates at different levels as part of the training curriculum. The NTA is in the process of developing the policy framework for internships. The policy will incorporate an incentive scheme for employers to take in interns and apprentices. In addition, to improve the matching of skills to the demands of the labour market, a customized and up to date national standard classification of occupations is needed. The current national classification standard, the Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations, is outdated, having not been revised since its adoption in 1996. This partly explains the poor matching in the electronic jobs portal.

The provision of work experience can prove costly for firms. The time of a manager or of a tutor responsible for the training of a new worker will entail a significant opportunity cost, in terms of directly productive activities which will no longer be possible. Moreover, such opportunity cost will increase with the seniority of the trainer, although such seniority may also translate into enhanced outcomes in terms of experience and skill gains for the new worker.

Moreover, there are important matching issues that can influence the sustainability of the placement of a worker in a firm. Firms can be very heterogeneous in terms of their preferences regarding the profiles of new recruitments. Such heterogeneity will cover multiple dimensions, most of which cannot be easily assessed from a CV or a job interview, such as the quality and quantity of work, the relationship with colleagues, the willingness to engage in new projects, punctuality, etc. Similarly, workers may also be considerably heterogeneous in their preferences regarding firms, even if these concerns tend to be less pressing in periods of high unemployment, especially among the young.

In this context, internships can be a very interesting work relationship model to both speed up and improve the quality of the transition from school to work. In other words, introducing internships as an additional form of employment relationship can incentivize firms to increase their engagement with young graduates, leading to higher levels of youth employment.

In practical terms, the development of an internship format may involve the introduction of legislative provisions, e.g. some relaxation of standard employment regulations, such as minimum wages or rules on dismissal, a maximum duration of the internship, and also potential requirements in terms of training or benefits to be provided by the firm to the intern (including transport and meal allowances and insurance cover).

While the potential benefits of internships are considerable, it is also important to acknowledge that internships may also be misused by some firms and have a negative effect on the labour market. For instance, firms may seek to reduce their levels of permanent employment and increase their number of interns. Firms may also engage in job churning, whereby internship contracts are not converted into permanent employment when they reach

the maximum term and are simply replaced by other interns. In addition, firms may use internships to reduce their labour costs and not provide useful training that can increase the labour market opportunities of trainees (either in that firm or in another firm in the same or a different industry).

Overall, it is important for the PES and or the labour inspectorate to monitor the extent to which firms use internships as screening tools and stepping stones to permanent positions or, alternatively, regard internships as a way to circumvent employment regulations and do not provide useful training to young people keen to improve their school-to-work transition.

3.2. The legal framework

The NES is composed of the Employment Services Board and the Employment Services Bureau. More specifically, the Act mandates the Bureau to conduct a number of activities, such as:

1. Registering jobseekers;
2. Registering vacancies in the public and private sector;
3. Assisting jobseekers to find suitable employment and recommending suitably qualified jobseekers to prospective employers;
4. Providing vocational guidance, career and labour market information to jobseekers and other interested persons;
5. Regulating and controlling the use of psychometric tests for selection and recruitment purposes in accordance with the Social Work and Psychology Act;
6. Liaising with the Ministry responsible for education in respect of educational and vocational training institutions on vocational attachments and internships;
7. Developing career guidance and related programmes aimed at helping persons to acquire market-orientated skills;
8. Maintaining the integrated employment information system;
9. Assisting and facilitating research for the Board on employment related matters;
10. Keeping a list of non-Namibian citizens granted work permits under the Immigration Control Act, 1993;
11. Keeping a register of private employment agencies; and
12. Collecting, analysing and disseminating statistical information related to employment in accordance with other relevant laws.

The 2011 Act makes it compulsory for ‘designated employers’ (defined in the regulations as those having more than 25 employees) to notify vacancies to the Bureau and to allow the Bureau up to 14 days to provide a list of eligible candidates. Employers are, however, free to choose any of the qualified candidates supplied or none of them if none is qualified and to recruit using other means. Designated employers, private employment agencies and designated institutions (training institutions) are required to provide information to the Bureau periodically. Furthermore, the Act mandates the Bureau to license and regulate private employment agencies. The definition of private employment agencies

in Section 1 of the Act excludes temporary agency work, also known as temporary employment services (TES).³

Other legislation also has a direct impact on the operations of the Bureau, such as the Social Work and Psychology Act of 2004 and the Immigration Control Act of 1993. The former regulates the training, qualification requirements and registration of social workers, psychologists and vocational counsellors. These professionals are not allowed to practice in Namibia unless they have been duly registered with the Social Work and Psychology Council. As is explained in the subsequent sections, this arrangement has impacted on the operations of the Vocational Counselling Subdivision of the Employment Bureau and hindered its full integration with the employment services.

The Immigration Control Act of 1993, among other things, regulates the issue of work permits for recruitment of foreigners to work in Namibia. The Act establishes the Immigration Selection Board, which advises the Chief Immigration Officer on matters pertaining to the issue of permanent residence and work permits. Other relevant laws include the Namibia Investment Promotion Act, 2016, the Vocational Education and Training Act, 2008 as well as labour legislation, including the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act of 1998.

Inadequate policy coordination and coherence were mentioned by stakeholders during the assessment, particularly with regard to institutional coordination of vocational education and training, higher education and recruitment of foreign workers. Regarding the latter, there is an overlap in the roles of various institutions and potential for conflict in decision making. On the one hand, the Employment Services Board - which is tripartite in nature - advises the Minister responsible for labour and employment, while, on the other hand, the Immigration Selection Board advises the Chief Immigration Officer. Meanwhile, the Investment Promotion Act which allows the Minister responsible to consult the Ministers for Immigration and Education regarding recruitment of foreign workers in investment projects. Furthermore, the application of the Employment Services Act to the public sector needs to be harmonized, through amendment of the relevant regulations, as recruitment in the latter is regulated by public service regulations.

³ The ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) defines a third category of private employment agencies as: “services consisting of employing workers with a view to making them available to a third party, who may be a natural or legal person ... which assigns their tasks and supervises the execution of these tasks”. Art 1.1 (b).

4. PES structure and functions

4.1. PES structure

As discussed in the above sections, the Employment Service Act establishes the National Employment Service (NES), comprising the Employment Services Board which advises the Minister responsible on all employment services matters. This encompasses regulation of private employment agencies and the Employment Services Bureau, which includes the Director of Labour Market Services and all Employment Officers.

The functional model of the PES in Namibia establishes the MLIREC as responsible for policy and legal frameworks. The Employment Services Bureau, headed by the Director of Labour Market Services in the Ministry, is the apex body responsible for the operational and performance management of the PES, as well as for monitoring and evaluation of its performance. The Deputy Director is in charge of the Employment Services Division, oversees the employment service centres located in 18 offices across the country, which carry on the day-to-day operations and delivery of services. They are organized into four major geographical groups: central, southern, north eastern and northern. Each has five offices, except the southern which has three. Each group is headed by a Senior Employment Officer (grade 8), under the overall supervision of a Chief Employment Officer (Grade 7) based in Windhoek. There is one office in each of Khomas, Omaheke, Hardap, Kavango, Zambezi, Oshana, Ohangwena and Omusati regions; and two offices in Karas, Erongo, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa and Kunene.

Considering that Namibia is vast and sparsely populated (825,615) square kilometres, with a density of 3 people per square kilometre) and 47% of the population of 2.56 million inhabitants live in urban areas, the 18 offices can scarcely reach people in the more remote areas. The PES therefore needs to develop innovative ways of reaching out to jobseekers in rural and other areas not served by the employment centres. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations, municipalities, technical schools and universities, etc. could be explored in the short to medium term. According to liveinternetstats.com, the Internet Penetration Rate in 2016 was 15.6 %, up by 3.8% from the previous year. This means that until such time that Internet usage increases significantly, 53% of the population living outside the main urban areas will have difficulty in accessing services through the online jobs portal. The PES may also consider arranging regular visits, where feasible, to unserved areas (mobile centres) and/or establishing online and offline kiosks at central points for easy access by jobseekers, especially young people.

The Board provides overall policy oversight, through its advisory role to the Minister. The Board is tripartite-plus in its composition, including representatives of people with disabilities and youth. Under the Employment Services Act, 2011:

“The functions of the Board are to -:

- a) investigate and advise the Minister on the provision of employment services and the attainment of other objectives of the Act;
- b) assist the Minister in monitoring and analysing labour market developments concerning occupations and occupational segments in particular, including vocational training;
- c) advise the Minister on legislation pertaining to the provision of employment services and regulation of private employment agencies;
- d) facilitate and coordinate multi-sectorial cooperation to achieve the objectives of this Act;

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- e) advise the Minister from time to time on the applicable fees to be collected in terms of this Act;
 - f) advise the Minister on the performance of the bureau in providing labour market services; and
 - g) advise on any other employment matter that the Board considers useful to achieve the objects of this Act or is referred to the Board by the Minister.”

4.2. PES functions

Public employment services normally undertake four major technical functions and one related administrative function depending on their level of development and the prevailing institutional framework. These functions include 1) job-search assistance, counselling and matching, 2) labour market information, 3) administration of active labour market programmes, and 4) administration of unemployment benefits. Public employment services also increasingly regulate, often through the responsible Ministry, the private employment agencies as well as promote cooperation with them. The range and depth of services normally increase gradually as the capacity of the PES and more resources are made available.

The Employment Services Bureau dispenses four of the five functions, excluding the administration of unemployment benefits, albeit on a rather limited scale. With regard to job search assistance and matching, the services to jobseekers include registration in the databank through both manual and computerized systems, provision of labour market information through school vocational guidance talks, group information sessions at the centres, career guidance and counselling, as well as placement. The Vocational Counselling subdivision provides professional vocational counselling and career guidance, psychometric testing as well as internships for psychologists and trainee counsellors. Services to employers include registration of vacancies through both manual and electronic means, initial pre-screening of candidates, job canvassing, etc.

Labour market information is the responsibility of the Labour Market Information Division, which, under the relevant legislation, is not part of the Employment Services Bureau. In practice, however, collection and analysis of labour market information through surveys involves all officers of the Labour Market Services Directorate. The Directorate has undertaken the following surveys: the Namibia Labour Force Surveys (NLFS) covering the years 1997, 2000, 2004, 2008 (when the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) took over the responsibility); the Namibia Occupational Skills Assessment Survey (NOSAS), for 2006; and the Namibia Occupational Wages Survey (NOWS), for 2002 and 2009.

Primary responsibility for the labour force survey since the 2012 round has shifted to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) which plans and conducts it in collaboration with the MLIREC. A Labour Market Information System is also being established, coordinated by the NSA, also in collaboration with MLIREC. The Employment Services Bureau, however, is responsible for collection and analysis of administrative data through its activities – registration of jobseekers and vacancies, placements, mapping of labour market policies, private employment service providers and training institutions. The adoption and installation of the Integrated Employment Information System (IEIS) presents an opportunity for enhanced collection and analysis of this information which will, in due course, provide labour market intelligence. There is, however, a gap in labour market information relating to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME), as no survey has been undertaken since 2003.

The Bureau’s size and complex and evolving structure makes it somewhat difficult to have a good understanding of the labour market and its trends. However, labour-market

information can play a critical role in many spheres of public and private decision making. Such information will include levels of employment, how these change over time and their distribution across sectors. It will also include the outcomes of graduates from different levels and types of education, in terms of both employment rates and wage levels. This information could also be further broken down, for example, by gender, region, sector, nationality, etc., providing a detailed characterization of the labour market and its sources of heterogeneity and inequality.

