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# THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF UNCONDITIONAL UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME GRANTS IN OVERCOMING FOOD INSECURITY IN NAMIBIA

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# Executive Summary

This report finds that UBI can be effective in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition by promoting financial security and resilience. Evidence from pilot case studies indicate that UBI can be effectively applied to the Namibian context. Moreover, since Namibia's welfare system has significant limitations, UBI can be a useful alternative response to crisis-level food insecurity. However, UBI's implementation in Namibia would be dependent on the availability of robust infrastructure such as schools and hospitals as well as policy reform to manage its high costs. Given UBI's financial inefficiency and the lack of evidence as to its sustainability on a national scale, its implementation will need to overcome several political challenges. Advocates should focus on the generation of robust evidence of UBI's benefits and use the successes of alternative cash-based interventions as a foundation for advancing UBI's implementation.



# Introduction

## Overview

Across all regions of Namibia, 1.15 million people face acute food insecurity, driven by climate shocks, rising food prices, and persistently high unemployment (36.9%) (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2023). In 2024, all regions of Namibia had reached or surpassed Crisis-level food insecurity as classified by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2024: 3). Nevertheless, government social security benefits and humanitarian assistance have likely alleviated food insecurity in some areas and prevented further deterioration, but much of the population will remain food insecure (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 2024: 3). Therefore, as acute malnutrition continues to rise, establishing a sustainable, long-term solution remains an urgent priority.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) has been proposed as a measure to address Namibia's ongoing food security crisis. UBI consists of periodic, unconditional cash payments for all individuals within a society, independent of means-testing or employment status (Center for Public Impact, 2016). Namibia has prior experience with UBI through the 2008 Basic Income Grant (BIG) pilot project (Center for Public Impact, 2016). The two-year initiative targeted Namibians living in poverty, providing a monthly grant of NAD100 per person in the Otjivero-Omitara region (Center for Public Impact, 2016). The program led to a significant reduction in household poverty, with the percentage of individuals below the food poverty line dropping from 76% in November 2007 to 37% within one year—and to just 16% among households unaffected by in-migration (Basic Income Grant Coalition, 2009). Despite these and other successes, the planned nationwide rollout of the BIG as part of Namibia's 2016-2025 development plan has yet to be implemented (Center for Public Impact, 2016).

This report evaluates the potential for UBI to improve food security in Namibia by addressing the following questions:

- How can UBI be effectively implemented for families and individuals experiencing food insecurity and malnutrition in Namibia?
- What are the unmet needs in food security and nutrition that a UBI could address?
- What are the appropriate modalities for unconditional grants?



*In January 2008, the first universal, unconditional cash transfer pilot project in the world began in Namibia, southwest Africa. All residents below the age of 60 received a Basic Income Grant (BIG) of N\$100 (€9) per person per month for a period of two years. Although achieving remarkable results, the pilot was not implemented as policy.*

# Research Question

What is the evidence - based on pilots and research from around the world - that unconditional / universal basic income grants address problems around malnutrition and food security in effective, efficient and sustainable ways, and how far is this applicable to the Namibian context?

## Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, consisting of a comprehensive literature review followed by qualitative data collection through focus groups and seven semi-structured interviews. The literature review provided an overview of Universal Basic Income (UBI) and its applicability in Namibia.

Data was further enriched through seven semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including Namibian policymakers, cash transfer program managers, community figureheads, and leading academics. These interviews gathered expert perspectives on the feasibility and potential impact of a UBI policy in Namibia.


Additionally, two focus groups were conducted to capture the views of affected populations. One group consisted of Lower-Middle income individuals, while the other included participants from the NAFSAN 'Nutrition-for-Health' training programs that were held across three Namibian regions. The focus groups provided insights into the lived experiences of those who may be directly impacted by a UBI policy, highlighting both opportunities and challenges in its potential implementation.

Definitions of key terms, conceptual frameworks, and a review of UBI case studies can be found in annex (3).



# SECTION 1

Key Debates,  
Theoretical Links, and  
Case Study Analysis



# 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO KEY DEBATES AND THEORETICAL LINKS

This section will introduce the debates informing and shaping current understandings of UBI, focusing on debates around

EFFICIENCY

& EFFECTIVENESS

## Efficiency:

In public policy efficiency refers to the minimisation of inputs while maximising outputs, whilst also including a 'value dimension', where a policy aligns with broader effects and values (Manzoor, 2014). To this end, critics argue that UBI's universality makes it financially inefficient since it does not seek to minimise inputs (i.e. the grant itself). Critics, therefore, propose more targeted interventions, like cash transfers and improving existing welfare systems, as more cost-effective alternatives (Ghatak, 2019).

In response, UBI advocates highlight the reduced administrative costs associated with universality (Torry, 2016) alongside the broader economic impact UBI could have as a continuous economic stimulus (Kőmúves, 2022). Advocates use examples of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic to frame UBI as a stimulus that creates economic growth and security, positively impacting productivity (House of Lords, 2020). They also indicate that financial efficiency is not the only form of efficiency which should be considered when designing a social welfare program. Instead, UBI excels at providing the 'value dimension' of efficiency which supports, in line with broader government priorities, a population becoming financially secure.

Additionally, advocates, whilst not denying UBI's high cost, offer several funding options for UBI (Van Parijs, 2017). Most of these suggestions operate around tax reform ranging from:

- Reformed flat rate taxation or linear taxation (Atkinson, 1995)
- Increased wealth taxation (Standing, 2017)
- A resource extraction tax (Berman, 2018)

# Effectiveness:

Effectiveness refers to achieving a policy's intended goals without creating excessive or counterproductive costs or consequences (Sanchez, 2022). Critics argue that the UBI is less effective at achieving set goals because it is not targeted. Therefore, instead of resources being directed disproportionately towards those most in need, all individuals receive the same amount, including people not in need – an 'excessive cost' often referred to as an inclusion error (Gentilini, 2020). Additionally, when considering consequences, critics also reference UBI as potentially:

- **Disincentivising** individuals to work, negatively effecting labour productivity (Muir, 2023)
- Creating a **dependency culture**, where individuals become reliant on welfare rather than their own labour (Widerquist, 2005)
- Being **misused** on vices, including alcohol and drugs (Evans, 2017)

Therefore, critics argue that conditions are necessary for efficiency.

However, UBI advocates highlight the design and aim of UBI as preventative, acting as a universal security net (Camper, 2017), rather than a limited response to poverty and food insecurity. Moreover, with respect to inclusion errors, advocates suggest that targeted responses exclude people in need of necessary assistance – commonly referred to as an exclusion error (Gentilini, 2020). They argue that excluding those in need is morally worse and more ineffective than including those not in need, particularly when considering the external positive effects of UBI as a broader economic stimulus. They also highlight the limited evidence of UBI misuse on vices, with one study giving \$200 to drug addicts in Liberia , with recipients “bucking expectations” and using the majority of funds on basic necessities (Blatmann & Niehaus 2014), and the negligible impacts on evidence on labour market and dependency culture in previous pilot studies (Schjoedt, 2016; Banerjee, 2023).

*Effectiveness refers to achieving a policy's intended goals without creating excessive or counterproductive costs or consequences.*



# 1.2 Theoretical Links between Food Security and UBI

Food insecurity and poverty are closely related, with each reinforcing and perpetuating the other. It is also multidimensional, meaning that it has a diverse range of causes. Therefore, as a simple understanding, UBI influences food security by increasing income, creating greater financial stability, in turn supporting food security by enabling individuals to access and afford nutritious food (Andrianarison, 2022).

However, food insecurity additionally stems from the inadequacy of existing social welfare systems. That is, existing social welfare systems are often designed to respond to crises (e.g. climate change), rather than prevent them. According to Guy Standing, this context has created a new economic class - the precariat, where chronic uncertainty has led to continuous economic instability, worsened by repeated economic shocks (Standing, 2011).

Thus, UBI serves as a solution by providing a guaranteed income which provides consistent economic security to increase the availability of and access to adequate food. Additionally, UBI provides this security on an individual level, reinforcing the belief that recipients themselves are in the best position to decide their own needs (Davies, 2019).

