



Migratory Profile

NAMIBIA

A. Executive Summary

Namibia is considered the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa, occupying part of the Kalahari Desert.ⁱ The culture comes from the traditions of native people and various immigrants who gradually arrived in the country.ⁱⁱ In this regard, in 2020 immigration came primarily from Angola, Zimbabwe, Germany, and South Africa.ⁱⁱⁱ Also, in terms of emigration, the main destination countries for Namibians are South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Botswana.^{iv}

Over the years, Namibia has also become a country of refuge for thousands of people fleeing their homes due to wars, poverty, and violence. People seeking refuge in Namibia mainly come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe.

Before 2015 Namibia's economy experienced a strong growth.^v However, this trend stagnated from 2016 onwards because of droughts, lower commodity prices, and reduced public investments.^{vi} There was a significant recession in the last three years, with a sharp contraction in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{vii}

Its leading economic sector is the tertiary sector, which accounts for 58.3% of GDP, and has a big incidence the transport of goods by land and sea and commercial activity.^{viii} The primary sector accounts for 18.7% of GDP.^{ix} In recent years, the importance of the mining sector has increased, mainly because of the extraction of uranium and diamonds.^x The secondary sector accounts for 15.8% of GDP, and construction has been one of the main sectors affected by the 2016 cuts.^{xi}

In 2021 Namibia's GDP amounted to US\$12,236,250.78^{xii} with an annual growth rate of 2.4%.^{xiii} In 2020 Foreign investment (FDI) net inflows represented -1.5% of the country's GDP.^{xiv} The inflation rate in 2021 was 3.6%.^{xv}

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

The Republic of Namibia is a southwestern African country with a population of 2,540,905 people and its territory extends for 824,269 sq km. It is one of the world's driest and most sparsely populated countries. It has borders in common with Angola, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Its capital and largest city is Windhoek, with 417,000

inhabitants.^{xvi} The official language is English, but they also speak Afrikaans (the most common idiom), German, and indigenous languages (Shivambo, Herero and Damara-Nama, Rukavango, Lozi, Tswana, and Bushman). Concerning ethnic groups, around 50% of the population belongs to the Ovambo tribe; Kavangos represent 9%, Herero 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, Bushmen 3%, Baster and Tswana 0.5%. Most of the population (90%) is Christian. Namibia's economy is highly dependent on mining for export.^{xvii}

II. International and Internal Migration

By mid-2020, 109,391 migrants were identified in Namibia. Women were 46% of the total migrant population, while 54% of them were male. In 1990, the migrant population in the country accounted for 120,641 people, representing a 9% decrease over the past 30 years. 36.6% was originally from Angola, 13.83% from Zimbabwe, 8.67% from Germany, and 8.12% from South Africa.^{xviii}

Since 2012 Angolan refugees in Namibia have been assisted with voluntary repatriation thanks to their home country support. Hence, the presence of Angolan migrants in Namibia has gradually decreased over the past ten years, until 2021. Since then, severe droughts in southern Angola have forced many families to flee from starvation and reach Oshakati, and finally settle in Etunda, Windhoek and Gobabis.^{xix}

Moreover, bilateral migration flux has been quite frequent between Angola and Namibia for family reasons, especially in the north. This phenomenon has a significant impact on cross-border trade and investment operations. Therefore, both countries are considering implementing a border resident card.^{xx}

Past heritage has also influenced Namibia's present picture. Ethnic groups disputes against German colonial occupation resulted in the genocide of Herero and Namaqua peoples, as well as mass migrations to Botswana between 1890 and 1906. Namibia gained its independence in 1990; and since then, most of those who went into exile and their descendants have returned to their homeland. It is the case of the members of the Herero ethnic group, originally from Namibia, who since 1995 started relocating there.^{xxi}

Past colonialism also influences the present economy. South Africans and Germans have been emigrating to Namibia since the 1950s and 1960s, because of the opportunity to open and operate their business in Afrikaans, English or German.^{xxii}

Furthermore, Namibia's internal migration has been affected by complex ethnic and cultural diversity. For instance, Oshiwambo and Rukwangali speaking people often relocate to urban areas for employment. However, once they leave their area, their original rural communities consider them foreigners or strangers since they have lost ties with their original culture. Therefore, adopting an urban lifestyle generally has a negative social connotation. ^{xxiii}

The country's rapid urbanisation challenges people's well-being and access to housing and essential services in urban areas. Pull factors include better economic and employment opportunities motivating inhabitants from rural areas to relocate to cities such as Windhoek. Push factors include the increasing temperatures and the destructive effects on the population's health and the poor harvests in rural areas in the country's central part. Drought

has also pushed rural populations to migrate into other rural areas with more favourable environmental conditions, especially in the north. Children living in rural areas are often sent by their families to relocate with other relatives in urban areas to study. Access to higher education is in fact more available in the main cities; however, once they graduate, they are unlikely to return to rural areas.