Moreover, this information can be instrumental not only from a historical perspective, understanding what has happened in the labour market over a recent or not so recent period, but also as a forecasting tool. The latter involves establishing trends and future prospects, which will be of great relevance to decisions regarding skills development and acquisition through the education and training system, the country's youth and the business community, at home and abroad.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the nature of information as a 'public good', a service that can be used simultaneously by multiple users. In this context, the delivery of high quality labour market information will require the intervention of the Government in mobilizing resources from taxation to fund labour force surveys, skills surveys (focused on education and firms' training needs, for instance), and tracer studies (following recent graduates of different education and training institutions).

While many of the labour market information surveys mentioned above are conducted by other public sector bodies (such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Training), the PES can also contribute to this process, in particular through its online jobs portal. Considerable up-to-date information about developments in the labour market can be collected through this portal. Indeed, the registration of jobseekers, vacancies and their successful matches can provide a large set of micro data that complements the other surveys and studies described above.

It is important to note that this online portal information will not necessarily provide a good understanding of the status of the labour market as a whole, at least immediately after collection starts. It will however be one source of information on flows in the labour market, or at least some sections of it (those more likely to engage with an online portal, in particular firms and jobseekers with greater Internet access). Indeed, this can be particularly informative, as it will provide a number of insights into the changes occurring in the labour market. In fact, in the context of Namibia, the capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate information is already available. The Labour Market Information System that is being created will be based outside but managed in collaboration with the Ministry. Building the capacity of PES as both producer and user of LMI would be critical.

The Bureau is not involved in implementing active labour market policies on a substantial scale other than employment services. As the PES is just in the process of revival, the Bureau does not yet have links with other service providers and thus does not provide any referral services either. The only services provided include basic advice on self-employment projects as well as assistance in writing business plans.

Finally, the Bureau is responsible for the licensing of private employment agencies, regulation of their services and enforcement of compliance, as well as collection of information on their activities. It is also responsible for designation of employers for purposes of registering vacancies with the Bureau and reporting of labour market information. The Bureau also maintains the list of training institutions, the courses offered and their performance, as required by law. It is also expected to collaborate with the private providers to improve access and quality of employment services in the labour market, as well as provide advice to employers on the requirements of the law.

5. Trends in service delivery

In this section, we take a deeper look at the type and sequencing of services to clients, performance management and collaboration with other service providers. The typical sequence of provision of services through public employment services is more or less as follows:

- a) *Intake and registration.* Jobseekers are registered either online, through self-service facilities at the centre, or face to face with centre staff. Normally employment assistants deal with the registration. They provide general information on services provided and how to use them and deliver group information sessions. Jobseekers who already have employable skills and/or experience may not need further services beyond this stage, and may start looking for jobs in the system.
- b) *Assessment, profiling, individualized counselling and work plan.* The registration assistants refer jobseekers that need the centre's services to employment officers/case workers who undertake an assessment of their readiness for employment, profile them accordingly, provide career counselling and develop a personal work plan for return to employment. Depending on the jobseeker's profile the work plan may include individual counselling (vocational, employment) and referral to labour market programmes provided either within or outside the public employment service.
- c) *Performance management.* A system for ensuring that the desired results are being achieved, that the provision of services is equitable and inclusive, and meets clients' requirements.

5.1. Services to jobseekers

The Bureau is still in its infancy and is not only suffering from teething problems but also financial and capacity shortfalls. The capacity of the PES determines the number and level of services offered to clients and, in turn, the effectiveness and efficiency of its contribution to national employment and labour market policy goals.

The services provided are at basic level and encompass a small range, involving registration, group information, job search assistance and placement. While individual professional counselling and psychometric testing is provided to clients, this service is not linked to the PES system and is provided on a needs basis. The flow of services does not include routine assessment and profiling, nor are jobseekers referred to active labour market programmes on a systematic basis. Given the current staff strength, individual work planning is still a long way off. The competency of the staff is not up to date, as there has been no training for over a decade and, due to staff turnover, most of the people who were trained have either left or have moved up the ladder and have not kept abreast of developments. The Bureau thus urgently needs capacity building in order for it to perform its mandate and contribute to the wider goals of employment creation, and reduction of poverty and inequality espoused in Vision 2030, the NDPs and the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP).

5.2. Multi-channelling of service delivery

In the light of technological developments, public employment services are increasingly diversifying their models of service provision to include different channels, such as online web-based matching and other interactive systems, telephone, email, as well as social media, especially with the proliferation and penetration of mobile phones. While

in Namibia only 20% of the population had access to internet as of March 2017, mobile penetration was 102%- meaning there were more mobiles than the population (Buddle.com). With regard to social media, recent estimates are that 23.4% subscribed to Facebook in 2016. Other channels include call centres and the traditional face to face method.

The Bureau currently uses online self-service including the Integrated Employment Information System launched in 2014,⁴ as well as face to face meetings. The latter are still important, especially as most jobseekers continue to present themselves physically at the centres, even if they use self-service. Registration of jobseekers is yet to be fully computerized with both manual and electronic registration running in parallel, which not only creates a backlog of forms to be entered into the system, but also delays the turn-around to employers' requests for candidates, as employment officers want to give equal opportunity to those whose forms have not yet been entered. MLIREC uses the Integrated Employment Information System to collect, store and update information concerning jobseekers' names, qualifications and occupations; vacancies in the labour market; training opportunities for workers made redundant and jobseekers in general; specialized skills and qualifications possessed by Namibian citizens and permanent residents; specialized skills and qualifications possessed by non-citizens residing in Namibia and employers in the country. However, the portal is not yet fully delivering to its potential, as suggested by the relatively low number of vacancy registrations available at present (around 60). This number is also somewhat disappointing given the requirement for employers with 25 or more employees ('designated employers') to post their new jobs with the PES.

The employment portal is yet to be fully developed. Stakeholders experience a number of problems when using it, such as:

- System downtime/outages are frequent, partly due to the low capacity and hence overload of the government network on which the portal is based;
- System pick up is very slow;
- The CVs on the platform are not user-friendly to employers, as in most cases they do not correspond to the requirements of the job;
- Multiple registration is possible;
- The system sometimes duplicates names and it becomes difficult to analyse the reports; and
- Customized reports are not possible.

The mission also observed a number of areas for improvement:

- The National Standard Classification of Occupations (NASCO, 1996) is outdated and does not relate to the changes in the labour market. On the other hand, the global International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) is likely to be too broad as it does not go beyond the 4-digit level;
- The capacity of the system to match skills and competences required by a job vacancy and the skills and competences of jobseekers is weak, to the extent that employers are often overwhelmed with CVs that do not necessarily match the criteria, and this increases their workload; and
- The system is not yet able to show the live register and hence reports are produced manually. Moreover, jobseekers are kept on the live register for 5 years, thus the cumulative figure includes those who have found jobs or are no longer looking for jobs.

⁴ <http://nieis.namibiaatwork.gov.na/>

An immediate review of the system is needed, therefore, to resolve the problems in the short run, and to upgrade it in the medium and long term to bring in advanced functionalities to improve the matching system. The review of the NASCO should be one of the medium-term priorities, as, beyond just the matching system, it will determine skills-based technical and vocational training systems.

The portal has the potential to improve the capacity and service delivery of the PES.⁵ Considering a recruitment rate of hiring estimated in other countries of around 20% of employment per year and an estimate of a stock of 710,000 jobs in Namibia (according to the latest Labour Force Survey), one would obtain an estimate of 142,000 recruitments per year. Moreover, if PES resources were expanded significantly, it would be reasonable to expect that at least 10% of these positions would be registered with the portal over the next three years, creating a potential for up to 14,200 vacancies to be filled through the portal each year. This imbalance between the numbers of vacancies and jobseekers is an important challenge that should be addressed as a matter of priority, as it is a powerful constraint on the portal's matching potential. Moreover, a sustainable answer to this challenge will ultimately involve ensuring that posting vacancies through the portal becomes more rewarding for firms: it should be a simple process, with a high probability of one or multiple potential matches being found.

5.3. Services to employers

While in Namibia, the law requires designated employers to register vacancies with the Bureau, the latter needs to build positive working relationships with the private sector, not only because the capacity for enforcement of the law is weak, but, more importantly, to ensure sustainable voluntary use of the services justified by the value they offer to employers. Moreover, the Employment Services Act Regulations exempt enterprises with less than 25 employees from compulsory registration of vacancies. According to recent government statements (confidente.com), the MSME sector employs some one in three workers from an estimated 33,700 enterprises. Tapping into this market would thus go a long way to enlisting vacancies for jobseekers, especially in a developing country context where vacancies are generally few, due to the small size of the formal sector. A dedicated team of employment officers is needed to cultivate positive relationships with employers, canvass for jobs, provide necessary labour market information, offer specialized services to small and medium-sized enterprises, provide basic HR services, etc. and in general maintain constant dialogue between the MLIREC and the private sector.

Employers were particularly keen on the Bureau acting as a one-stop service for such things as verification of certificates with the Ministry of Education as well as criminal record checks with the Ministry of Home Affairs. As the NIEIS matures, the Bureau should initiate discussions to ensure linking of the relevant government databases and establish a mechanism for authentication of credentials for employers. It would save considerable time for both jobseekers and employers and significantly increase the value added by the Bureau.

5.4. Building strategic and operational partnerships

Public employment services are responsible for the implementation of national employment and labour market policies and, therefore, they need to form alliances and networks with other institutions. Moreover, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its employment services, the PES has increasingly formed partnerships with other public institutions such as local municipalities and line ministries, but also with private and not-

⁵ For a conceptual discussion, see Box 2

for-profit service providers. The fiscal challenges arising from the effects of the global economic crisis and the rapid changes in the labour market due to globalization and technological advances have made collaboration even more important. Developing countries often lack the resources to expand public employment services and fund comprehensive labour market programmes. Networking with public, private and NGO sectors thus provides the PES with an opportunity to expand its services, increase outreach, and build capacity and expertise to serve all categories of people in the labour market, especially the disadvantaged.

Many institutions provide labour market programmes in which the PES could play a facilitating role and leverage some resources to expand its services, particularly implementation of active labour market policies. While in developed countries access to unemployment benefits serves as an incentive for jobseekers to register with the PES, in developing countries like Namibia, if properly coordinated, access to labour market programmes for those able to work could be the best incentive available. The Employment Services Bureau could form partnerships with various government ministries and departments as well as other public organizations such as the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), the Ministries of Education; Home Affairs and Immigration; Industrialization, Trade and SME Development; Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MPESW); Sport, Youth and National Service; the Social Security Commission, NGOs like the National Youth Council, National Disability Council, Women's Action for Development, Employers (NEF, NCCI) and workers (NUNW, TUCNA, etc.) as well as private employment agencies. The Employment Services Bureau will also need to map out the international organizations and development partners present in Namibia, and their areas of interest, to identify potential partnerships and support for the implementation of the Action Plan for strengthening employment services and ALMPs in Namibia.

The Government is implementing several social protection and social welfare programmes across different institutions, coordinated by the Ministry of Poverty Eradication created in March 2015. Getting the beneficiaries of the social assistance programmes into work would be a medium-term goal for collaboration with the Ministry of Poverty Eradication.

It is evident that the Employment Services Bureau has not yet forged partnerships with key organizations in the public sector, the private sector and private employment agencies or non-governmental organizations. Consultations during the mission revealed possible areas of collaboration with various stakeholders. Private employment agencies and some members of employers' organizations see the revamped PES as a competitor. Experience around the world shows that the PES and private employment agencies can complement each other. The ILO Employment Private Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) recommends collaboration between private and public employment services while ensuring that the latter maintains authority over policy, resources and coordination of the labour market.