# 1.3 Case Study Comparison

This section analyses and compares previous UBI/Unconditional Cash Transfer pilots and their effectiveness, efficiency, and applicability to the Namibian context. Limited by the number of previous case studies, overlap between existing studies, and whether these case studies represent a 'complete' UBI pilot as shown by the GiveDirectly table in annex (6)(GiveDirectly, n.d), this report has sought to maximise applicability by analysing case studies outside of North America, focusing on:



**1- THE 2017-2030  
GIVEDIRECTLY  
BASIC INCOME  
PILOT IN KENYA**



**2- THE 2011-2012  
MADHYA PRADESH  
UBI PILOT IN INDIA**



**3- THE 2003-2021  
BOLSA FAMÍLIA  
PROGRAM IN  
BRAZIL**

To create a comparison, case studies 1 and 2 are examples of UBI, whilst case study 3 is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program widely referenced as 'being recognised globally as a model for CCT programmes' (Centre for Public Impact, n.d).

These case studies have been compared and analysed by reviewing the literature surrounding their establishment, findings, and limitations. A detailed review of each case study can be found in section 4 of the annexe, alongside annexes (5.1) and (5.2), comparing modalities and outcomes.



However, while this is a comparative analysis, these case studies cannot be compared as like for like; each study operated with different modalities, target outcomes, contextual factors, and conditions.

Additionally, while both UBI pilots were academic studies, the Bolsa Família program (BFP) was a nationwide initiative operating outside controlled study parameters. This distinction has the effect that the UBI pilots were able to select their study conditions whilst the BFP could not. Therefore, while the academic nature does nothing to invalidate the results of the UBI pilot studies, it does allow for the possibility that the findings from these studies, compared to the BFP, may have been amplified by choosing favourable conditions. Equally, it reflects the need for continued long-term UBI pilots like those of GiveDirectly on a more national scale.

## 1.3.1 Comparative Analysis

This section will analyse the three case studies to answer the core focuses of the questions highlighted in this report's ToRs annex (1, 2):

- **1. Does UBI address food insecurity and malnutrition effectively?**
- **2. Does UBI address food security and malnutrition efficiently?**
- **3. What can be taken away from these case studies in the context of Namibia?**


# 1. Does UBI address food insecurity and malnutrition effectively?

The evidence from the case studies indicates that UBI effectively tackles food insecurity and malnutrition in the short and medium term, with notable changes occurring within 6 months. This is evidenced by significant increases in nutritious food consumption, reductions in child malnutrition, and increased nutritional access. While implied rather than explicit, the case studies also indicate that UBI can have long-term positive impacts on food security by promoting financial security.

The case studies suggest that UBI addressed food insecurity and malnutrition in several ways:

- **Financial Access** - UBI caused poverty reductions, increased purchasing power, and reduced debt, improving financial access. The increase in financial access increased individuals' ability to purchase adequate food, leading to an immediate improvement in food security and nutritional consumption.
- **Financial Security** - Financial access is temporary, addressing immediate needs rather than long-term security. In that sense, the improved financial traits exhibited through the application of UBI, including debt reduction and increased saving rates (Banerjee, 2023), show that UBI influences long-term financial security and, thereby, improves long-term access to adequate nutrition and improved food security.
- **Physical access** - Physical access to food is a key aspect of food security. The Madhya Pradesh case study indicates that UBI improves food availability through an increase in agricultural self-employment and asset investment (Schjoedt, 2016). Both factors led to increased local food production, directly improving the physical access to food. Across both UBI case studies, the quality and nutrition of food consumed were also greatly improved.

Additionally, the GiveDirectly and Madhya Pradesh case studies recorded large-scale economic effects, including increased wages and asset appreciation. Alongside the evidence of UBI's broader positive effects, like improved health and educational outcomes, the case studies suggest that UBI can effectively address the multidimensional nature of food insecurity.



While CCTs in Brazil also showed positive impacts on aspects of food and financial security - compared to UBI, the effects of CCTs were less pronounced. While significant reductions in child mortality - a result of increased vaccinations, health care and improved nutrition (Hellmann, 2015) - were recorded, there was limited evidence that nutritional status outcomes improved at all (Magalhães et al., 2024). Moreover, while the conditionalities of the CCTs positively affected specific targeted outcomes - health and education- they failed to comprehensively break the multi-causal cycles of intergenerational poverty that contribute to food insecurity across Brazil (Neves, 2022). This contrast suggests that removing conditions could facilitate greater autonomy and a more sustainable improvement in food security and nutrition.

## 2. Does UBI address food security and malnutrition efficiently?

The various modalities of the three case studies offer several understandings of UBI's efficiency. From an administrative efficiency perspective, Abhijit Banerjee (2023) suggests that the universality of UBI was administratively efficient as it removed requirements to check recipients' eligibility and ongoing compliance whilst streamlining the dissemination of funds. However, the BFP case study also illustrated that, while conditionality does reduce administrative efficiency, this inefficiency can be reduced by combining the existing conditional social welfare systems into one (Centre for Public Impact, n.d).

Another important aspect of efficiency is achieving a desired outcome quickly. The case studies indicate that UBI reduced poverty and improved food security and nutrition much more quickly than Brazil's CCT. That is, UBI achieved more significant improvements in food security and poverty reduction in a shorter period – 6 months compared to 18 years, than the CCT comparison.

However, UBI is less financially efficient. While the case studies did not directly address these criticisms, UBI has a higher cost per person than CCTs and other forms of social welfare. Furthermore, much of the literature on the BFP CCT praises the program's financial efficiency, with 43 million recipients costing only 0.5% of Brazil's GDP (Hellmann, 2015).

Therefore, the case studies suggest that UBI is efficient at achieving the desired outcomes quickly and with limited administrative requirements; however, it remains more costly than some conditional options.

# 3. What can be taken away from these case studies in the context of Namibia?

The contextual conditions between these case studies and Namibia suggest that UBI remains applicable to the Namibian context. Namibia and the case studies share similar socio-political and economic contexts, including high levels of unemployment, poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, inequality, slow economic growth, and higher vulnerability to crises in rural populations (Bertelsmann, 2024). However, the potential financial inefficiency of UBI may continue to be the biggest challenge to its implementation.

In the Namibian context, these case studies indicate that UBI may show the following results:

## Takeaway #01

A significant, positive, and timely impact across all three levels of food security and nutrition.

## Takeaway #02

A low likelihood of promoting a dependency culture and/or provide a disincentive to work.

## Takeaway #03

An increase in small-scale agricultural investment and self-employment.

## Takeaway #04

An effective tackling of the indirect and multidimensional factors influencing and enforcing food insecurity.

## Takeaway #05

A positive impact on immediate and long-term financial security and debt reduction.



# SECTION 2

Limitations of Existing  
Policies in Namibia

# 2. Limitations of Existing Policies in Namibia

Having established indicative results from case studies that UBI could be applicable and effective in Namibia, this section will evaluate UBI's effectiveness and applicability in the context of the limitations of Namibia's existing welfare systems.

## 2.1 The Formal and Informal Namibian Welfare systems

The Namibian welfare system operates in the context of informal community and family-based support in addition to a formal welfare system. While this informal welfare network provides critical assistance under stable conditions, it becomes severely compromised during crises like droughts, when entire communities simultaneously fall into vulnerability (Subbarao, 1998). In the context of climate change, rising food and fuel prices in Namibia, economic pressures are additionally increasing due to the growing dependency of vulnerable groups, including the elderly and unemployed youth, on a strained support system. This burden falls heavily on the working class, while the country's revenue base continues to shrink - limiting the capacity of existing social safety nets (Kalusopa & Katjuongua, 2021). Therefore, a strong formal welfare system in times of crises - like food insecurity - is crucial. Namibia's formal welfare system comprises a mix of contributory and non-contributory social protection mechanisms. These include old-age pensions, disability grants, child grants, veterans' grants, and emergency cash transfers (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2021).

## 2.2 Limitations of the Current Welfare System

### 01.

Administrative Complexity and High Costs

### 02.

Exclusion and Inclusion Errors

### 03.

Identification Barriers and Bureaucratic Hurdles

### 04.

Inadequate Response to Sudden Crises

Despite often being commended for having one of the most comprehensive social protection systems in Africa, Namibia's welfare system faces structural weaknesses that hinder its effectiveness.