In 2020, the Namibian Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation launched the National Migration Policy. The intended purpose of this regulation was to achieve decent work conditions and labour integration for migrants and refugees.^{xxiv}

Nevertheless, internal and international migrants who move to urban areas are more likely to experience hazards and disasters as they create and expand informal urban settlements. These populations have experienced (with growth rates as high as 283% in Oshakati city between 1991 and 2011) limited access to electricity, water, sanitation and health services.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In 2020 Namibia reported 47,770 emigrants^{xxv} (1.9% of its total population),^{xxvi} of whom 50.6% were women.^{xxvii} Their main destination countries were South Africa (76.8%), the United Kingdom (5.1%), Australia (3.5%), Canada (2.3%), and Botswana (2.1%).^{xxviii} Although Namibia has witnessed a rapid urbanisation process, the number of emigrants is still relatively small.^{xxix} Furthermore, the number of studies on international migration, specifically on Namibians abroad, has been very limited.^{xxx}

Namibia was under the rule of the Union of South Africa (British dominion) until its independence in 1990, so its migratory ties with this country are essential.^{xxxi} Most Namibians crossing the borders into South Africa retain strong ties to this country and come from urban backgrounds.^{xxxii} Namibian expatriates in South Africa are generally better educated and receive higher incomes than those coming from other countries.^{xxxiii} The most important reason for moving to South Africa is often related to family and friends' ties, while poverty and the need for employment do not seem to play a relevant role.^{xxxiv} Therefore, the most affluent and stable in Namibian society have the closest cross-border relationship with the neighbouring country.^{xxxv} In addition, the main motivations for Namibians migrating to Europe or North America are to study and to seek or get a better job.^{xxxvi}

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced Persons)

In 2021, 3,733 persons with refugee status and 2,747 asylum seekers were registered in Namibia.^{xxxvii} Among the refugees, 85.37% came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 8.30% from Burundi, 3.35% from Rwanda, and 1.29% from Zimbabwe.^{xxxviii} 53.78% of them were male and 46.22% female, while the majority's age group was 18-59 years old.^{xxxix} By the end of 2022, 4,044 refugees and 2,782 asylum seekers will be registered in the country.^{xl}

The reasons for moving to Namibia in search of refuge are related to conflicts, political instability, and violence in their countries of origin.^{xli}

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the last two decades' major conflicts, increased poverty, political instability, and violence drove thousands of people to seek refuge in other countries, including Namibia.^{xliii} As far as Burundi, violence has decreased, and following the May 2020 elections, there has been an increased interest in the voluntary return of refugees living in other countries.^{xliiii} For this reason, in 2021 the number of refugees repatriated from Namibia grew significantly compared to previous years, even though the situation in Burundi still remains unstable.^{xliv}

Namibia is a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. However, the country put a reservation on article 26, which guarantees refugees freedom of movement within the host country.^{xlv} It also signed the 1969 AOU Refugees Convention. Furthermore, following its international obligations, the government has enacted the Namibian Refugee Act (Recognition and Control Act, 1999).^{xlvi}

Namibia's reservation of Article 26 prevents refugees and asylum seekers from looking for work or earning a living.^{xlvii} Most refugees and asylum seekers in Namibia reside in the Osire refugee settlement.^{xlviii} Here, they are confined within the camp and are obliged to obtain an exit permit, for example, even to go to the hospital in Otjiwarongo.^{xlix}¹ The settlement has its police station, health clinic, primary and secondary school, and a women's centre. Some applicants and refugees do odd jobs for the settlement administration or work in agricultural projects, while others run small tents or cultivate the land to survive.^{li}

Consequently, the strict confinement policies in Osire make asylum seekers and refugees highly vulnerable, with no official access to farmland, labour markets, and higher education opportunities.^{lii} Furthermore, refugees and protected persons can be arbitrarily arrested and deported if "it is in the interest of Namibia's sovereignty and integrity, national security, public order, decency or morality".^{liii}

Currently, the situation is even more complex as the region is under severe pressure because of rising fuel and food costs. This has led to smaller food rations for refugees and the elimination of the Osire Livelihoods Project, which supported refugees in small-scale farming and animal husbandry.^{liv} Also, climate change (high temperatures, water scarcity) has been affecting the fertility of the land, which is now inhospitable.^{lv}