5.5. Performance management

Given the competing needs for resources at country level, and, indeed, the current fiscal consolidation programme under the HPP, public employment services have to demonstrate their value for money in terms of promoting full and productive employment in Namibia. As discussed in Section 2 above, Vision 2030 targets an unemployment rate of 5% at the end of the period, the NDP4 has productive employment as one of the three major pillars, while the HPP provides quick-win strategies to achieve these objectives. While the Bureau has a system of regular (monthly and quarterly) collection of information on outputs of activities undertaken by its offices at all levels, this information does not translate into performance targets and indicators.

The Bureau should therefore consider developing a simple performance management system with clear targets and indicators, together with capacity building of the PES, to ensure that results are measured, and officers are motivated to perform.

Box 2. Role of digital technology in improving PES delivery

Online jobs portals play an increasingly important role in labour market matching and labour market information systems. They consist of open and dynamic websites, run by the PES or on its behalf, that collect, process and generate information from and to a number of labour market stakeholders. For instance, when receiving and processing online registrations of jobseekers and vacancies, these portals will typically draw on large amounts of up-to-date information on labour market flows. Moreover, when using appropriate profiling and matching methods, online jobs portals can offer good opportunities for jobseekers and firms to come together and increase employment, while also improving productivity and working conditions.

Following an initial investment to set up and fine tune a portal, in its hardware and software dimensions, its operations will typically require little in the way of additional resources, either human, financial or technical. Moreover, as these portals can deliver a large number of key employment services of great economic value and have a significant positive impact on the functioning of the labour market, they typically lead to large (private, public and social) returns on the investment required for its creation.

Indeed, hiring costs for firms and search costs for workers can be lowered significantly if online jobs portals deliver effective employment services. Labour market information has an important 'public good' dimension, in particular when made available online. In fact, online access to information about a vacancy by a jobseeker (or about a jobseeker by an employer) does not preclude other jobseekers (employers) from accessing it at the same time. The possibility that several individuals and firms may use the same information, even simultaneously, greatly increases the social value of this information and, especially in its online dimension, is an important incentive for the public to take advantage of it.

Moreover, attestation services (checking the quality of the information entered by jobseekers and firms), profiling (characterizing jobseekers and vacancies in terms of more general groups), and matching (finding suitable jobseekers for each vacancy) can also be made available to multiple jobseekers and employers at no additional cost when delivered electronically. This is in striking contrast to the case in which these employment services are used individually by workers and firms, leading to much higher costs. Indeed, many firms face recruitment costs of 20% or more for each recruitment added to the annual wage bill, a significant charge that can lead to substantial negative effects on job creation. This, too, underlines the social relevance of the online PES.

Overall, the public delivery of effective employment services can lead to a major reduction in the gap between the total costs that employers face when employing workers and the net earnings of workers when accepting jobs. Moreover, as this factor has been shown to be a major negative determinant of employment levels, more effective PES could lead to significant gains in employment.

Besides the efficiency promoting benefits of the PES, in general, and online portals, in particular, there are additional important equity effects to consider. In the absence of an online PES, jobseekers can only find about job opportunities through relatives, friends, colleagues (former or present), adverts in the media or direct contacts with firms. These traditional job search activities are not only highly uncertain and time consuming, but can also be strongly skewed towards those with better connections and more resources. They can place the long-term unemployed and young people looking for a first job at a significant disadvantage, as their connections with the labour market are weaker.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of an online jobs portal, given the challenges in Internet access in some parts of the country and the still sizeable percentage of individuals and firms not fully familiar with it. However, these constraints are likely to gradually become less pressing, as internet connectivity and coverage improves over time. (According to the statistics available, over half a million people in Namibia used Facebook in 2016, corresponding to a population share of around 23%.)

Moreover, it is important to underline that, despite its importance and potential, an online jobs portal is only a tool and only one of several other channels of employment service delivery. It is not an independent PES in itself. It should be set in a context in which services are also delivered from physical job centres located across the country.

6. Active labour market policies, institutional framework and coordination mechanisms

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) consist of policies that aim at reintegrating the unemployed or underemployed into productive work as fast as possible by enhancing their employability and improving the efficiency of matching in the labour market. ALMPs therefore require beneficiaries to participate in labour market activities. Passive labour market policies, on the other hand, aim at replacing the incomes of the unemployed and /or the poor who cannot support themselves. They do not require participation in any activity on the part of the beneficiary. ALMPs can be categorized into five groups: employment services, labour market training, entrepreneurship and self-employment support, employment subsidies (wages, recruitment and retention in employment) and direct employment creation through public works.

Namibia has been implementing active labour market programmes for a long time. The Government adopted a multi-sectoral labour-based works policy in October 1999, following extensive stakeholder consultations around the White Paper on Labour-Based Works. The aim of the policy was to increase the employment intensity of growth in general by promoting labour-intensive technology and sectors of the economy, as well as employment-intensive infrastructure. A Labour-Based Work Forum (LBWF) was proposed to coordinate the implementation of the policy. However, following the restructuring of the then Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication, the Bill creating the LBWF never saw the light of day while the new Roads Authority took over responsibility for the LBW policy, but only focusing on road infrastructure through the use of small business contractors. In 2012 the Roads Authority was working with 40 SMEs and nine civil engineering plant contractors. About 600 kilometres of gravel roads had been built employing 1800 workers. One of the key challenges was that the labour-based methods were more costly than conventional road building (namibian.com.na, Ministry of Works and Transport).

As has been widely noted in the literature, public works programmes in developing countries are mainly geared towards poverty alleviation, especially for vulnerable groups. In Namibia, the guiding policy principles for eligibility for labour-based public works include preference to previously disadvantaged groups, in the light of the apartheid history, women and people with disabilities. There is also an emphasis on local sourcing of labour.

An example of the application of labour-based methods in public works is the construction of the Northern Railway Extension in which over 25,000 people were employed, injecting about N\$440 million (US\$34 million) into the local communities. However, there have been several challenges leading to delayed project implementation as well as high costs. There is currently no framework for collaboration with the PES and the Ministry of Works and Transport does not see any areas for collaboration. This is a missed opportunity for both, as there are efficiency gains to be made through collaboration. In South Africa, for example, the PES is increasingly involved in supplying workers for public works projects from its databank on the portal.

Against a background of sustained unemployment rates and in response to the negative, second-round, effects of the global crisis, the Government launched a stimulus programme, the Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG), which sought to promote job creation through expanded public works programmes and by addressing supply-side constraints. TIPEEG targeted the creation of 104,000 direct and indirect jobs between 2011 and 2014.

Other ALMPs have been implemented, scattered among different institutions in the public sector such as the MHETI, NTA, the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), MSYNS, MITSMED, National Youth Council (NYC), Ministry of Works and Transport

(MWT), as well as NGOs and private providers such as the Women’s Action for Development (WAD) and private employment agencies. There is little collaboration among the providers of these ALMPs, nor is the PES linked to them. Passive labour market programmes are implemented by the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MPESW) (social assistance related to ending hunger, access to social services, education, etc. for the poor and vulnerable groups). Examples of institutions delivering ALMPs are provided in Table 1 below.

The Employment Services Bureau should undertake a complete mapping of all labour market policies provided in the market, by geographical area, capacity, access requirements, etc. and disseminate this information by all available means, including information sessions, career counselling, electronic jobs portal, etc. The Bureau should also forge partnerships with the service providers, in order to increase services to jobseekers and to build its capacity for service delivery.

Table 1: Organizations providing ALMPs in Namibia

Organization P= public Pr = private N = NGO	LMP Type				
	Employment Services	Labour Market Training	Entrepreneurship & self-employment	Public works	Social assistance
MLIREC (P)	Yes		To some extent		
NTA (P)		Yes	Yes		
MSYNS (P)		Yes	Yes		
MI&T (P)			Yes		
MWT (P)				Yes	
NYC (P)		To some extent	Yes		
MPESW (P)					Yes
WAD (N)		Yes	Yes		
PEA (Pr)	Yes	To some extent			

Source: Stakeholder consultations during the assessment mission

In Namibia, as in other countries in Africa and elsewhere, there are many labour-related programmes and initiatives in progress. These programmes, conducted by many different stakeholders, vary in size and have different target groups. However, all have the shared goal of contributing towards the alleviation of a problem observed in the labour market.

The problems addressed by these programmes typically concern unemployment (youth unemployment in particular). They can also concern more specific dimensions, such as gender, disability, minorities, or specific sectors (agriculture, for instance) or regions (rural areas, for example). The interventions conducted under these programmes may also follow different approaches, including a focus on skills creation, entrepreneurship, information dissemination, recruitment subsidies, validation of prior learning and experience, etc.

One of several challenges that many of these programmes face that can restrict their success is disseminating information about its activities and reaching the intended target group. While the programme may have many merits, considerable resources (in terms of staff time but also financial means) can be spent, in practice, on the identification of eligible individuals, leaving fewer resources for the intervention itself.

In this context, it can be of enormous value to have an information hub of the multiple labour market programmes available in Namibia. The natural location for such hub would

be the online jobs portal. This setup would ensure that information about labour market programmes, from any organization (other ministries, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, etc.), could be easily posted and updated and would immediately reach any interested party anywhere in the country. This would also be in line with the provisions of the Act (e.g. section 18) which indicate that the Bureau may direct ‘designated institutions’ to submit information in respect of ‘persons who have completed accredited educational programmes, persons who are currently in such programmes, [and] courses offered’.

The availability of the information on the website, following a screening by the PES staff, would also promote greater trust in the programme among potential participants. It would also ensure that discussions between such potential participants and the staff implementing the programme could start at a more advanced level, and after some self-selection by the former. These steps would be important, as they would save time and other resources that otherwise would have to be spent on issues not directly related to the intervention itself.

Of course, not all eligible individuals in all programmes will necessarily have access to the Internet and the jobs portal. Additional dissemination efforts would still have to be made in terms of physical networks, depending on the nature of the programme. However, even in this case, the portal could be of considerable help, as it would facilitate the provision of information to any intermediaries.

7. Private employment agencies and other employment service providers

The term private employment agencies (PEAs) covers a potentially wide range of private-sector organizations that conduct intermediation activities between labour supply and labour demand. PEAs may include private employment agencies delivering recruitment and placement services, temporary work agencies (hiring workers to deliver services in other firms), private training providers (enhancing the skills of workers of other firms), private employment providers (which may deliver employment-related services to governments, such as placement support to specific groups of jobseekers or welfare eligibility assessments), as well as typically more niche services such as head hunters or consultancy firms.

In virtually all cases, PEAs will provide services that meet the human resource needs of firms and be paid by the latter. The success and profitability of PEAs will therefore depend not only on the extent to which they work with a good portfolio of businesses, but also on their access to a large number and potentially diversified range of jobseekers, who can eventually be placed with their clients.

On the other hand, each PEA firm will have a limited geographical presence, perhaps based on a handful of establishments across the country or even smaller, based on a single establishment. In addition, each firm may also have a stronger focus on a specific part of the labour market, such as senior management, middle management, or technical positions. In some cases, firms will also specialize in particular industries, such as finance or mining.

The above description highlights a number of clear differences between PES and PEAs. These include not only the national dimension of PES, covering all sectors, all regions, and all worker profiles, while PEAs tend to be active only on subsets of each of those dimensions. The differences also include a greater focus of PEAs on private sector firms, while PES tend to engage more with jobseekers. The latter is particularly clear in developed countries that offer unemployment benefits to a number of jobseekers, but it also applies in developing countries where unemployment benefits may not be available. These differences between PES and PEAs indicate a clear potential for complementarity in their actions. While PES tend to focus more on jobseekers and have access to a large number of worker registrations, PEAs tend to engage more with employers that have vacancies to fill. While PES have a national perspective, and therefore will generally have a particular expertise in any specific industry, region, or job type, PEAs assemble a potentially large number of firms and even larger number of establishments that may have developed stronger relationships with a rich and diversified network of employers and their vacancies.