## 2.1.1 ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEXITY AND HIGH COSTS

Social assistance in Namibia is administered through multiple legislative frameworks and various government ministries and agencies. The fragmentation of these provisions across different entities has led to operational inefficiencies (Kalusopa & Katjuongua 2021). These are compounded by manual processing and bureaucratic inefficiencies.



Further, major inefficiencies are the costly and labour-intensive targeting process required for their means-tested benefits. Identifying and verifying eligible beneficiaries requires continuous data collection, updates, and monitoring - all of which demand substantial financial and human resources (Hanna & Olken, 2018). Research indicates that targeted programs in developing countries often allocate up to 10% of their budgets to administrative costs, limiting the funds available for direct support (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). In Namibia, slow bureaucratic processes, outdated verification methods, and reliance on manual paperwork frequently cause delays, preventing timely assistance from reaching those in need – particularly in time of crisis (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2020). As one interviewee noted:



*"The process is just too slow. By the time you get approved, your situation has already changed. People cannot afford to wait months when they need help today."*

During crises such as severe droughts, delays in welfare distribution exacerbate vulnerabilities, forcing those in urgent need to navigate a lengthy approval process before receiving aid (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2020). The administrative burden of targeted welfare programs is particularly evident when compared to universal approaches like Universal Basic Income. Research suggests that while universal models may initially have higher inclusion errors, they significantly reduce administrative costs by eliminating complex verification processes (Banerjee et al., 2019). The Basic Income Grant (BIG) pilot in Otjivera (2008-2009) demonstrated that providing cash unconditionally simplified administration, minimized corruption, and ensured faster, more efficient distribution (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2019).







## 2.1.2 EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION ERRORS

Targeted welfare programs often struggle with high exclusion and inclusion errors, reducing their overall effectiveness. In Namibia, many eligible individuals are excluded due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited outreach, and misclassification. Additionally, Research by Banerjee et al. (2019) highlights that income instability among intended recipients further complicates accurate targeting. During our stakeholder interviews, one interviewee noted:

"If you are going to use poverty as the eligibility criteria, we know poverty is not static, right? You can be poor today, but it doesn't necessarily mean you will still be poor tomorrow."

Namibia's social assistance programs rely on means-tested eligibility criteria, which often fail to capture those in temporary or seasonal poverty, such as informal workers or subsistence farmers affected by droughts (Hanna & Olken, 2018). As a result, many individuals are excluded from receiving critical aid when they need it most.

Inclusion errors, on the other hand, occur when individuals above the poverty line receive benefits, reducing the efficiency of social welfare programs. Corruption and favouritism further exacerbate these errors, with local officials sometimes manipulating beneficiary lists for personal or political gain. One interviewee highlighted this risk:

"Local leadership identifies beneficiaries, which creates room for favouritism and misallocation. Universality could resolve these issues by removing discretionary decision-making."

The politicization of welfare programs allows well-connected individuals to access social grants regardless of actual need, while others are excluded despite meeting eligibility criteria. This weakens public trust in social protection mechanisms and diverts resources away from those who need them most. Namibia's experience with cash transfers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Basic Income Grant (BIG) pilot in Otjivera demonstrated that universal benefits reduce corruption risks, ensure rapid distribution, and reach those in need without complex bureaucratic processes (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2019).



## 2.1.3 IDENTIFICATION BARRIERS AND BUREAUCRATIC HURDLES



Given Namibia's crisis-level food insecurity, streamlining access to social welfare benefits is essential. However, stringent identification requirements create significant barriers, particularly for rural populations, undocumented children, and nomadic communities (Randall & Coast, 2015; Kalusopa & Katjuongua, 2021). Many lack birth certificates or national IDs, preventing them from accessing cash transfers, pensions, and food assistance. The absence of a national biometric registry further complicates eligibility verification, leading to exclusion errors. One interviewee highlighted the severity of the issue:

“We still have undocumented or unregistered children... and I would imagine also the challenge of IDs comes even for the adult population, because there are a lot of undocumented people, mostly migrants, but also nomadic communities.”

Even for those who do have identification, Namibia's slow-moving bureaucracy and complex application processes present additional barriers to receiving assistance. Manual verification systems and outdated record-keeping result in long processing times, further delaying aid to those in urgent need (Moreira de Souza & Torres, 2024).



## 2.1.4 INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO SUDDEN CRISES

Natural, economic, and political crises are becoming more frequent, widespread, and prolonged across the world (Barca & O'Brien, 2018). However, Namibia's social protection system is largely reactive, which can leave the most vulnerable without immediate support when a crisis occurs.

However, past examples have shown the effectiveness of near-universal cash transfers in times of crisis. The 2013–2014 drought relief program, organized by private actors such as the Lutheran Churches, didn't face the same bureaucratic hurdles and delivered quick, unconditional support to those excluded from government grants (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2020).

Similarly, the COVID-19 Emergency Income Grant (EIG)—despite being part of the formal welfare system—was rolled out swiftly, reaching 750,000 applicants within weeks (Haarmann & Haarmann, 2020). Unlike Namibia's usual grant system, which requires lengthy approvals, the COVID-19 EIG was a near-universal, direct cash transfer, allowing for faster relief. A recipient described its impact:

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*“The money that I received... during Coronavirus, COVID-19... was really useful because I went to go buy my basic needs. **It added value to my life**”.*

This demonstrates that Namibia’s welfare system can respond quickly when needed, but that flexibility is not embedded into standard programs. During collective crises such as droughts, Namibia’s core social protection mechanisms struggle—applications surge, administrative bottlenecks slow distribution, and informal community-based safety nets collapse as entire communities face hardship (Moreira de Souza & Ferreira Torres, 2024).

However, Food insecurity has immediate effects, making delays in aid potentially life-threatening. In May 2024, 1.4 million Namibians faced severe food insecurity, making up 48% of the country’s population. The extreme drought resulted in a 53% drop in cereal production, worsening food shortages. In response, the government launched a drought relief program, but due to slow bureaucratic processes, 330,000 families were left waiting for assistance, showing the inability of the current system to deliver immediate relief (Moreira de Souza & Ferreira Torres, 2024).

While the government has historically relied on emergency budgets to fund crisis relief, this approach is unsustainable. Constantly shifting resources at the last minute weakens long-term planning and stability. The lack of rapid response mechanisms highlights the need for a shock-responsive social protection system (Kalusopa & Katjiuongua, 2021). Past interventions, particularly the EIG and church-led drought relief, demonstrate that direct, (near) universal cash transfers can serve as a model for more responsive, less bureaucratic emergency assistance. UBI could function as a dynamic and flexible stabilizing mechanism in this context.



For instance, during the 2004 Tsunami in Sri Lanka, millions of dollars were allocated to emergency relief supplies, however, Standing (2017) notes that this aid was often not what the population wanted or needed, and that providing them with basic income cash transfers would have given them more agency than traditional humanitarian aid in terms of “how to move forward with their lives” (Standing, 2017: 242). Furthermore, unlike traditional welfare programs that require application processes and administrative oversight, UBI remains in place, providing a safety net without the need for continuous eligibility reassessments; “UBI is ready for the moment someone falls into poverty—whether due to job loss, economic downturns, or climate-related disasters.” (Nettle, 2018).



Conversely, UBI offers individuals and communities transformative purchasing power, empowering them to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of a crisis. Furthermore, unlike traditional welfare programs that require application processes and administrative oversight, UBI remains in place, providing a safety net without the need for continuous eligibility reassessments;

***“UBI is ready for the moment someone falls into poverty—whether due to job loss, economic downturns, or climate-related disasters.” (Nettle, 2018).***

# SECTION 3

Evaluating UBI's  
Transformative Potential



# 3. HOW CAN UBI BE TRANSFORMATIVE?

Having demonstrated UBI's effectiveness and applicability in addressing food insecurity in Namibia through case studies and in the context of the limitations of existing systems, this section will evaluate UBI's transformative effects. It will show how universality and unconditionality can offer transformative financial resilience and security to address food insecurity. It will then discuss added costs, and the trade-offs in financial efficiency and sustainability, involved in its effectiveness.

## 3.1 UBI as the Basis for Effective Transformation

This section finds that UBI can effectively act as the basis for increased spending and greater access to opportunities such as employment and education, providing both financial security and resilience against poverty and food insecurity. Moreover, the universality and unconditionality of UBI can have broad and equitable effects in addressing food insecurity that make it more effective than conditional and/or targeted interventions.