Furthermore, Angola has also experienced rising temperatures in recent decades, leading to a severe drought in the country.^{lvi}^{lvii} Since December 2020, the Angolan provinces of Cuanza Sul, Benguela, Huambo, Namibe, and Huíla have been facing drought spells with below-average rainfall. In early March 2021, about 900 Angolan nationals, mostly children, nursing mothers, and the elderly, arrived in the Omusati and Kunene regions of Namibia looking for food, water, medical services, and employment opportunities.^{lviii}

Finally, due to climate change, in 2021 255 internal displacements were recorded in Namibia.^{lix}

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Namibia has been able to fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking.^{lx} Its national institutions have shown committed and sustained efforts during the

time of the US Department of State's report, even considering the impact of COVID-19 on the anti-trafficking capacity. Namibia remained in Tier 1 compared to the previous report. Its efforts included training employees on victim identification tasks, referring identified victims to care, opening eight public-operated shelter centres and funding three NGOs to provide care to trafficking victims. Namibia passed the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2018 (in effect since November 2019), criminalising sex and labour trafficking and mandating penalties of up to thirty years of imprisonment, fines of N\$1 million (over 62,000 USD) or both. This was coherent with contemporary punishments for severe crimes, such as kidnapping.^{lxi}

Regarding victims, as it happened in the previous five years, traffickers exploit locals and foreigners in Namibia, as well as Namibian victims abroad. Some of these victims are offered legit work positions at the beginning, and recruiters usually pay adequate wages, but afterwards they subject their victims to forced labour in cities and commercial farms. Namibian children are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour in several sectors, like cattle herding, domestic service, and agriculture. In addition, the arrival of about 7,000 Angolan migrants fleeing the terrible drought and the protracted malnutrition in the Southeastern region fostered in Namibia the traffic of Angolan children by exploiting them as cattle herders and domestic workers. Traffickers bring children not only from Angola, but also from other neighbouring countries and subdue them to sexual exploitation and forced labour, including street vending in Windhoek and other cities, as well as fishing work.^{lxii}

In 2021, the government provided assistance to all seven identified victims and continued providing care to the 18 victims from 2020. Together with NGOs, the state's assistance to victims included shelter, psycho-social services, and medical care. Child victims were placed into governmental residential childcare facilities and provided access to education. Seventeen Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Protection Units nationwide offered initial psycho-social, legal, and medical support to victims of crime, in coordination with other ministries. Foreign victims could obtain temporary residence visas during legal proceedings. Moreover, in order to prevent human trafficking, the government provided support to an NGO-operated hotline for GBV, child abuse, and human trafficking. The hotline operated daily from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (although no victims were identified through it).^{lxiii}

Despite these efforts, Namibia faces several problems related to coordination, victim identification and officials' complicity. It also initiated fewer investigations and prosecutions in 2021. Training was cancelled due to pandemic-related restrictions on in-person gatherings in 2020 and 2021, and it did not provide specialised training to law enforcement or protection officers either.

VI. National Legal Framework

The Namibian Constitution has been the Supreme Law in the country since its 1990 independence.^{lxiv}

Namibia launched its Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Proclamation in 1989, amended by Acts 4 and 7 in 1993. The Act regulates and controls the entry of persons in Namibia and their residence, and outlines the requirements for the expulsion of certain immigrants from the national territory.^{lxv} In 1993, Namibia also introduced the Immigration

Control Act to manage the entry of persons and their residence, and signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Citizenship in Namibia is an essential requirement for many other rights, such as the right to vote or run a political party.^{lxvi} The Immigration Control Act regulates the acquisition and loss of Namibian citizenship, under Article 4 of the Constitution.^{lxvii} Namibian Citizenship Special Conferment Act in 1991 and Namibian Citizenship (Second) Special Conferment Act in 2015 were enacted to confer Namibian citizenship upon certain descendants of persons who fled Namibia before 1915 because of the persecution that took place during the colonial government. The 2016 Namibian Citizenship Amendment Bill excluded children of non-Namibian parents who live in the country on temporary permits from acquiring Namibian citizenship by birth.