Many PES around the world have, therefore, been open to and/or implemented different types of partnerships with PEAs. These partnerships include programmes in which specific groups of jobseekers (either with more specific needs or of a more general profile) are referred to private providers for additional support in their transition to employment (as in the UK, the Netherlands, or France) or the PES even focus on regulation, monitoring and contract awarding activities while only the PEAs deliver employment services to jobseekers (Australia). Other countries establish a public monopoly of employment services but promote partnerships with PEAs in terms of vacancy registrations (including from temporary work agencies) and training provision (Germany).

PES-PEAs partnerships may be regarded as even more important in the context of developing countries. If the PES can only draw on a limited number of public job centres and employment officers across the country, the scope for substantive links with employers and their vacancies will necessarily be limited. Indeed, in the case of Namibia, there are only 18 offices countrywide. This will then impair the ability of the PES to provide job

opportunities to jobseekers, in particular those who may be in a more fragile situation, such as the long-term unemployed and youth. On the other hand, links with PEAs can bridge the gaps with employers and ensure that a much larger share of their vacancies will be made available to virtually all jobseekers, in particular those enrolled in the online jobs portal, even if the number of PEA job centres is also limited.

PEAs in Namibia are regulated by the Employment Services Act. The Bureau is responsible for their licensing as well as enforcement of the law. They have to be licensed by the Employment Services Bureau in order for them to operate. The Act does not recognize private employment agencies that provide temporary employment services and prohibits charging of fees to jobseekers. So far, the MLIREC has registered 37 private employment agencies licensed to operate. Private employment agencies (PEAs) provide services for matching offers of, and applications for, employment. A few well-established PEAs, such as Easy HR Consultancy and HR@Work, provide HR services to private sector enterprises. Some also provide simple IT and soft skills training to jobseekers, as extended services, for a fee charged to employers and employees. PEAs are required to provide periodic reports. Apart from provision of other ALMPs, the mission did not find any record of not-for-profit organizations providing employment services.

The PES has not entered into any cooperative agreement with any agencies. Experience in many emerging economies in Latin America and Asia shows that cooperation with other service providers may help budget-constrained developing countries to expand services, improve their quality, as well as their outreach to jobseekers remote from the labour market (either geographical location or in terms of employability). The Bureau should therefore consider ways of building relationships with private providers by developing a framework for collaboration. This however, requires the Bureau to build its capacity to manage collaboration.

8. Human, financial and material resources

The capacity of the PES determines the number and level of services offered to clients and, in turn, its effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to national employment and labour market policy goals. However, the assessment found this to be somewhat weak for an upper middle-income country like Namibia. The team believes strongly that increases in the resources allocated to the PES to deliver the recommendations made in this report would deliver strong social, public and private returns to the people of Namibia.

Moreover, such investments would tend to benefit those in the lower income levels much more, in particular the unemployed, and would therefore have not only a positive impact in terms of efficiency, but also contribute to higher levels of equity. The latter goal is also particularly important, as Namibia is one of the countries in the world with the highest levels of inequality (as measured by the Gini index).

The Employment Services Division is headed by a Deputy Director and has two subdivisions with a staff complement of 29 Employment Officers in Employment Services Subdivision and 13 Psychologist/Psychological Counsellors in the Vocational Counselling Services Subdivision. However, under the Act, the latter are not considered part of the Employment Services Bureau, although their functions are part of the Bureau's mandate. In practice, vocational counsellors have performed their work independently of the employment services centres, providing services to different clients, including those referred from the employment centres. Thus, excluding the Vocational Counselling Services staff, the PES has a total of 24 front-line staff.

However, the Act includes services related to vocational counselling, conduct of psychometric assessments and tests for selection and recruitment, career guidance, etc., among the functions of the Bureau. There is thus scope, even within the current provisions of the Act, for stronger integration of these services in the PES. Secondly, as there are only 11 qualified counsellors, and as more people come through the PES, there is a need to empower employment officers to provide basic counselling services to jobseekers and leave specialized counselling to the professionals. One way forward would be to develop competency profiles for employment officers and, later, competency based training, as was recently the case in South Africa (the Department of Higher Education and Training developed a Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners which includes both employment officers as well as professional counsellors).

The staff comprise one Deputy Director (grade 4), one Chief Employment Officer (grade 7), four Senior Employment Officers (grade 8), 24 Employment Officers (grade 10), one Chief Psychologist (grade 5), two Psychologists (grade 6), eight Psychological Counsellors (grade 8), and two intern Psychological Counsellors (grade 9).

With 5 officers at the head office (excluding vocational counsellors), there are thus on average 1-2 people per region. Given an estimate of 24 frontline staff and a total of 159,563 unemployed in 2014 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2015), the ratio of the unemployed per caseworker is a staggering 7,252. However not all the unemployed seek the assistance of the PES and hence a more realistic variable is the ratio of registered jobseekers per caseworker. Due to technical challenges explained earlier in the report, the number of jobseekers in the live register is not currently available. However, using a cumulative figure of roughly 62,000 jobseekers registered on the Integrated Employment Information System, an electronic labour exchange system, since 2014, each caseworker is potentially responsible for up to 2,800 jobseekers on average, in contrast to a maximum caseload of 200 in the EU, 267 in Tunisia, 577 in Egypt and 1057 in Morocco (Angel-Urdinola et al., 2013). Services to jobseekers and employers cannot be improved if the staffing capacity is too low.

Moreover, the Bureau does not have support staff, as employment officers are also responsible for administrative tasks, including manual registration of jobseekers and vacancies and subsequent transfer into the electronic labour exchange platform. Furthermore, the professional capacity of staff needs to be strengthened: most of them learn on the job and have not had any formal training for over a decade. Given the above, a training strategy for the Bureau needs to be developed, resources mobilized, and implemented in the medium to long term.

With regard to the physical infrastructure of the PES, the mission was only able to visit the “Work in Namibia” employment centre located at the Ministry’s head office. The office was formerly used by data entry clerks and is not really suitable for an employment service centre. It is normally congested, with jobseekers waiting to take turns on the available computers and printing and photocopying facilities. There is no reception and there are only two employment officers based in the centre, who also conduct outreach visits to a couple of field offices in the Khomas region. Its location is also not easily accessible to jobseekers, being away from the main transport links and commercial activities. MLIREC however, does have adequate office space in the former Labour Commissioner’s Office where the employment service centre could be relocated. In the future, another centre and /or kiosks accessible to young people could be opened in a more central location or locations.

The Directorate of Labour Market Services has an all-inclusive annual budget of N\$ 29,882,575.00, which is shared between the two divisions (Employment Services and Labour Market Information). This includes resources for labour market surveys undertaken by the Ministry. Although the actual figure is not available, it is unlikely that the budget for PES activities go beyond N\$2,000,000 or about US\$150,000. This budget allocation is very low and may not allow building of the minimum capacity needed for the Bureau to establish itself as a preferred service provider to both employers, jobseekers and other stakeholders. While the law makes it mandatory for employers to register vacancies with the Bureau, the success of the latter will not necessarily depend on enforcement of the law (which is currently weak) but rather on the relationship and positive perception it builds with employers (and workers) as a valuable service provider/partner.

Some benchmarks are relevant here. For instance, the OECD indicates that amongst its members for which data is available (the most recent year being 2013), expenditure on Active Labour Market Policies (including PES) corresponds to an average of 0.3% of GDP, which is estimated to be far higher than the equivalent figure for Namibia (although, this latter figure is not available, as many ALMPs are delivered outside the PES, and it has not been possible to produce a cumulative total for these investments).

Apart from lobbying for an increase in the budgetary allocation from the Treasury, the Bureau should explore more ways of increasing its resource base, including accessing funds set up for financing training and other ALMPs (Training Levy) and the Social Security Fund. The Namibia Training Authority administers the Training Levy which, technically, the PES could draw upon for resources to implement skills development and employability enhancement for jobseekers that face barriers in the labour market. While these levies are typically designed to fund skills interventions, there is a significant overlap or complementarity with the activities of the PES. As indicated above, PES can be instrumental in providing diagnostics of the labour market, including issues of skills mismatch. Even more importantly, the facilitation of labour-market matching, which is a fundamental goal of the PES, is a key stepping stone towards the promotion of training and, more generally, all forms of work-based learning. This matching is therefore a key source behind the collection of a training levy and it would be appropriate for part of the revenues from the levy to be allocated to the PES.

However, at the moment, the PES is not a beneficiary of the Training Levy Fund. The NTA is open to further discussions with the Bureau on how they could collaborate within

the current legal provisions regarding the use of the Fund in the short run but also on possible amendments to the law in the medium and long term.

The Social Security Commission runs three schemes: Maternity Leave, Death and Disability; Employees Compensation Fund; and Development Fund. The latter finances bursaries, primarily for technical education as well as development projects of value to the community undertaken mainly by community-based organizations. The Bureau could initiate discussions regarding the possibility of accessing some of the development funds. Furthermore, the compulsory National Pension Fund (NPF) is expected to become operational in about a year's time, and could be a source of funds for the PES and ALMPs. In most developed and emerging countries, active labour market programmes are financed from the unemployment funds.

The Bureau could also access resources from various programmes run by public and private organizations and the non-governmental sector, either by referring jobseekers to these programmes or obtaining resources to run specific programmes that are of interest to them.

9. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the institutional and human resources capacity of the Bureau

- 1.1 Strengthen the human resources capacity of the Bureau with respect to both quantity and quality.
 - 1.1.1 A human resources needs analysis should be undertaken, in order to establish a minimum staff contingent for the Bureau and to deliver an acceptable level of service to clients. In the short run, the Government should endeavour to have at least 6 front-line employment officers at the Khomas Employment Service Centre and 5 in Walvis Bay, comprising two employment officers responsible for jobseeker services, including information sharing, profiling, and basic (non-professional) counselling; three (two in Walvis Bay) employment officers responsible for Namibia at Work (IEIS), one of whom should be co-administrator with the service provider and the other also responsible for public relations; and one employment officer responsible for employer services. In the regional offices, a minimum contingent of 3 employment officers responsible for jobseeker services, LMI and employer services, respectively. The officer responsible for employer services could also double as the PR officer. The 11 psychologists/counsellors and 2 interns should be assigned to different regions and offices to provide continuous professional counselling services to PES clients that need them, on request or as advised by profiling officers.
 - 1.1.2 The Government should urgently consider the use of interns to alleviate the current critical staff shortages. The discussions regarding the payment of transport allowances to interns need to be finalized to make these human resources readily available to the PES.
 - 1.1.3 In addition, the Bureau needs to engage support staff at lower levels to undertake routine administrative work, such as reception, registering jobseekers and providing general information about the services of the Bureau.
 - 1.1.4 A staff training needs analysis should be undertaken as the basis for a short to medium-term training plan.
 - 1.1.5 Manuals for delivery of employment services need to be developed and, ultimately, online course materials should be developed for new staff.
 - 1.1.6 **Professionalization** of PES functions and jobs needs to be considered and carefully planned, and, in accordance with the ILO Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88), ensure security of tenure of employment service staff independent of political changes and ensure their professional development.
- 1.2 Improve the physical infrastructure of PES offices, beginning with the employment service centre in Windhoek.

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- 1.2.1 The employment service centre at the Head Office in Windhoek needs to be relocated as soon as possible to a more spacious office (the former Labour Commissioner's Office which is vacant might be the best option in the short term). There is need for a reception, waiting area, noticeboard and offices for employment officers with adequate facilities for privacy of jobseekers. Given the role employment services play in increasing the efficiency of matching and hence promoting productivity gains, the Bureau should work closely, and possibly share offices, with the National Productivity Unit.
 - 1.2.2 A separate computer area/room with well equipped with computers, printing and photocopying facilities should be provided for self-service, particularly for young people. In the medium to long term, the Centre should be relocated to a more central location with easy transport connections.
 - 1.2.3 Regional offices should also be improved along the lines of the main employment service centre, subject to available resources. In the medium term, kiosks could be established in strategic locations for registration and job search, including in universities and higher learning institutions with career centres.