**BUILDING FINANCIAL  
SECURITY AND  
RESILIENCE**



**THE BROAD AND  
EQUITABLE EFFECTS  
OF  
UNCONDITIONALITY  
AND UNIVERSALITY**

# 3.1.1 Building Financial Security and Resilience

The transformative potential of UBI stems from the financial security and resilience it can provide. This is particularly needed in Namibia, where the key drivers of food insecurity are a lack of an income, an unstable income, or a precarious ability to spend given price shocks and unemployment (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2024: 1).



UBI’s universality and unconditionality produces a ‘multiplier effect’, which is an economic phenomenon where an initial increase in overall spending results in a larger output of economic activity. Since large numbers of people spend more, given a universal and unconditional grant, demand for goods and services is increased, leading to higher production, employment and income generation. This causes the initial impact to be ‘multiplied’, as greater overall benefits are generated than the original amount spent on the grant. Standing (2017) explains this effect with reference to a UBI grant for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, where each dollar generated “more than \$2 for the Lebanese economy, most of which was spent locally” (Standing, 2017: 243).

This can provide financial security through an increased spending capacity for basic needs like food. It can also increase access to transformative opportunities like entrepreneurship and education, which increase the resilience of individuals, families and communities against falling into poverty and thereby food insecurity.

## 3.1.2 The broad and equitable effects of unconditionality and universality

Unconditionality and universality can have broader effects than conditional grants or non-cashed-based conditional interventions like food stamp programmes. One advocate involved in several global UBI Pilots pointed out that providing a basic income to some but not others can lessen overall impacts due to the networks of dependencies that exist in circumstances of food insecurity and poverty:

*"If you give [a basic income] to one household and not to the next door neighbours... you're going to find people knocking on your door and asking ... favours from you, etcetera. So it's going to be diluted straight away".*

The broader impact of universality and unconditionality can be an effective base for social transformation by providing small basic incomes for interdependent networks, instead of diluting conditional incomes. Forget et. al (2013) make the same point: "Raising my income makes my child more likely to finish high school; you benefit because your child will be influenced by the decisions made by my child." (Forget et. al (2013: 90).

In Namibia, the broad reach of UBI's effects can promote gender equity and women's freedom, alleviating key issues of poverty and food insecurity. In fact, "women tend to invest more in their children's nutrition, health, education and housing with increased income." (UN Women, 2023: 1). Women's empowerment has also been shown to be critical for child nutrition in the first 1000 days of life (Santoso et. al 2019). UBI's equity can be particularly transformative given the unique experiences of many Namibian women. An advocate we interviewed explained that many women have resorted to prostitution as a coping strategy:

*"We had women who said "we needed to prostitute ourselves... in order to feed our children"".*

Here, the transformative potential of UBI is in providing women with their own basic income, one that is equal to men's and crucially one which they can decide how to spend.



## 3.2 Concerns and Considerations for UBI's transformative potential

While UBI can provide broad and equitable effects on poverty and food insecurity, this comes with a high financial cost, financial inefficiency, and depends on broader tax and policy reforms to be affordable and effective. Moreover, it must be implemented alongside broader systems and opportunities like education, employment, transport and healthcare, since UBI can only increase capability to access these systems and opportunities. Therefore, affordability, financial efficiency, and the risk of undesirable consequences on the Namibian economy must be considered alongside the transformative potential of UBI.

### 3.2.1 State Integration could Mitigate High Costs and Increase Efficiency

For UBI to be effective it will require systems, infrastructure and opportunities like education, healthcare and employment. This increases costs significantly. However, these costs can be mitigated by integrating UBI policy with pre-existing social policy. For example, UBI replacing some welfare systems could mitigate the high costs involved in both (Colombino 2019).

Similarly, integrating cohesive state-led infrastructure into UBI's implementation could ensure that its benefits are efficiently taken advantage of by recipients through making infrastructure like schools and hospitals available. Not doing so can weaken infrastructure that vulnerable people must participate in to escape poverty and risks limiting UBI's effectiveness. Therefore, existing state-led infrastructure can be strengthened, and new infrastructure can be introduced in a streamlined, efficient, integration with UBI's implementation. High costs could also be managed through social policy's replacement with UBI in part or in whole.

*For UBI to be effective it will require systems, infrastructure and opportunities like education, healthcare and employment.*

## **3.2.2 Assessing UBI's Financial Inefficiency**

A reformed tax system would maintain the financial security and resilience against poverty offered by UBI, while minimizing inclusion errors. Nevertheless, if this approach were to be implemented, the Namibian government will have to evaluate how to manage UBI's implementation alongside a reformed tax system that effectively 'taxes back' this income, leading to slow cash flows. Inevitably, UBI ultimately remains financially inefficient.

## **3.2.3 Mitigating risks of inflation**

UBI could, in theory, increase food or other price levels by increasing consumer spending. Jones and Marinescu (2022) found in a study in Alaska, that it was uncertain what the causal effects of unconditional cash transfers were on inflation and prices (Jones & Marinescu 2022). However, the multiplier effect may contribute to the economy's growth and labour to the degree that inflation risks may be manageable.

## **3.4 Evaluating transformative potential and trade-offs in efficiency and sustainability**

Overall, UBI can provide broad and equitable effects in addressing poverty and food insecurity through financial security and resilience. Since a UBI must be introduced as part of social policy and tax reform as well as infrastructure, its effectiveness comes with added costs and financial inefficiency. It could be severely limited without the feasibility of these reforms. However, UBI could capitalize on its effectiveness by reforming and simplifying social policy.

Moreover, in terms of sustainability, more quantitative information is needed. For example, data will need to be gathered as to whether UBI as a supplement or replacement for existing social policy saves enough money to be entirely sustainable. Another consideration for UBI's transformative potential is whether inflation can be an issue. Inflation is a risk with any cash-based intervention, so data will need to be gathered as to how it could be managed or contained on a national level. In short, the extent of UBI's financial inefficiency and how it can manage its high cost, trade-offs, and added costs will depend on the details of its implementation.

# SECTION 4

Policy Implementation

# 4.1 Key Policy Considerations for UBI Advocacy in Namibia

Insights from stakeholder interviews—including policymakers, leading academics, community leaders, and program managers—highlighted political challenges and opportunities that advocates might face when campaigning for UBI. This section will examine how these opportunities and challenges can be effectively addressed to effectively apply UBI in Namibia.

## 4.1.1 Concerns about the term “Universal”

A key challenge that emerged from stakeholder interviews was scepticism of the effectiveness of UBI’s universality. Policymakers raised two main concerns. Firstly, there were significant doubts about its financial feasibility. Namibian policymakers emphasized that Namibia lacks the fiscal space to support a universal UBI scheme. As one interviewee stated:

*“We [Namibia] are not in a [fiscal] position at this point in time to do a whole universal basic income grant.”*

Secondly, there was concern that a universal model could lead to inefficient resource allocation, as funds might be distributed to individuals who do not require financial assistance. One policymaker described this as “wasteful”, explaining:

*“You then have an aspect of wastefulness, for example, the likes of [name redacted] might not necessarily need that amount that is given, and therefore it could have been used better by a person who is more needy.”*

Government stakeholders emphasized that clear, empirical evidence would be the most effective tool to assuage these concerns. For example, one policymaker noted:

*“We notice that, when you give evidence... it becomes very easy for Cabinet members to understand and to be clear as to what they are signing into.”*

Their concerns are valid, as there is limited research on the long-term implementation of UBI, particularly within the Namibian context. This suggests that UBI advocacy should prioritize strong quantitative evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness compared to other social protection schemes and justify its cost as a worthwhile investment for the Namibian government. To build a compelling case, a multi-stakeholder task force—including economists, government policymakers, community leaders, and program managers—could be established to generate and present data. This approach would not only ensure that the strongest quantitative evidence in favour of UBI is produced, but that evidence aligns with government priorities of sustainable investments and decision-making processes.