In 1990, Namibia acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees - with the reservation on article 26, related to refugees' freedom of movement - and its 1967 Protocol in February 1995. It also incorporated provisions of the 1951 Convention and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention^{lxviii} into its domestic refugee legislation,^{lxix} the Namibia Refugees, and the recognition and control Act of 1999.^{lxx} Today, as a member of the African Union (successor to the OAU, 1963-1999), Namibia cooperates closely with UNHCR to provide international protection and material support to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Namibia is not a party to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, nor the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.^{lxxi}

VII. Main Actors

The State

The state actor responsible for migration issues is the Namibian High Commission. It was established in 1990 and its task is promoting bilateral relations with the UK, Ireland, Malta, Cyprus and Greece, and providing civic services to Namibian nationals residing in these countries^{lxxii}.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security is in charge of the effective management and registration of the national population, the promotion of legal migration, and the reception and protection of asylum seekers and refugees. The Ministry also provides its citizens safety and security, and gives relevant stakeholders specific statistics and information.^{lxxiii}

The Department of Immigration Control, Citizenship and Regional Structure handles the entry and departure of people and expedites visas, passports, residence permits, and Namibian citizenship.^{lxxiv}

Regarding forced migration, the Department of Refugee Administration is governed by the 1999 Namibian Refugees (Recognition Control Act) Act no. 2. At the international level, it follows the 1951 UN Convention, the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.^{lxxv} An

asylum seeker, upon arrival in Namibia, should report to law enforcement and be interviewed for refugee status at the Osire Refugee Settlement. The Namibian Refugees Committee (NRC) refers the interview for consideration and recommendation to the Commissioner for Refugees, who will then grant or refuse the refugee status.^{lxxvi}

International Organisations

The leading international organisations dealing with migration issues are present and active in Namibia. This is the case of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which provides assistance and protection to the migrant population, combats human trafficking, and supports the reintegration of returnees.^{lxxvii}

IOM has been established in Namibia since 2011 and promotes the implementation of the international protection and assistance standards for migrants. IOM works to enhance the criminal justice system's response to trafficking in persons by establishing a formal mechanism among law enforcement bodies to coordinate their activities.^{lxxviii}

UNHCR's South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) serves Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and South Africa. Together they host approximately 260,521 people of concern to UNHCR, and 250,250 of them live in South Africa. Many refugees and asylum-seekers reside in the Osire Refugee Settlement, located 225 kilometres far from the capital of Namibia, Windhoek. UNHCR supports the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in providing protection and basic and essential services to refugees and asylum seekers in partnership with non-governmental organisations.^{lxxix}

Finally, UNICEF helps migrants settled in temporary camps in Namibia. Driven by a severe drought in southern Angola, an estimated 6,000 migrants fled to Namibia, and over 80% of them were women and children. More refugees are also found in non-monitored dwellings throughout the border regions, with very limited access to critical life-saving services.^{lxxx}

Together with UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides food and cash assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in the refugee settlements in Namibia such as the Osire settlement.^{lxxxi}

NGOs and Other Organisations

UNHCR supports the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in providing protection and basic and essential services to refugees and asylum seekers in partnership with two non-governmental organisations: Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and the Society for Family Health (SFH).^{lxxxii}

The Legal Assistance Centre is a public interest law centre that collectively strives to make the law accessible to those with the least access through education, law reform, research, litigation, legal advice, representation, and lobbying, to create and maintain a human rights culture in Namibia. LAC offers legal advice and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Osire Refugee Settlement near Windhoek and the Reception Centre in Zambezi Region.^{lxxxiii}

The Society for Family Health (SFH) is a non-governmental organisation operating in Namibia since 1997. It provides scholarships for refugees to study in their host countries. The Albert Einstein Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) Scholarship Programme offers qualified refugee students the possibility to study towards and earn an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum. UNHCR through a tripartite agreement with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration (MHAISS), and the Society for Family Health (SFH), implements this program in Namibia.^{lxxxiv}

In December 2020, Angolan citizens started crossing the border into Namibia looking for food, water, healthcare and employment because of the drought in their own country. At the request of the Namibian government, the Namibia Red Cross Society has been providing Angolan citizens food, shelter, blankets, mattresses, clothing, and healthcare, regardless of their legal status.^{lxxxv}

The Catholic Church

The Namibian Catholic Bishops Conference belongs to IMBISA^{lxxxvi}, a regional structure that supports its members dislocated in different areas: Angola and São Tomé, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. IMBISA's member bishops also meet every three years in a plenary session (the last one was held in November 2022). It also organises workshops such as the one that took place in Pretoria, South Africa, in February 2022, where opinions on the pastoral care of migrants and refugees in the IMBISA Region were shared and discussed in light of Pope Francis' Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti".^{lxxxvii}

For its part, the Namibian Conference includes the Migration and Itinerant People among its social commissions.^{lxxxviii}

The condition of migrants and refugees is a major concern highlighted in the bishops' appeals^{lxxxix}, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{xc}

The care dimension is carried out in collaboration with other institutions such as CRS and Caritas Namibia^{xc}. For instance, in 2013 South Africa suffered severe droughts, and Catholic Relief Services along with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Namibia gave funding to Caritas Namibia to boost fundraising to provide basic and supplementary food for the population.^{xcii}

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