Recommendation 2: Increase PES funding and the number of funding bodies

The above recommendations are fairly ambitious and would therefore require additional financial and human resources. As indicated in the introduction, the number of staff currently involved in employment services is very limited. We believe strongly that increases in the resources allocated to the PES to deliver the recommendations made in this report would deliver strong social, public and private returns to the people of Namibia.

- 2.1 Increase the appropriation from the national budget.
 - 2.1.1 The Government should consider establishing a separate vote for the implementation of the Employment Services Act, covering the operations of the Employment Services Board and the Bureau, based on a costing of priority activities and innovations submitted by the latter.
 - 2.1.2 In the short run, given the potential value of the PES in facilitating various priorities of the HPP, including the establishment of the productivity centre, the Government should consider allocating some of the funds earmarked for the implementation of the Plan to the Bureau, based on specific activities suggested by the latter.
 - 2.1.3 In the medium to long term, the Government should consider re-channelling some of the funds allocated for implementation of Active Labour Market Policies in different institutions to the Bureau, which could then purchase services through contracts with private service providers.
- 2.2 Amend the appropriate legislation to allow the PES access to Training and Social Security Funds.
 - 2.2.1 In the short run, the Bureau should engage with the NTA on the possibility of accessing the Fund within the current provisions of the law.

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- 2.2.2 In the medium term, the PES should fund its expansion by having the Government establish a legal provision that a given percentage of the training levy revenues should be automatically allocated to the PES budget. It is proposed that this percentage should be between four and six per cent of all annual training levy revenues.
 - 2.2.3 In the short run, the Bureau should engage with the Commission for possible funding from the Development Fund for some of its activities. These could be specific training activities for vulnerable groups in the regions.
 - 2.2.4 In the medium term, the PES should fund its expansion by having the Government establish a legal provision that a given percentage of relevant social security revenues is automatically allocated to the PES budget. It is proposed that this percentage should be between one and two per cent of relevant annual social security revenues. However, the introduction of this funding would be conducted in stages, as and when relevant social security funds are established.

Recommendation 3: Enhance the central coordinating role of the PES as a key player in the labour market by improving the offer and delivery of services

- 3.1 A clear flow and sequencing of services should be developed from registration, profiling and assessment, counselling, job search assistance and employability improvement, to matching and post-employment services. Development of tools and procedures for profiling and assessment, counselling and job search assistance should be prioritized in the short to medium term.
- 3.2 The MLIREC, as the policy maker to which the PES is answerable, should foster a working protocol between the vocational training subdivision and the Bureau. The law states that the Bureau consists of the Director and all employment officers of the Ministry, while Vocational Counselling is part of the Directorate. Nevertheless, services related to vocational counselling, conduct of psychometric assessments and tests for selection and recruitment, career guidance, etc. are included in the **functions** of the Bureau. There is thus scope, even within the current provisions of the Act, to engender stronger integration of these services in the PES.
- 3.3 The Government should empower employment officers to provide basic counselling services to jobseekers and leave specialized counselling to the professionals. Even if the vocational counselling services were successfully integrated into the PES, the staff complement of 13 psychologists/ psychological counsellors is insufficient to provide counselling, let alone individualized counselling, as the PES develops. In order to stay within the realm of the Social Work and Psychology Act, 2004 (Act No 6 of 2004), which only allows registered professionals to practise as vocational counsellors and social workers, the Government should consider, in the medium term, developing *competency profiles* for employment officers and later

competency-based training to allow non-professionals to provide non-specialized counselling.

- 3.4 The Bureau should create a link to existing Active Labour Market Programmes by, firstly, mapping all such programmes in urban and rural areas and their providers (whether public or otherwise) and making them available on the jobs portal, establishing working relationships with programme providers and subsequently implementing some of the programmes in-house or in collaboration with other service providers. In the absence of unemployment benefits, ALMPs can serve as an incentive for jobseekers to register with the PES.
 - 3.4.1 The online jobs portal should become an information hub for labour market programmes in Namibia. This means widening the scope of the portal to include all forms of online information. It involves the creation of a specific section in the main website where this information will be posted. More importantly, this task will involve establishing a good network of relationships with multiple stakeholders involved more or less directly with labour market programmes.
 - 3.4.2 The PES should also seek to fully maximize the jobseeker and vacancy registration aspects that follow from the programmes listed on the website. Some programmes will require staff for their activities and should therefore post such vacancies there. Other programmes will seek to approach jobseekers with specific characteristics. These jobseekers should then register in the portal and subsequently be directed to the programme officials. This will of course depend on the nature of the partnerships that are established between the PES and the various actors implementing Active Labour Market Policies.
 - 3.4.3 This section of the portal should also list physical and internet addresses of all stakeholders in the labour market, including job centres, employers' associations, trade unions and private employment agencies.
- 3.5 Improve *services to employers*: The Bureau needs to constantly engage the private sector, through the Namibian Employers' Federation, the Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the designated employers, as well as members of the Employment Services Board to ensure that the IEIS is user-friendly, that the turnaround from the Bureau meets the HR needs of employers, including small enterprises. Particular attention should be paid to small employers who are outside the mandatory reporting requirements. Their use of the PES will be totally dependent on the value of the services that it provides.
- 3.6 Provide *one-stop services* for such things as verification of certificates with the Ministry of Education as well as criminal record checks with the Ministry of Home Affairs. As the NIEIS matures, the Bureau could initiate discussions to ensure linking of the relevant government databases and establish a mechanism for authentication of credentials for employers. It would save considerable time for both jobseekers and employers and significantly increase the value added by the Bureau.

As highlighted in Recommendation 2, the portal would serve as the main tool for implementation.

- 3.7 In addition to the IEIS, the Bureau should develop innovative outreach programmes such as kiosks in strategic locations in urban and rural areas, mobile employment centres, and partnerships with NGOs operating in rural areas, technical schools and universities, etc. to ensure universal access and equity.
- 3.8 Review the communication strategy and create alliances with different stakeholders: trade unions, NGOs, employers' associations, schools, etc. to spread the word about the Bureau's services.
- 3.9 The core role that the PES may acquire via its hub component may facilitate the strengthening of its coordinating function across programmes, to maximize synergies and minimize duplication between them. In other words, these activities may help the PES to deliver more effectively the mandate established in Namibia's policy framework. If this initiative proves successful, the hub dimension will provide PES staff with a very good understanding of the range of programmes in place in the country, their differences, similarities and potential synergies. The PES can then leverage this information to shape the formation of new programmes and improvements in existing programmes.
- 3.10 Engage and develop tailor-made services for SMEs, including in the informal sector, to promote their transition to the formal sector and improve the quality of jobs.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen partnerships with other service providers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors

- 4.1 Following the mapping in Recommendation 3.4 above, the PES should forge alliances and partnerships with key public and NGO sector ALMP providers. Public sector organizations include municipalities and other local government entities which implement various types of ALMP.
- 4.2 The Bureau should engage with PEAs and identify areas for possible cooperation which may include pooling of information and use of common terminology so as to improve transparency of labour market functioning; exchanging vacancy notices; launching of joint projects, for example in training; concluding agreements between the public employment service and private employment agencies regarding the execution of certain activities, such as projects for the integration of the long-term unemployed; training of staff; consulting regularly with a view to improving professional practices (ILO Recommendation No. 188) .
 - 4.2.1 In the short run, the PES should promote the registration of vacancies and jobseekers registered by PEAs through the online jobs portal (and, more generally, in the PES). This action should be of great benefit to both the PES

and PEAs: the former will provide greater opportunities to its many jobseekers, the latter will be better able to meet the needs of the employers they serve. It is important to underline that the PES and PEAs should not regard each other as competitors, but as partners working together for what is ultimately a common goal of increasing employment and accelerating the matching of jobseekers with vacancies of a high quality.

- 4.3 In the medium to long term, the PES should consider implementing Active Labour Market Policies, including pilot projects, gradually engaging in more advanced partnerships with PEAs, including payment conditional on results. Under these pilot projects, specific groups of unemployed jobseekers facing greater challenges in their transition to employment (long-term unemployed, disabled, youth, women, etc.) would be assigned or referred to programmes conducted by PEAs. These programmes could relate to various active labour market policies, such as short training programmes, career or job counselling, recruitment subsidies, traineeships (with pre-selected firms), or recognition of prior learning and experience. Payment for these PEA-delivered services could combine two components: a fixed component (paid against evidence of costs incurred by the private provider when supporting the assigned jobseekers, possibly up to a low threshold); and a variable component, conditional on the sustained or sustainable employment of each unemployed individual referred to the programme, in comparison with a suitable 'control group'. The variable pay component promotes a stronger incentive for the private provider. On the other hand, the fixed component minimizes the risk to the private provider of participation in the scheme, given that part of the outcomes of participants may be determined by factors outside the private provider's control.
- 4.4 The PES should list all PEAs operating in the country on its online jobs portal (see Recommendation 2 for details).

Recommendation 5: Generate and analyse additional and more up-to-date labour-market information

- 5.1 The PES should publish frequent labour-market reports based on analysis of the data collected through the jobs portal. These reports could be largely automated, based on a set of indicators that are retrieved and processed using software algorithms. Human input would be required only in the analysis of the results and even then, only to some extent. The frequency of the reports could vary depending on the specific report. For instance, there could be a short monthly report (perhaps five pages), and a quarterly report of greater depth (10-15 pages). Following their online release, these reports would most likely attract attention in both the traditional media and in the social media. This attention would reinforce the importance of the portal in the labour market, namely by attracting more registrations of jobseekers and vacancies, as well as further enhancing the reputation of the PES and the MLIREC in the economy and society.
- 5.2 The portal-based labour market reports should provide information about a series of variables, measured over the month or the quarter, including the following:

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- 5.2.1 The number of vacancy registrations, including its breakdown by region, sector, occupation group, education level required, and indicative salary (the latter if available in sufficiently large numbers);
 - 5.2.2 The number of jobseeker registrations, including a breakdown by sex, age group, region, sector, and education level; and
 - 5.2.3 The number of successful matches (registered vacancies filled following registered jobseeker applications), including a breakdown by region, sector, occupation group, and jobseeker sex, age group, and education level.
- 5.3 The PES should consider the development of partnerships with schools, training centres and universities to conduct tracer studies for their leavers and graduates. These tracer studies would draw on the data-collection and data-analysis structures already available, at least to some extent, in the online jobs portal. These partnerships would also promote registration of jobseekers through demonstration sessions at their place of study, in particular in the final year of each programme, as well as registration of vacancies by the firms that these education and training institutions may work with more frequently.
 - 5.4 A streamlined and anonymized version of the micro data collected by the jobs portal should be made available, upon request, and updated on a regular basis (e.g. every quarter), for the purpose of research on the Namibian labour market. Such research could be conducted by universities, international organizations, research institutes and think tanks in Namibia and abroad. The availability of the data would make the activities of the jobs portal more transparent and increase the engagement of different stakeholders with it.
 - 5.5 In collaboration with the LMI Division, build capacity for analysis of labour market information drawn from various sources, including the central databank of the Labour Market Information System, once developed and functional.
 - 5.6 In collaboration with the LMI Division, liaise with relevant agencies to ensure collection of labour market information in the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including the informal sector.