## 4.1.2 Resistance to Systemic Change

Nearly all stakeholders interviewed emphasized that implementing UBI in Namibia would significantly disrupt the existing development aid system which institutions—such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—benefit from preserving. One interviewee stated:

*“They are imposing their ideological model on a developing country to benefit. They don't have a lot of empathy with the way a developing country should be in charge of itself and have impeded it [their independence].”*

Because cash-based interventions challenge the dominance and control of multilateral institutions, stakeholders acknowledged that advocating for UBI would be an “upstream” battle. While there is no simple solution to overcoming these barriers, it is crucial to recognize that resistance to UBI may stem from institutional and political interests in addition to economic concerns. One potential approach to navigate these interests is to first advocate for smaller, less disruptive cash-based programs that already have support within the government, such as conditional cash transfer programs, and use their success as a foundation to gradually introduce UBI. As one stakeholder notes:

*“I would much prefer to have a smaller amount given to everybody, individually, unconditionally, and then build it up as resources can be mobilized.”*

Nevertheless, the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted multilateral institutions to reevaluate the effectiveness of cash-based social protection. In 2022, the IMF published a report highlighting the success of cash-based intervention in emergency contexts—challenging some of the concerns raised by interviewees (International Monetary Fund, 2022). As more multilateral institutions continue to produce evidence in support of cash-based intervention, advocates may benefit from leveraging these findings to strengthen their case and pre-empt potential resistance from these institutions.

## 4.1.3 Concerns About Achieving Specific Outcomes

A key concern among stakeholders was their lack of confidence in UBI's ability to achieve specific outcomes. As a result, there was a preference for combining UBI with additional social or behavioural initiatives. One stakeholder explained:

*"It is not enough to give cash to beneficiaries, without explaining, without giving some sort of education and some way of influencing behaviour change."*

Therefore, to make UBI more appealing to policymakers, advocacy efforts might benefit from incorporating social or behavioural programming alongside cash transfers. However, some stakeholders were critical of co-programming, particularly if it imposed conditions on the receipt of UBI, noting that it could be perceived as paternalistic. To address this challenge co-programs could be made optional instead of mandatory. This allows co-programs to be a tool at the disposal of Namibians, instead of a control mechanism over their social protection. However, further research may be needed to assess how optional versus mandatory, co-programs influence government support for UBI.

*"We notice that, when you give evidence... it becomes very easy for Cabinet members to understand and to be clear as to what they are signing into."*

## 4.2 Alternatives to UBI

The previous section highlighted key considerations in advocating for Universal Basic Income (UBI), including common concerns about sustainability and implementation. This section explores alternative cash-based approaches that may be more politically feasible to implement than UBI in a Namibian context. These alternatives are not meant to replace UBI, but instead, could serve as entry-points for introducing cash-based programs, which, if successful, could later strengthen the case for UBI.

### 4.2.1 Conditional Cash Transfers and Cash Transfers with Co-Programming

Namibian policymakers in our interviews identified conditional cash transfers and cash transfers with co-programming as alternatives to UBI that have strong political support in Namibia. This is because these models are often seen as more cost-effective and less "wasteful". As a result, they may be an effective method of transitioning cash-based interventions towards UBI in the Namibian Context.

### 4.2.2 Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)

#### ***Overview of Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)***

Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) is a targeted social assistance program designed to support individuals or households earning below a specific income threshold (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). Several countries, including South Africa and Brazil, are exploring variations of this model. For instance, South Africa's proposal suggests a basic income grant of \$15–\$20 per person per month (Centre for Social Science Research, 2006). Unlike Universal Basic Income (UBI), which provides payments to all individuals regardless of income, GMI specifically supports low-income households and adjusts benefits as earnings increase (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). Importantly, GMI is not intended to replace work but rather to ensure that recipients can meet a minimum standard of living (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020).

# Advantages of GMI in Namibia



## Perceived as “pro-poor”

In our interview’s policymakers expressed concerns that UBI lacks a clear focus on low-income populations. While it must be acknowledged that debates exist on whether poverty-targeted programs effectively reach the most vulnerable, GMI is seen as a more explicitly pro-poor policy. As a result, GMI may be more politically favourable in Namibia than UBI.



## A fiscally conservative alternative to UBI

With UBI often criticized as “wasteful,” GMI offers a middle ground by providing financial support to individuals while maintaining a more targeted, cost-conscious approach. As a result, GMI may be more politically viable in Namibia than UBI.



## Maintains the flexibility of UBI

Like UBI, GMI provides unconditional cash support for those below a certain income threshold. This allows recipients to decide how best to allocate their funds without government-imposed spending restrictions.





# Challenges of GMI in Namibia



## Concerns about work disincentives

Some stakeholders expressed concerns that cash-based programs could discourage work, although research does not strongly support this claim. However, because GMI benefits are set to support people at such a minimum standard of living, they are unlikely to discourage employment (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). Instead, they may serve as a temporary support mechanism for those experiencing financial hardship (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). This same criticism is often levelled at UBI.



## High administrative burden

One of the biggest drawbacks of GMI is the need for frequent eligibility checks, which can be costly and bureaucratically complex (Gentilini & Grosh, 2020). In our interviews, many stakeholders highlighted the difficulty of accurately determining eligibility, with a significant risk that the most vulnerable individuals could be excluded. As UBI is universal, this burden is null.

## The flawed assumption of linear poverty



GMI assumes that once individuals surpass a specific income threshold, they are on a stable path out of poverty. However, many people fall back into poverty after brief periods of financial stability (Misha et al., 2014). Therefore, without frequent and well-executed eligibility reassessments, GMI risks failing to support those who temporarily rise above the threshold but later fall back below it (Misha et al., 2014). This dynamic raises concerns about whether GMI can effectively address the realities of economic instability in Namibia. Since UBI is a universal grant, it provides support to all individuals, regardless of the volatility of their situations.

## 4.2.3 Graduation Approach (GA)

The Graduation Approach (GA) aims to support the extreme poor in transitioning out of poverty through a multi-phase support system (Soares & Orton, 2017). This includes asset transfers, financial training, social services, and self-employment support, with the goal of fostering self-sufficiency over time (Soares & Orton, 2017). Once participants achieve a certain income level, they “graduate” from the program (Soares & Orton, 2017). It is important to note that GA generally excludes cash transfers, but there is debate around the integration of cash programming into the approach to create a more comprehensive solution. Overall, current global pilots, many of which have *excluded* cash-based programs, have shown mixed results (Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017).

### Advantages of GA in Namibia

#### **Strong political support**

During our interviews Namibian policymakers noted that they were currently looking to implement a graduation scheme. This demonstrates strong political feasibility which may ease its implementation compared to UBI.

#### **Targeted support for the ultra-poor**

GMI assumes that once individuals surpass a specific income threshold, they are on a stable path out of poverty.

#### **Incorporation of co-programming**

GA integrates co-programming into its model, which is strongly supported in by Namibian policy makers, making it potentially more politically feasible than UBI.

#### **Potential impact on food security**

While not widely documented, some studies have suggested that the GA could have positive effects on food security. This is also a documented benefit of UBI (Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017).

# Challenges of GA in Namibia

“We [Namibia] are not in a [fiscal] position at this point in time to do a whole universal basic income grant.”

Despite its potential advantages, the Graduation Approach also faces significant challenges:



## High costs

Graduation programs can be expensive, with costs ranging from USD 379 per household in India to USD 2,865 in Peru, excluding health services (Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017). Table 1 illustrates the number of cash transfers that could be provided in different countries for the same cost as a Graduation program. This raises an interesting paradox. While Namibian policymakers' express concerns about the cost of UBI, there is a strong political will to implement a Graduation program. This suggests that fiscal space may not be the primary concern, and that the perception of “waste” and inefficiency could be a larger issue.

*The Value of a U-BIG grant that could be provided for the price of a graduation program:*

Country	Purchasing Power Parity Value (USD)	Nominal Value (USD)
Bangladesh	19	8
Ethiopia	52	20
Ghana	59	20
Honduras	39	22
Pakistan	78	24
Peru	74	43

Table 1, Data from Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017

However, further research is needed to determine which of these explanations would hold true and is more sustainable in practice in impacting the ultra-poor in Namibia.