Recommendation 6: Modernize and increase the usage of the online jobs portal

- 6.1 The registration of jobseekers and vacancies should be more streamlined, to facilitate automatic profiling and matching in due course. This will involve more clicking and less typing by users, i.e. greater use of ‘drop-down menus’ and less use of open text fields in registration forms, for jobseekers and employers alike. Open fields greatly constrain the scope for both matching (as the field of study and the subject studied may be described in a different manner) and the generation by the portal of easily usable labour market information. Different options may also be made available in terms of the level of detail of some items (i.e. users may choose between a two-digit or a three-digit occupation definition).

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- 6.2 A new occupation code should be adopted and installed in the portal, to be used in registrations of jobseekers and vacancies, considering that the current one (Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations (NASCO), with 441 categories) is deemed outdated. Indeed, NASCO was developed in the mid-1990s and in some sectors of the economy visited by the mission, concerns were raised about its current suitability. The IEIS, which uses the outdated occupation classification system, is thus likely to produce mismatches, given that the labour market and production systems have dramatically changed since the standard was last developed. If deemed necessary, after consultation with key stakeholders (employers, training institutions, etc.), and in order to facilitate a prompt adoption and installation, the bureau could, in the interim, use the current ISCO-08 classification⁶. This classification is ready to use and will be well known by a number of firms, especially the multinationals operating in Namibia. However, the ISCO may be regarded as too broad, given that a national classification had already been developed, to the extent that it may no longer respond to employers' needs in a middle-income country like Namibia. It may also be advisable first to present a list of occupations at a more aggregated level, to facilitate the search in the most appropriate disaggregated category. It may also be interesting to let jobseekers list more than one occupation, e.g. up to three, in case a specific occupation does not fully match the experience and interests of the jobseeker. One should also bear in mind that the importance of this recommendation goes beyond just the portal. It will affect the characterization of both demand and supply of skills, and therefore may be regarded as particularly important.
- 6.3 A tool should be created to allow jobseekers and employers to conduct offline registrations which would then be submitted when an Internet connection is available. This could involve two Excel files with a set of fields mimicking those of the website (jobseekers and vacancies) that could be downloaded, filled in, and then submitted online, possibly by email, including attachments (certificates, CVs, etc.). This would ensure that all computer time available (even when the Internet is down) could be used for registrations.
- 6.4 It would be important to explore partnerships with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation with a view to electronic attestation or certification of educational credentials submitted by jobseekers. This would involve not only the level and subject of the certificate but also the grades obtained. Once again, this would avoid duplication of efforts by multiple employers screening the same candidates, making the portal more attractive for both parties. (See also refer to Recommendation 3.6).
- 6.5 The portal should have a training component, based on short video courses and question banks on general areas, such as CV preparation, interview techniques, job counselling, productivity software (Word, Excel, etc.), entrepreneurship, languages, basic maths, human resources management, employment law, etc. Some of these

⁶ Available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/docs/resol08.pdf>.

courses could be sourced for free or for a small fee from online training firms. Additional content could be submitted from other ministries and agencies in areas related to employment creation. Job counselling and aptitude tests could also be delivered on the portal. This training dimension would represent a further incentive towards registration of jobseekers, and subsequently vacancies. The scores in multiple-choice question banks offered in the portal may also be used for screening purposes by some employers, as further evidence of the profile of different jobseekers.

- 6.6 Efforts towards increasing registrations from smaller employers should be enhanced, in particular those with less than 25 employees and therefore not required to engage with the PES. These smaller employers may be of greater interest to the PES from many perspectives: their number will be far larger than that of larger firms (over 37,000 in 2012); they may play a more important role in terms of job creation and recruitment (one-third of the total employed in 2012); on average, they will be looking for somewhat less skilled workers that will be easier to find among the jobseeker registrations collected by the portal; and their take-up of the services delivered by the portal will be a better indicator of its quality for the very reason that these smaller employers are not required to post their vacancies there. Specific actions that may further this goal may include a partnership with the dedicated portal of the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development⁷, as well as with relevant employers' associations. Of course, such registrations would also be welcome other sources in different formats, and not necessarily through the portal. On the other hand, direct online registration would greatly facilitate the handling of the vacancy and prompt matching with available jobseekers.
- 6.7 Similarly, it would prove particularly useful to encourage greater usage of the portal for vacancies in the public administration. These job opportunities attract great interest from the general population, including from skilled employees, given the high level of unemployment and the generally good working conditions offered, including job security. The opportunity to learn more about these vacancies, and to apply for them through the portal, would not only increase even further the transparency of the appointment process in the public sector, but also promote the registration of high-skilled individuals, facilitating matching at upper levels of the labour market, including with private sector firms. The Government should therefore amend or put in place the necessary policy and regulations in the public service to give effect to the use of the PES and the portal for public sector recruitment.
- 6.8 Jobseekers and vacancies registered on the website for more than a defined period, three months or as much as one year, should be moved into an 'inactive' category and be disregarded in terms of matching analysis. This should follow an email or SMS sent in advance to each jobseeker or employer informing them of the pending change and inviting them to update or delete the information. Thus, if the

⁷ <http://sme.mti.gov.na/>

registration is updated within a given deadline, e.g. two weeks, the registration would not become inactive. This process could lead to the clearing of a significant percentage of the over 60,000 jobseeker registrations currently stored in the system and would ultimately facilitate matching, as the PES would then draw on more relevant and up-to-date information.

- 6.9 During the modernization of the portal, greater use should be made of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in advertising vacancies posted on the portal, achievements in matching, new training offers, and individual success stories. These activities could increase the portal's popularity with jobseekers and employers alike, strengthening its role in improving and accelerating labour market matching.
- 6.10 The matching of jobseekers and vacancies should be improved, taking into account multiple dimensions such as occupation, location/region, experience, education/training/skills, sector of activity, and wage range variables, and offering lists of applicants ranked in terms of potentially suitable matches to prospective employers. This ranking approach implies that lists of jobseekers submitted to employers for each vacancy will start with exact matches along the available skill dimensions, and then move on to jobseekers that may not match exactly the profile requested but still be of potential interest. For instance, a worker with the occupation, region and education requested, but not as many years of experience as indicated in the vacancy, may still be of interest. In any case, a criterion will have to be adopted to rank jobseekers that do not fully match an employer's requirements, given the multiple dimensions under consideration. Overall, the improvement in the matching algorithm adopted by the portal would address a concern commonly expressed by employers that matches suggested by the PES are not suitable, or require too additional screening, thus undermining the portal's original purpose of facilitating the recruitment process.
- 6.11 Ideally, there should be an automatic and immediate provision of matches to employers, following the submission of a vacancy by the latter. Should no matches be found at that stage, up to a threshold of correlation, to be defined, between the profile of the vacancy and the profile of the available jobseekers, then an email indicating this should be sent to the employer, providing a timeframe in which jobseeker responses would be solicited in accordance with the prevailing regulations. This procedure would address a concern expressed by several employers that they had never having received a response from the portal following notification of a vacancy. Thus, the portal would keep on screening new jobseeker profiles that might subsequently be registered on the website based on the initial feedback, a ranked list of potential matches or a statement that no matches were found. If any new jobseeker fits the profile, and if the vacancy is still active, then the portal would submit the resulting match to the employer.
- 6.12 The Bureau should develop follow-up activities, after the submission of vacancies to prospective employers, to evaluate the rate of successful matches. This would involve a number of internal performance management indicators, including the percentage of registered vacancies filled by jobseekers registered by the portal within a month following the registration of the vacancy; the percentage of

registered jobseekers that are matched to at least one vacancy within a given period of three or six months following registration; and the percentage of registered jobseekers that are placed in a vacancy within a similar period. These indicators should be reported publicly every quarter.

- 6.13 As highlighted above, the portal should be managed by a dedicated team of at least three employment officers, focused exclusively on this area, at least one of whom would preferably have a strong IT background. These officers would be responsible for the daily management of the portal at national level, including:
 - 6.13.1 Publication and regular update of an FAQ's ('frequently asked questions') file;
 - 6.13.2 Creation of content about the activities of the portal and its dissemination in social media;
 - 6.13.3 Uploading of registrations submitted in hard copy or via email, focusing at first on any existing backlog, especially vacancies;
 - 6.13.4 Presentations about the portal to the relevant stakeholders, including employers' associations, the media, and education/training institutions;
 - 6.13.5 Interaction with the IT provider to ensure the prompt solution of any problems in the portal's underlying software and the introduction of new features;
 - 6.13.6 Visits to education and training institutions, jobs fairs, medium-sized and large companies undergoing or potentially undergoing restructuring and relocation, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders, to promote and obtain registration of jobseekers;
 - 6.13.7 Promoting the registration of workers under temporary contracts sufficiently in advance of the date when the contract is likely to come to an end; and
 - 6.13.8 Post-placement appraisals, both with employers and former jobseekers, to identify challenges and opportunities towards the improvement of the services delivered.
- 6.14 The re-launch of the upgraded and improved portal should be accompanied by the online publication on the portal itself of a manual introducing the new features of the system and the organization of a training session targeted at employer and worker representatives. The training session would be videoed and uploaded to the portal itself.
- 6.15 The server where the portal is located should have enough capacity to accommodate a larger number of requests for access, to ensure a fast interaction with users, and to minimize the time in which it is not available. A contingency plan for back-up server

should also be prepared, to ensure continuity if there are problems with the current server in the future.

- 6.16 It would be useful to include self-employment and informal jobs on the website, focusing on occupations that tend to be predominantly informal, such as masons, carpenters, plumbers, painters, drivers, electricians, gardeners, farmers, car mechanics, air conditioning technicians, etc. These are activities that are subject to the same challenges in terms of matching as formal jobs and could benefit from more information (e.g. a record of performance ratings and salary ranges). In this regard, the portal should provide a list of artisans who have been checked by the Bureau who could be matched to the jobs available.
- 6.17 Similarly, the portal should also consider traineeship, apprenticeship and job attachment opportunities. See also Recommendation 7 on this point.
- 6.18 The ILO would potentially be available and could be approached to conduct a preliminary statistical analysis of the existing jobseeker registrations stored in the online jobs portal. This would involve the submission of the individual and vacancy-level micro datasets under a confidentiality agreement and the preparation of a technical report by the ILO, highlighting challenges and opportunities in the current data structure, with more specific proposals regarding potential changes to the existing profiling and matching system.

Recommendation 7: Address skills mismatch through promotion of internships as stepping stones towards productive employment

- 7.1 The MHETI, MLIREC and the NTA should finalize and adopt the Internship and Apprenticeship Policy and guidelines covering all sectors of the economy, through extensive consultations with the relevant stakeholders.
- 7.2 In the medium term, the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation and the MLIREC, and the NTA should ensure that there is a clear legislative framework to accommodate and support the creation of internships by firms and other organizations. These internships would be subject to a number of minimum requirements in terms of training content, pay, allowances, insurance, percentage of internships created by a firm that are required to be converted to permanent positions, and posting of the vacancy online with the PES. Internships should also be subject to a maximum duration, after which the internship contract may be presumed to have been converted implicitly to a permanent contract.
- 7.3 A specific legal model that might be considered as a starting point for potential discussions with the social partners and other labour market and political stakeholders is the following:
 - 7.3.1 Each firm that seeks to create a traineeship position must describe in a document submitted to the PES the training to be provided to the trainee

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- and the skills to be acquired by the trainee, the duration of the training and the name of the trainer who will supervise the training;
- 7.3.2 In the same document, each firm will be required to indicate, at the time of posting of the internship vacancy, whether there is an expectation that the vacancy will be converted into a permanent position and that the intern will be permanently employed, should the match prove satisfactory;
- 7.3.3 A traineeship cannot last more than 18 months, after which the traineeship should be converted into a permanent contract or expire;
- 7.3.4 All internships should offer financial allowances for a daily meal and for transport, for each day of work, at minimum levels set by the Ministry, following the standards adopted in the economy. However, there will not be a compulsory minimum pay level, i.e. a firm may employ an intern without payment of a salary other than the above allowances, but only for the first six months of the internship. This is justified by the resources invested by the firm in the training of the trainee. From the seventh month (if the internship is still in force), a salary should be paid, corresponding to at least one third of the applicable minimum wage. From the thirteenth month (if the internship is still in force), the salary should correspond to at least two thirds of the applicable minimum wage;
- 7.3.5 Firms with less than 25 employees must convert at least one third of the internships created into employment contracts. In other words, a fourth trainee may only be appointed by a smaller firm if at least one of the three previous trainees had their traineeship converted into permanent employment;
- 7.3.6 The document submitted by the firm to the PES with the information about the vacancy (indicating the training content, training timeline, tutor, etc.) is tacitly validated by the PES if no opposition is indicated by the PES within a period of two weeks. A template should be made available by the PES at the online jobs portal to facilitate the preparation of this document by firms. As well as encouraging good practices, firms should make full use of training as a tool to increase firm productivity; and
- 7.3.7 The firm should indicate that it is willing to provide a document to the trainee at the end of the traineeship attesting to the training received by the trainee. This document could be attached by the trainee to future job applications, in particular if the traineeship is not converted into permanent employment.
- 7.4 The portal should also register traineeship, and equivalent apprenticeship and job attachment, opportunities placed by firms and other organizations. As in the case of formal, full employment, firms and workers may face significant challenges in terms of information about available collaborators and vacancies. Such challenges may reduce significantly the number of traineeships and similar opportunities to obtain and increase experience. Moreover, the increased formalization that follows

from the registration of such positions with the PES may enhance their potential in terms of work-based learning content and their prospects of securing subsequent sustainable employment. Overall, the promotion of these traineeship and equivalent opportunities through the online portal may have a significant impact on reducing youth unemployment, in particular in urban environments.

- 7.5 The PES should offer traineeships for its own services when preparing and conducting the expansion of its activities and human resources. This approach will ensure that the PES will be appropriately staffed at low cost, at least during an initial stage of the expansion process. This approach will also ensure that the PES gains additional first-hand experience of the challenges involved in appointing and managing trainees, as well as a better understanding of the trainees' perspective. The PES traineeship vacancies should also be advertised on the Internet jobs platform. Overall, this experience can be used in the interaction with firms and trainees, promoting higher levels of engagement and trust. As the PES grows, and a better understanding of the quality of the matches is established, it would be expected that a significant percentage of the trainees would be converted.
- 7.6 The wider public sector should also consider the potential of traineeships. The PES could play an instrumental role in disseminating this format and its advantages across Ministries and other public sector agencies, while at the same time promoting deeper reflection within such bodies about their current and future training needs.
- 7.7 Ensure that traineeships and apprenticeships are covered in the revision and regular updates of the Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations to better align training to labour market demands.

10. Action plan

Appendix 1 presents a detailed account of the action plan for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. The recommendations and action points have been reorganized in a logical flow of priority areas, strategic objectives, key strategies and outputs and activities. Lead agencies for each activity have been suggested together with the estimated timeframe for implementation.

There are four priority areas for action. First, the organizational structure, capacity and functional model of the PES should be improved. This would be achieved by building up the institutional and human resources capacity of the ESB and ensuring that a sustainable model for financing PES services is in place. Second, for the PES to be effective, the range and depth of services provided should respond to the needs of its clients – jobseekers, employers and the general public. Concerted efforts to realise an improved offer and delivery of services, as well as timely generation, analysis and dissemination of labour market information, constitute the main strategic objectives in this area.

Thirdly, in order to reach out to all labour market participants and improve the offer of employment services, diversification of the models of service delivery through multi-channelling is paramount. This means strengthening partnerships with other service providers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors and improving access to employment services and outreach for hard-to-reach clients.

Last, but not least, the contribution of the PES to address the mismatch and shortage of skills, for example, through promotion of internships as stepping stones towards productive employment, is explored.

The highlighted priority areas, strategic objectives, strategies and activities are not meant to be exhaustive or definitive. The plan is intended to be dynamic, subject to review and revision in the light of changes in the labour market.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan for strengthening the PES in Namibia

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe		
PES: Organizational structure, capacity and functional model	Strengthen the institutional and human resources capacity of the Bureau	Strengthen the human resources capacity of the Bureau, both with respect to quantity and quality	Undertake a human resources needs analysis to establish a minimum staffing level for the Bureau to deliver an acceptable level of service to clients.	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23		
			Assign psychologists/ counsellors to different regions and offices to provide continuous professional counselling services to PES clients that need them – on request or as advised by profiling officers.	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23		
			Urgently consider the use of interns to alleviate the current critical staff shortages and engage staff at lower level to undertake routine administrative work.	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19		
					Draw up a short to medium-term training plan based on a comprehensive staff training needs analysis	MLIREC, OPM, NTA	2018/19
					Develop manuals for delivery of employment services and, eventually, online course materials should be developed for new staff.	MLIREC, NTA, NQA	2018/19 -2019/20
					In the medium term, develop competency profiles for employment officers and later competency-based training to allow non-professionals to provide non-specialized counselling.	MLIREC, OPM, MHETI, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2022/23
					Professionalize PES functions and jobs	MLIREC, OPM, MHETI, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2022/23
				Improve the physical infrastructure of PES offices, beginning with the employment service centre in Windhoek.	Relocate the employment service centre at the Head Office in Windhoek as soon as possible to a more spacious office (the former Labour Commissioner's Office which is vacant could be the best option in the short term).	MLIREC, MOF, MWT	2018/19 -2019/20
					Provide a separate computer area/room well equipped with computers and printing and photocopying facilities for self-service, particularly young people	MLIREC, MOF	2018/19 – 2019/20
					Improve regional offices along the lines of the main employment service centre, subject to available resources	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
			In the medium term, establish kiosks in strategic locations for registration and search for employment, including in universities and higher learning institutions with career centres.	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23
		Improve the organizational structure and functional model of the PES	Review the organizational structure, with a possibility of converting the bureau into a semi-autonomous or autonomous PES body with regional and local offices	MLIREC, OPM	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Amend the law to include vocational training and LMI under the Bureau	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2022/23
			In the short run, MLIREC as the policy maker to which the PES is answerable, foster a working protocol between the vocational training subdivision and the Bureau	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Initiate discussions to review the functional model of the PES that may include a network of other service providers	MLIREC, ESB, OPM	2018/19 – 2022/23
	Ensure sustainable financing of the PES	Increase appropriation from the national budget.	Establish a separate vote for the implementation of the Employment Services Act covering the operations of the Employment Services Board and the Bureau based on a costing of priority activities and innovations submitted by the latter	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Allocate some of the funds earmarked for the implementation of the HPP to the Bureau based on specific activities suggested by the latter	MLIREC, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2020/21
			In the medium to long term, re-channel some of the government funds allocated for implementation of Active Labour Market Policies in different institutions to the Bureau, which could then purchase services through contracts to private service providers.	MLIREC, ESB, OPM, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23
			At the macro level, the Government should mainstream employment in the national budget and investment programmes/projects	MLIREC, NPC, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
		Amend the relevant legislation to allow the PES access to Training Levy and Social Security Funds	In the short run, the Bureau should engage with the NTA on the possibility of accessing the Fund within the current provisions of the law.	NTA, MLIREC, SSC, MOF	2018/19 – 2019/20
			In the medium term, the Government should establish a legal provision that a given percentage of the training levy revenues should be automatically allocated to the PES budget.	MOF, NTA, MLIREC,	2018/19 – 2022/23
			In the short-run the Bureau should engage with the Social Security Commission for possible funding from the Development Fund for some of its activities.	MLIREC, SSC, MOF	2018/19 – 2019/20
			When the Unemployment Insurance Fund is established, the Government should establish a legal provision that a given percentage of the training levy revenues is automatically allocated to the PES budget.	MLIREC, SSC, MOF	2018/19 – 2022/23
Range and depth of service provision	Increasing the core role of the PES in the labour market by improving the provision and delivery of services	Improve the capacity of the PES for effective service delivery	Develop a clear flow and sequencing of services from registration, profiling and assessment, counselling, job search assistance and employability improvement, to matching and post-employment services.	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Develop tools and procedures for profiling and assessment, counselling and job search assistance in the short to medium term.	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Empower employment officers to provide basic counselling services to jobseekers and leave specialized counselling to the professionals	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Create a link between the Bureau and the institutions that provide Active Labour Market Programmes, first by mapping all such programmes in urban and rural areas and their providers (whether public or otherwise) and making them available on the jobs portal, establishing working relationships with programme providers and subsequently implementing some of the programmes in-house or through collaboration with other service providers	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2022/23
		Improve services to employers	Continuously engage with the private sector, through the Namibian Employers' Federation, the Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, designated employers, as well as members of the Employment Services Board, to ensure that the NIEIS is user friendly, that the turnaround from the Bureau meets employers' HR needs, including small enterprises.	MLIREC	2018/19 -2020/21

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
			Develop and adapt services to the needs of small employers who are outside the mandatory reporting requirements. Their use of the PES will be totally dependent on the services provided.	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Set up a dedicated team of counsellors to engage with and respond to the needs of employers	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Provide one-stop services for such things as verification of certificates with the Ministry of Education as well as criminal record checks with the Ministry of Home Affairs	MLIREC, NQA, MHA	2018/19 – 2022/23
			As the NIEIS matures, link relevant government databases and establish a mechanism for authentication of jobseeker credentials for employers.	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Engage with key stakeholders and develop tailor-made services for SMEs, including the informal sector, to promote their transition to formality and improve the quality of jobs	MLIREC, MITSMED, NISO	2018/19 – 2022/23
		Strengthen communication strategy to raise awareness and use of PES services	Review the communication strategy and create alliances with different stakeholders: trade unions, NGOs, employers' associations, etc. to spread the word about the Bureau's services.	MLIREC, MICT, ESB, OPM	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Strengthen the coordinating role of the PES across programmes to maximize synergies and minimize duplication between them.	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Strengthen the capacity of the PES to act as coordinator of labour market players to ensure optimal organization of the labour market to attain full, productive and decent work	MLIREC, NIPAM	2018/19- 2019/20
			Strengthen the capacity of the PES to act as the information hub for jobseekers, employers, training institutions, private employment agencies and other stakeholders.	MLIREC	2018/19- 2019/20