### Limited impact on the ultra-poor

Evidence suggests that the greatest benefits of GA are seen among those who are less poor when entering the program (Misha et al., 2014). This raises concerns about the approach's ability to effectively support the ultra-poor. Nevertheless, if this is the explanation for the discrepancy in impact between the ultra-poor and individuals who are more well-off, this critique could also be levelled at UBI. Conversely, some argue that UBI's unconditionality can effectively support the ultra-poor. Unlike the Graduation Approach, which prioritizes entrepreneurship, UBI offers basic security and allows individuals to invest in various aspects of their own and each other's lives, allowing them to escape multidimensional poverty. However, further research is needed to determine which of these explanations would hold true and is more sustainable in practice in impacting the ultra-poor in Namibia.



### Assumption of upward mobility

GA assumes a linear trajectory out of poverty, with households suddenly "graduating" to a level in which they do not receive social support (Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017). This assumption is not always realistic as many households experience fluctuations in their economic status (Kidd & Bailey-Athias, 2017; Kidd & Gelders, 2016). As a result, GA may fail to adequately support those who fall back into poverty after temporary periods of financial stability if frequent eligibility checks aren't conducted. UBI would address this issue through universality as the delivery of the benefit is constant (Nettle, 2018).

# 4.3 Advocacy Strategies

Overall, alongside a crisis framing, to strengthen the case for UBI, advocates should focus on two key strategies:

- Generating robust quantitative evidence on UBI’s benefits through a multistakeholder task force. This is imperative as little evidence currently exists regarding the long-term efficiency and sustainability of UBI in a nationwide Namibian context.
- Advocating for politically supported cash-based programs, gathering strong evidence of their impact, and using them as a foundation for advancing broader UBI adoption. Table 2 compares the features of different social programs that could be used when employing this approach.

By leveraging these strategies, advocates can create a more supportive policy environment for implementation.

Intervention	Universal	Co-programming	Cash Based	Strong Political Support	Demonstrated impact on food security
UCT			✓		✓
CCT		✓	✓	✓	✓
UBI	✓		✓		✓
GMI			✓		
GA		✓		✓	

**Table 2,** Table comparing the features of social programs



# CONCLUSION

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dimus justo purus quis odio.



## Conclusion

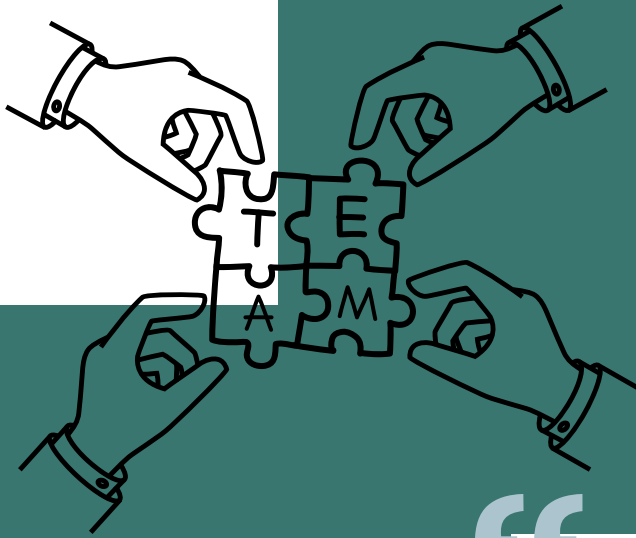
This report highlights the strong transformative potential of UBI in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in Namibia. Results from comparisons of global case studies of UBI pilots indicate that it can be effective in addressing food insecurity, and applicable to the Namibian context. This effectiveness can include significant short-term, localized impacts on poverty reduction, food security, health, education outcomes, debt reduction, entrepreneurship, and reducing exploitative labour practices. Moreover, UBI has the potential to function as a more efficient social protection system compared to Namibia's current welfare programs. Its universal and unconditional nature reduces bureaucratic inefficiencies, enables faster responses to crises, and offers preventative support rather than reactive aid. UBI's transformative potential is in offering equitable and broad financial resilience and security through increased spending capacity and access to opportunities like education and entrepreneurship. However, it is important to acknowledge that most UBI studies are short-term, and its transformative potential cannot be realized without added infrastructure costs, policy and tax reform. This leaves questions about its long-term sustainability and impact. Critics argue that without extended studies, the full effects of UBI remain uncertain.

However, despite compelling evidence of UBI's benefits, Namibian policymakers remain hesitant due to concerns over cost, perceived "wastefulness", and sustainability. As a result, successful advocacy for UBI must go beyond presenting evidence of its impact and instead focus on framing the policy in a way that resonates with policymakers. Our report suggests three key approaches to achieving this:

- 1 Positioning UBI as a response to Namibia's emerging food insecurity crisis:** A universal social protection system that is not restricted to addressing a single vulnerability, such as Namibia's current social welfare system, would ensure resilience for all citizens in food insecurity. Additionally, UBI serves as a preventative measure—by lifting people out of poverty before a crisis occurs, they become more resilient, ultimately reducing government costs during recovery.
- 2 Generating robust quantitative evidence through a multistakeholder task force:** Establishing a collaborative effort that includes economists, policymakers, think tanks, community advocates, and beneficiaries would not only strengthen the evidence base for UBI but also ensure that key stakeholders are engaged in shaping the policy. This approach would allow advocates to understand how policymakers want the debate framed, identify areas where concessions could be made without harming beneficiaries, and develop an implementation strategy that aligns with political realities.
- 3 Adopting a gradual implementation approach:** Given the political resistance to fully implementing UBI, a phased approach may be more feasible. Advocates could push for an initial, more limited, cash transfer program, and using the evidence from its success to build momentum for expanding toward a full UBI model.

Overall, UBI has the potential to drive transformative change in Namibia's food security landscape. However, to achieve its successful implementation, advocates must strategically navigate political barriers and frame the policy in a way that aligns with both evidence-based arguments and political feasibility.





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Curabitur mattis, diam non laculis  
ximus justo purus quis odio.

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# Annex:

## Annex 1: Original Terms of Reference (ToRs)

**Project Working Title:** the effectiveness and efficiency of Unconditional/Universal Basic Income Grants in overcoming malnutrition and food insecurity.

**Background:** NAFSAN is Namibia's SUN - Civil Society Alliance, representing civil society, academia the private sector within the national food and nutrition security policy context: [www.nafsan.org/nfns](http://www.nafsan.org/nfns)

Our mandate and key focus areas are to:

- 1) Provide reliable and practical information, tools and platforms towards food security and optimal nutrition, hereby translating complex science into day-to-day language.
- 2) Ensure good communication, effective coordination and enhance synergies among various stakeholders from multiple sectors.
- 3) Advocate for changes in laws, policies and actions towards sustainable approaches to improving nutrition in Namibia, as well as for greater financial and political commitments.

According to the Global Nutrition Report, 'Malnutrition is the leading cause of death and ill health worldwide since 2020.'- The previous section highlighted key considerations in advocating for Universal Basic Income (UBI), including common concerns about sustainability and implementation. This section explores alternative cash-based approaches that may be more politically feasible to implement than UBI in a Namibian context. These alternatives are not meant to replace UBI, but instead, could serve as entry-points for introducing cash-based programs, which, if successful, could later strengthen the case for UBI. At the same time, calls for a Universal Basic Income become increasingly louder in various countries around the world, hereby also making the case for such unconditional grants to significantly contribute in the fight against malnutrition in effective and even cost-efficient ways. Namibia, where one of the globally renowned pilot projects took place several years ago – [www.bignam.org](http://www.bignam.org) and where less than 25% of the population are food secure, is currently considering pioneering such a universal basic income grant, yet there are also doubts among key decision makers.



**Question:** What is the evidence - based on pilots and research from around the world - that unconditional / universal basic income grants address problems around malnutrition and food security in effective, efficient and sustainable ways, and how far is this applicable to the Namibian context?

This will inform innovative national policy development and may even have a global impact.

**Objective:** The three levels of Food and Nutrition Security are: 1) Availability (sufficient food being produced locally), 2) Access (everyone being able to afford sufficiently nutritious food), and 3) Consumption (healthy eating and drinking behaviours, including infant and young child feeding practices).

As recognised national alliance in Namibia, NAFSAN will use the outcomes not just to advocate for a U-BIG, but to also provide technical support to government in developing respective policies and in implementing accompanying measures, such as nutrition awareness campaigns, based on already existing materials and established collaborations ([www.nafsan.org/nh4](http://www.nafsan.org/nh4)).