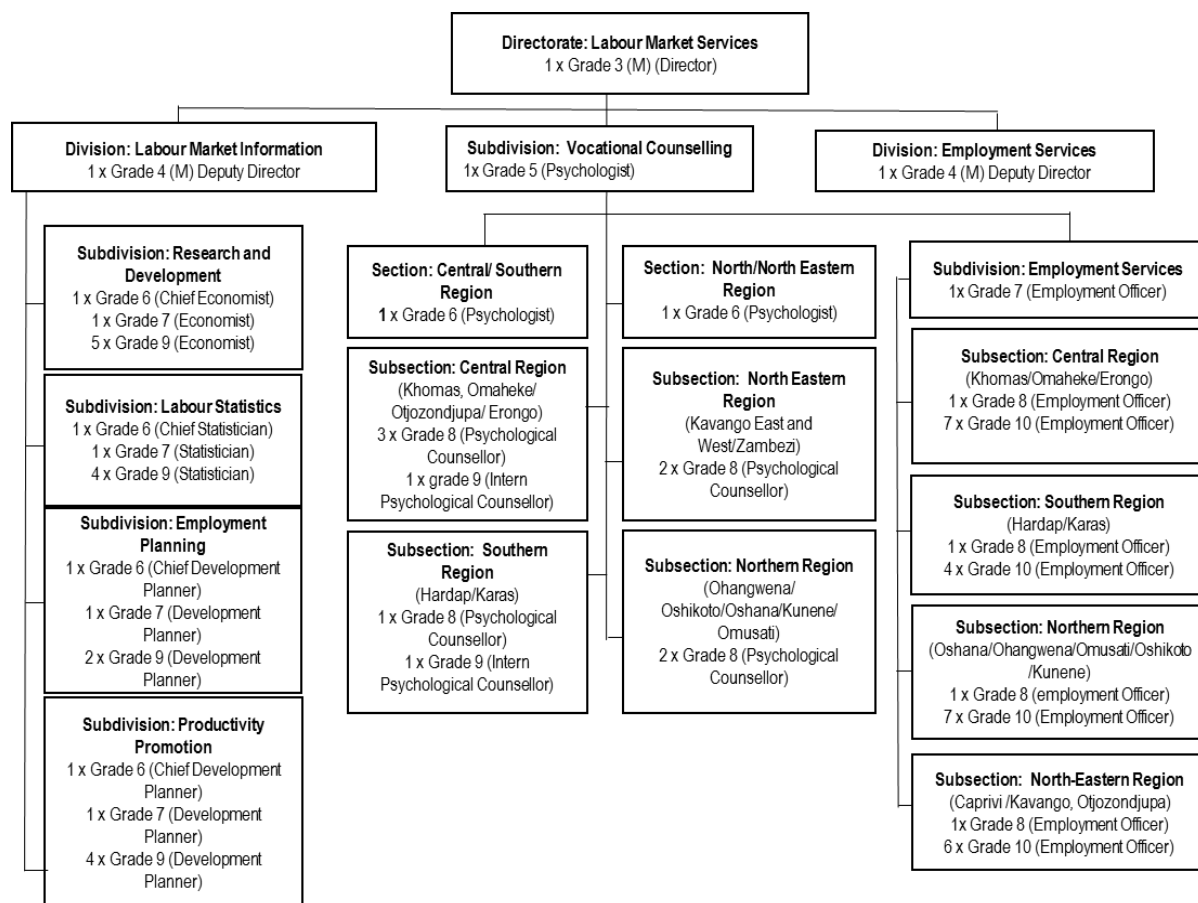
Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
	Generating and analysing additional and more up-to-date labour market information.	Strengthen capacity to generate and analyse additional and more up-to-date labour market information	Publish frequent labour market reports, based on analysis of the data collected by the jobs portal, as well as other sources	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Develop partnerships with schools, training centres and universities to conduct tracer studies for their leavers and graduates.	MLIREC, MoEAC, MHETI, NTA	2018/19 – 2022/23
			In collaboration with the LMI Division, build capacity for analysis of labour market information from various sources, including the central databank of the LMIS once developed and functional	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2022/23
			In collaboration with the LMI Division, liaise with relevant agencies to ensure collection of labour market information from micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including the informal sector	MLIREC, NSA	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Make available to researchers on request a streamlined and anonymized version of the micro data collected by the jobs portal for research purposes on the Namibian labour market.	MLIREC, NSA	2018/19 – 2020/21
Models of delivery and multi-channelling	Strengthening partnerships with other service providers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors	Secure cooperation with other employment service providers in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors	The PES forges alliances and partnerships with key public and NGO sector ALMP providers. Public sector organizations include municipalities and other local government entities which implement ALMPs.	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Engage PEAs and identify areas for possible cooperation.	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2019/20
			In the short run, the PES should promote the registration of vacancies collected recorded by PEAs through the online jobs portal.	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Build capacity for the PES to implement Active Labour Market Policies, beginning with pilot projects and gradually adopting more advanced partnerships with PEAs, including payment conditional on results.	MLIREC, ESB	2018/19 – 2022/23
			List all PEAs operating in the country on the NIEIS.	MLIREC	2018/19
	Improving access to employment services and outreach to hard-to-reach clients	Modernize, strengthen and increase the usage of the Integrated Employment Information System	In the short run, iron out the technical hitches of the system and make improvements that do not need substantial further investment (e.g. creation of live register, offline registration tool, reduction of downtime frequency, etc.)	MLIREC, ESB, Internet Service Provider (ISP)	2018/19 – 2019/20

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
			Streamline registration of jobseekers and vacancies to ensure a closer match and align CVs to job requirements	MLIREC	2018/19
			Ensure a dedicated team of officers to work on the portal and liaise with employers and other users	MLIREC	2018/19
			Link the portal to social media, to reach young people in particular	MLIREC, NYC	2018/19
			Register mapped training programmes, internships and other active labour market programmes	MLIREC, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Develop a job matching system that allows automatic matching of jobseekers and vacancies based on a revised and updated national standard classification of occupations	MLIREC, NTA, MHETI, OPM	2020/21 -2022/23
			Create linkages with the Ministries of Education and Internal Security to ensure a one-stop attestation of educational credentials and criminal record checks	MLIREC, MHETI, MSS, NQA,	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Develop and install online career guidance materials and training materials for PES staff;	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2020/21
			Expand coverage of jobs on the portal to informal/self-employment, e.g. registration of artisans;	MLIREC	2018/19
			Expand the capacity of the server and Internet connectivity	MLIREC	2018/19
			Re-launch the upgraded NIEIS accompanied by the online publication of user manuals, basic features of the portal and organize online and offline training sessions for employers and workers	MLIREC, ESB, OPM	2018/19 – 2019/20
		Develop and implement innovative offline PES outreach programmes	Establish kiosks in strategic locations in urban and rural areas, and	MLIREC, ESB, RCs	2018/19 – 2022/23
			establish mobile employment service centres at key points in semi-urban and active rural areas	MLIREC, ESB, RCs	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Develop partnerships with NGOs operating in peri-urban and rural areas, technical schools and universities, etc. to ensure universal access and equity	MLIREC, ESB, MoEAC, MHETI, NTA, NGOs	2018/19 – 2022/23

Priority Area	Strategic Objective	Action /Strategy	Activities	Lead Agencies	Timeframe
Skills mismatch and shortage	Addressing skills mismatch and shortage through promotion of internships as stepping stones towards productive employment	Policy and legal framework for promotion of work experience improved	Finalize and adopt the Internship and Apprenticeship Policy and guidelines for stakeholders across all sectors of the economy	MHETI, MLIREC, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2022/23
			In the medium term, ensure that there is a clear legislative framework to accommodate and support the creation of internships by firms and other organizations.	MHETI, NTA, NQA, NIPAM, MLIREC	2018/19 – 2022/23
			Revise and update the Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations	MHETI, MLIREC, NTA, NQA, OPM	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Ensure that traineeships and apprenticeships are covered in the revisions and regular updates of the Namibia Standard Classification of Occupations to better align training to labour market demands	MLIREC, MHETI, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2019/20
			Register on the portal traineeship, and equivalent apprenticeship and job attachment opportunities placed by firms and other organizations.	MLIREC	2018/19 – 2019/20
			The PES should offer traineeships for its own services when preparing and conducting the expansion of its activities and human resources.	MLIREC, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2022/23
			The wider public sector should also consider the potential of traineeships.	MLIREC, OPM, NTA, NQA	2018/19 – 2022/23

Appendix 2 – PES Organizational Chart

1.



Appendix 3 – Unemployment trends

Unemployment rate by area and sex 1997-2013 (Broad definition)							
Area	Sex	1997	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Urban	Females	39.3	37.2	33.8	42.9	33.6	33.5
	Males	26.8	25.4	24.4	29.9	23.3	24.6
	Both	32.4	31.3	29.0	36.4	28.3	29.1
Rural	Females	41.2	40.4	53.0	72.1	29.6	32.7
	Males	30.3	30.8	36.5	56.8	22.4	27.2
	Both	36.1	35.9	44.7	64.9	26.2	30.2
Namibia	Females	40.4	39.0	43.4	58.4	31.8	33.1
	Males	28.6	28.3	30.3	43.5	22.9	25.8
	Both	34.5	33.8	36.7	51.2	27.4	29.6

Source: NFLS 1997, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2013

Appendix 4 – Meetings of ILO representatives with stakeholders in the Namibian labour market

Date	Stakeholder	Indicative Time
30 January 2017	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation - Permanent Secretary	08h30 - 09h00
	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation - Directorate of Labour Market Services (<i>Director, Deputy Directors and Heads of Subdivisions</i>)	09h00 - 11h30
	Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation - Namibia at work (Registration Centre)	12:00 - 13:00
	Windhoek Vocational Training Centre (WVTC)	14:30 - 15:30
	Social Security Commission	16:00 - 17:00
31 January 2017	Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare	08:30 - 09:30
	Namibia Statistic Agency (NSA)	10:00 - 11:00
	Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development	14:30 - 15:30
	Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI)	16:00 - 17:00
1 February 2017	National Planning Commission (NPC)	08:30 - 09:30
	Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service	10:00 - 11:00
	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation	11:30 - 12:30
	Namibian Employers' Federation (NEF)	14:30 - 15:30
	National Disability Council	16:00 - 17:00

Date	Stakeholder	Indicative Time
2 February 2017	Women's Action for Development (WAD)	08:30 - 09:30
	Namibia Training Authority (NTA)	10:00 - 11:00
	National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA)	11:30 - 12:30
	UNESCO	14:30 - 15:30
	Jobs Unlimited (Private Employment Agency)	16:00 - 17:00
3 February 2017	NEDBANK (Designated Employer)	08:30 - 09:30
	Ministry of Works and Transport	10:00 - 11:00
	National Youth Council (NYC)	11:30 - 12:30
	Debriefing meeting with the Director, Deputy Directors and Heads of Subdivisions: LMS	12:50 - 14:00

Appendix 5 – List of Ministry participants in the two meetings at the ministry

Monday, 30 January 2017

1. Ms Josephine Sifani – Deputy Director: Employment Services (ES)
2. Mr Arnold Ngeama – Chief Employment Officer: (ES)
3. Ms Emily Shikomba – Senior Employment Officer: (ES)
4. Ms Cynthia Beukes – Psychologist: Vocational Counselling Services: (VCS)
5. Ms Shasheeda Mberira – Intern Psychologist: (VCS)
6. Ms Julia Hamhata – Chief Development Planner: Productivity Promotion Unit (PPU)
7. Ms Anthea Rietz – Development Planner: (PPU)
8. Mr Elia Shiwambi – Development Planner: (PPU)
9. Ms Hilya Iita – Chief Development Planner: Employment Planning Subdivision (EP)
10. Ms Wilhemine Shigwedha: Chief Economist: Research and Development Subdivision (R&D)
11. Mr Victor Gaoseb – Economist: (R&D)
12. Ms Jacky Hambira – Private Secretary to the Director

NIEIS Registration Centre

13. Mr Piet Carstens – Employment Officer: (ES)
14. Mr Filemon Leonard – Employment Officer (ES)

Friday, 3 February 2017

15. Mr Albius Mwiya – Director: Labour Market Services
16. Ms Josephine Sifani – Deputy Director: Employment Services (ES)
17. Mr David Iigonda – Deputy Director: Labour Market Information (LMI)
18. Mr Arnold Ngeama – Chief Employment Officer: (ES)
19. Ms Cynthia Beukes – Psychologist (VCS)
20. Ms Shasheeda Mberira – Intern Psychologist (VCS)
21. Ms Wilhemine Shigwedha – Chief Economist: (R&D)
22. Ms Anthea Rietz – Development Planner: (PPU)
23. Mr Elia Shiwambi – Development Planner (PPU)
24. Mr Mathews Haitembu – Statistician: Labour Statistics Subdivision (LS)
25. Mr Wilbard Paulus – Statistician: (LS)
26. Ms Jacky Hambira – Private Secretary

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