**Methodology:** Desk research (finding and comparing pilot projects and research across the globe, with a focus on comparable scenarios), interviews with key stakeholders in Namibia from civil society, community leaders, academia, government and private sector, as well as global thought leaders.

Scenario planning and analysis/forecasts on feasibility of future implementation of various existing models/suggestions of such a Universal Basic Income Grant, based on suggestions made.

Identification of necessary accompanying measures to increase the impact of such a grant towards positive nutrition-related outcomes and to help Namibia achieve greater levels of food security.

## Annex 2: Revised Terms of Reference (ToRs)

The team sets out to collect and critically evaluate evidence, based on global research as well as past, present and proposed projects and pilots, that unconditional Universal Basic Income (UBI) grants can address malnutrition and food insecurity in effective, efficient and sustainable ways. The degree to which this can be applicable to the Namibian context with respect to promoting the three levels of Food and Nutrition Security - availability, access and consumption – will be assessed based on the Food and Nutrition needs of varying regions of Namibia and the historical precedent of the Namibian government with respect to their willingness and/or ability to enact such policy on a national and universal basis.

# Annex 3: Conceptual Frameworks for UBI

## Conceptual Foundations for Universal Basic Income:

This section establishes a conceptual framework for understanding Universal Basic Income (UBI) in relation to food security. First it will define key terms—including UBI, social welfare, cash transfers, and food security. Additionally, it will explore the theoretical perspectives and frameworks that shape these concepts and their application within the Namibian context.

### Definitions:

**Universal Basic Income (UBI)** - Universal basic income (UBI) is a periodic, unconditional cash payment given to all individuals within a society, absent of means testing and employment status. (Bien, 2025)

**Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers** – Cash transfers are direct payments made to reduce poverty and improve an individual's or group's economic security. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) provide financial support contingent on specified behavioural requirements like school attendance and employment training. Unconditional cash transfers (UCTS) do not limit the recipient's behaviour or use of the transfer (Atkins, 2020).

**Social Welfare** – Social welfare is a collective term for a series of social, economic and institutional policies and practices that provide individuals, households, and groups with income support and protection against economic risks that prevents distress (Rawlings, 2015).

**Food Security** - Food security refers to the consistent physical, economic, and social access to sufficient, nutritious, and safe food meeting basic dietary requirements for an active and healthy lifestyle. It combines a focus on consumption behaviours, nutritional quality, and access. Conversely, food insecurity arises when these conditions are not met. (World Bank, n.d.).

### Base Theoretical Understandings - Early Origins to Modern Day:

Historically, thinkers like Bertrand Russell have argued that existing social welfare systems fail to provide genuine security and empowerment due to the restrictive conditions and limitations they impose on recipients (Russell, 1917). These conditions have prevented welfare recipients from achieving 'true' economic freedom on the basis that freedom cannot be conditional.

UBI was therefore suggested as a solution. Into the present, the discourse on UBI continues to reflect similar key themes. However, in the current context, chronic economic uncertainty, precarious employment, and the expansion of human rights have added more nuance to the discussion (Alston, 2019). These contextual changes have resulted in a framing of UBI that is increasingly rights-based, as well as a social security net which protects against unpredictable risks in a rapidly changing world.

## Annex 4: Detailed Codified Case Study Analysis

### Kenya - GiveDirectly Basic Income Pilot (2017-Present)

**Modalities:** The Kenyan GiveDirectly UBI pilot study was set up to evaluate the long-term effects of unconditional cash transfers on economic well-being, health, education, and social outcomes. Using a 12-year randomised control trial, 195 villages equating to 23,000 people were divided into three categories - long-term UBI, short-term UBI, and large lump-sum. The long-term UBI Group received a basic income of \$22.50 per month for 12 years, with the short-term UBI group receiving the same monthly amount for two years only. The large lump-sum group received a one-off payment of \$500 (GiveDirectly, 2023).

**Results:** Given that this study is ongoing, a comprehensive analysis of the long-term impact of UBI will be unavailable until early 2030. However, following the completion of the second stage - provision of UBI to the short-term and the lump-sum group - some research into its effects has been completed. Thus, the results below are all taken from (Banerjee, 2023)

- UBI provision increases food consumption across all groups by 6-11%, with protein consumption rising by 25% for lower-income participants and 15% for higher-income participants. Food and nutritional variety also increased across all groups, with an improvement in child nutrition and no increase in alcohol consumption reported.
- Poverty and living conditions were improved, with the most significant changes occurring in the lump-sum groups. Household asset ownership saw an overall increase, with the most significant growth in agricultural assets. All groups experienced gains in agricultural asset ownership, however, the lump sum group exhibited the highest increase.

- The economic effects of the experiment were evidenced by increased wages across UBI villages, a 14% increase in self-owned enterprises and a 52% increase in net revenues. Participant villages also experienced a movement away from exploitative low-wage agricultural employment alongside no noticeable impact on the labour supply. The long-term UBI groups also saw higher levels of saving, debt stabilisation, and credit group participation.
- The experiment also indicated positive social outcomes on mental health, decreasing rates of depression and household violence decreasing across all groups. Educational outcomes were most noted in the lump sum recipients, with increases in educational spending and higher grades in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education recorded.

**Key Takeaways:** The GiveDirectly Kenyan UBI experiment illustrated UBI's ability to improve food security, employment norms, financial stability, and social well-being. The most notable differences between the three income variations were that increased savings behaviours and well-being were most observed in the long-term UBI group. In contrast, the short-term UBI and lump-sum groups observed increased investment behaviours. A clear linkage between poverty and food insecurity is also established.

**Shortcomings:** The GiveDirectly Kenyan UBI experiment is far from complete, and thus, the long-term effects of UBI compared to lump-sum and short-term UBI cannot yet be fully understood. Additionally, whilst the sample size is the biggest UBI experiment to be conducted yet, it remains limited to two regions and 195 villages across Kenya. This raises concerns over the result's applicability in the context of a national trial or application.

## India - Madhya Pradesh Pilot (2011-2012)

**Modalities:** Using a randomised control trial design, approximately 6000 participants across eight villages received unconditional monthly cash transfers for 18 months. Initially, the UBI value was set at ₹200 for adults and ₹100 for children; however, this value was increased by 50% mid-trial (SEWA, 2014).

### Results:

- Food security was improved drastically, with the proportion of pilot households reporting that they had enough income to meet their food needs increasing from 52% to 78% within 6 months; control villages saw this figure decline (Schjoedt, 2016). Child malnutrition also fell, with the percentage of children classed as a healthy weight for age increasing from 39% to 59% (Davala, 2015).

- There were notable improvements in living conditions, with the percentage of households with at least one bed increasing from 36% to 83% (Ali, 2020), mobile phone ownership increasing from 9% to 61%, and ownership of motorbikes increasing from 3% to 30%. UBI was also used to make specific housing improvements, improving beneficiary living conditions and agency (Schjoedt, 2016).
- Favourable economic and educational outcomes were also reported, with increased school attendance and lowered dropout rates, particularly among girls. Significant debt reduction was witnessed, with pilot villages' debt falling 73% compared to control villages' 18%. UBI also contributed to economic empowerment with notable increases in self-employment, with recipients able to move away from exploitative wage labour like brick kilns and focus on farming through purchasing seeds, fertiliser, and equipment (Schjoedt, 2016).
- Gender equality and social benefits also occurred, with recipients indicating greater female financial autonomy and a 1% decrease in alcohol consumption in pilot villages compared to a 5% increase in control villages (SEWA, 2014) (Schjoedt, 2016).

**Key Takeaways:** In the Madhya Pradesh pilot, the provision of UBI improved food security, nutrition, health, living standards, and education. It also provided financial empowerment, particularly for women, and significantly reduced the debt burden of recipients. UBI also positively impacted employment norms, replacing exploitative labour employment with increased agriculturally related self-employment.

**Shortcomings:** The Madhya Pradesh pilot's most significant shortcoming was its length. Critics suggest that the 18-month pilot was insufficiently long to observe the long-term effects of UBI provision, including the compounding effects of the positive outcomes listed above. Equally, critics argue that the lack of engagement with existing social welfare, the study of only eight villages (6000 people) in a region of 72 million, and the changes in UBI value mid-way through the pilot undermine some of its findings. Finally, GiveDirectly also notes that, in their opinion, the amount of income provided did not satisfy a 'basic' provision - as seen in annex (6).

## Brazil - Bolsa Família Program (2003-2021)

**Modalities:** The Bolsa Família Program (BFP) combined some of Brazil's existing social welfare programs into a nationwide conditional cash transfer, targeting between 11 and 14 million families living in poverty (a monthly income between R\$77.01–R\$154) and extreme poverty (a monthly income below R\$77) (Hellmann, 2015; Centre for Public Impact, n.d).

The BFP was structured as a basic monthly benefit provided alongside variable payments targeting vulnerable demographics. Both the benefit amounts and target groups were regularly adjusted, reflecting inflation, new research, and governmental policy priorities (Magalhães et al., 2024).

### **Results:**

- Food security and health outcomes improved drastically, with beneficiary households reporting a 6% increase in weekly food expenditure, a 7.3% increase in the purchase of fresh and minimally processed foods, and a 9.4% increase in caloric availability (Martins, 2016). Additionally, infant mortality caused by malnutrition and diarrhoeic illnesses dropped by 50% among participant families (Hellmann, 2015). Despite this, (Magalhães et al., 2024) suggests that these changes in food security, did not equate to a change in nutritional status.
- BFP also had impacts on educational attainment. Secondary school pass rates increased by 4%, with overall attendance increasing and dropouts decreasing. These changes were tied directly to the conditionality clauses, which required an 85% attendance rate to receive the BFP benefit (Hellmann, 2015). The changes in educational attainment were also more pronounced in poorer rural regions of Brazil.
- BFP had substantial economic impacts, with extreme poverty reduced by 5.2% between 2002 and 2012 (Centre for Public Impact, n.d.). Inequality was also improved with a Gini coefficient change from 0.591 in 2003 to 0.561 in 2009 (Neves, 2022). Additionally, formal employment rates among beneficiaries increased from 9.8% in 2004 to 12.5% in 2007 (Junior, 2019). Despite this, (Magalhães, 2024) suggests that whilst poverty reduction occurred, it did not decline effectively enough to break intergenerational poverty transmission (Neves, 2022).
- From a social perspective, competing research exists. (Hellmann, 2015) suggests that 90% of all beneficiaries managing transfers were women, indicating that BFP supported aspects of female economic empowerment. However, (Magalhães et al., 2024) indicates that some evidence suggests BFP increased intimate partner violence and gendered stereotypes among women.

**Key Takeaways:** The Bolsa Família program saw conditional cash transfers improve educational attainment and attendance, reduce child mortality and health through improved nutritional access and food security, and reduce poverty and extreme poverty alongside increasing employment.

**Shortcomings:** The BFP was not deployed as an academic study. As a result, its structure complicated the attribution of specific outcomes. That is, every outcome of the study did not have a clear cause and effect and could have had multiple factors relating to BFP influencing it. Thus, whilst the program had positive effects overall, inefficiency and efficiency between different modalities could not be identified.

# Annex 5: Case Study Analysis and Comparison Tables:

## Annex 5.1: Comparison in Modality of the Three Case Studies

Case Study Analysis/Comparison	Modalities	Kenya UBI, GiveDirectly 2017-2030	India, Madhya Pradesh, 2011-2012	Brazil Bolsa Familia Conditional Cash Transfers, 2003-2021
	Number of Participants	23,000 Participants	6,000 Participants	Approx - 11 Million Families = 46 Million Recipients Per Year
	Study or Program Purpose	Academic Study to Assess the Long-Term Effects of UBI on Economic Well-Being, Health, Education, and Social Outcomes	Academic Study to Assess the Impact of UBI on Poverty and Welfare in Rural Communities	National Social Welfare Program Addressing Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Inequality, Through Conditional Cash Transfers
	Model and Structure of Distribution	Unconditional Monthly and Lump-Sum Provided Individually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term Group - Unconditional Monthly Payment for 12 Years</li> <li>Short-term Group - Unconditional Monthly Payment for 2 Years</li> <li>Lump-Sum - one off payment</li> </ul>	Unconditional, Universal, Monthly Payments, Provided Individually	Conditional and Variable Monthly Payments Provided per Family Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic Payment Given to Each Family in Poverty/Extreme Poverty</li> <li>Variable Payment Given to Families with Vulnerable Groups</li> </ul>
	Control Groups	YES	YES	NO
	Study Length	12-Year Study (Not Completed)	18-Month Study (Completed)	18-Year Program (Completed)
	Average Transfer Value	Long-Term - USD\$22.5 Monthly Short-Term - USD\$22.5 Monthly Lump-Sum - USD\$500	Adults - ₹200 per month Children - ₹100 per month (Both Increase by 50% mid trial)	2003 - Basic Benefit - R\$50/month 2018 - Basic Benefit - R\$89/month 2003 - Variable Benefit - R\$15/child 2018 - Variable Benefit - \$41-48/added variable

## Annex 5.2: Comparison in Outcomes of the Three Case Studies

### Case Study Analysis/Comparison

Outcomes	Kenya UBI, GiveDirectly 2017-2030	India, Madhya Pradesh, 2011-2012	Brazil Bolsa Família Conditional Cash Transfers, 2003-2021
Food Security	6-11% Increase in Food Consumption 15-25% Increase in Protein Consumption Improvement in Child Nutrition.	26% Increase in Food Security Within 6 Months 20% Decrease in Child Malnutrition	6% Increase in Weekly Food Intake 7.3% Increase in Fresh Foods and a 9.4% Increase in Caloric Intake No Change in Nutritional status.
Poverty and Debt	Reduction in Poverty - Qualitative Analysis Increase in Asset Ownership Increase in Savings/Debt Stabilisation	Reduction in Poverty - Qualitative Analysis 55% Reduction in Debt Compared to Control Villages	5.2% Reduction in Extreme Poverty Between 2002 and 2012 Reduced Reliance on Informal Loans
Educational	Increased Educational Spending Most Significant in Lump Sum Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Outcome Increase in Lump Sum	Reduced Dropout Rates Increased Attendance	4% Decrease in Secondary School Dropout Rate Increase in Attendance
Economic	Increased Wages 14% Increase in Self-Owned Enterprises 52% Increase in Enterprise Revenue	Increased Purchase of Agricultural Assets and Entrepreneurship	Reduction in Inequality - 0.591 in 2003 to 0.561 in 2009
Health and Social	Qualitative Suggestions: Living Conditions Improved, Improved Mental Health, Decreased Household Violence	Increased Female Financial Autonomy 1% Decrease in Beneficiary Alcohol Consumption	Decrease in Vaccinatable Disease Mixed Result on Gendered Social Outcomes
Employment	Increase in Self-Employment Reduction in Exploitative Wage Agricultural Labour	Increase in Self-Employment (Usually Agricultural) Reduction in Exploitative Wage Labour like Brick Kilns	Formal Employment rose 2.7% Between 2004 and 2007



# Annex 6: GiveDirectly Comparison Between Case Studies

## Completed Pilots on Unconditional Cash Transfers\*

Location of Pilot	Universal?	Basic?	Long Term?	Recipients	
Eastern Band of Cherokee, USA	No	No	Yes	15,000	
Madhya Pradesh, India	Yes	No	No	6,000	No completed study on unconditional cash transfers meets all the criteria for what a UBI would look like.
Seattle and Denver, USA	No	Yes	No	4,800	
Gary, Indiana, USA	No	Yes	No	1,799	
Manitoba, Canada	No	Yes	No	1,300	
New Jersey, USA	No	Yes	No	1,216	
Namibia	Yes	Yes	No	930	
North Carolina & Rural Iowa, USA	No	Yes	No	809	

\*From GiveDirectly<sup>vi</sup>

**(GiveDirectly, n.d)**

This report intended to use this table to illustrate the lack of overlap between case studies. However, GiveDirectly also meant this table to illustrate the need for a ‘complete’ pilot study – universal, basic, and long-term. While this table indicates that the Madhya Pradesh case study was universal in that it was given to everyone, it does not indicate that the Madhya Pradesh pilot was basic in that it provided basic needs. Instead, it suggests that the transfer amounts in the Madhya Pradesh pilot were too small to cover basic needs. This does not diminish the comparison or case study analysis but rather suggests that ‘complete’ UBI in that context could have had an even larger impact.