



# CHALLENGES TO FOOD SECURITY OF OLDER PEOPLE IN RURAL NAMIBIA

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# Outline of the presentation

- Background
- Objective
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion



# Introduction

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- Namibian most arid country in the world
- The harsh weather conditions and severe drought is negatively impact food production in Namibia
- Reliance on food purchases instead of food production
- Older people, only depend on pensions as income affected



# Method

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- Qualitative study
- key informant interviews with community leaders
- focus group discussions with older people and informal caregivers.
- Data analysis Atlas ti software.

# Results

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- Three themes
  - Credit food purchases
  - Drought relief food
  - Community initiatives

# Theme one: Credit food purchases

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Pension insufficient: Older person

- *“We , the elderly, do not have food in the house, because the pension is so little that we have to buy on credit. On pension payday all the pension money is then handed over to pay the debts for food bought on credit, and then we sit with a problem, having nothing to eat.”* Older person

Luxury food items bought on credits:

- *“Elderly people have to wait for seven days before they can start taking food on credit in the new month, Food is given on credit to the elderly for the entire amount of the pension. Some shop owners are not only giving the basic food like mealie meal and sugar, but will also give luxury items like tomato sauce, and so the account get higher. So, when the elderly receives their pension they have to hand over everything to the shop owner. Key informant*

Prizes on credit purchases fluctuates:

- *“If the shop owner decided to add a 50 cent to every item that was bought on credit, no matter if it is a pensioner, he will do it. If the sugar costs 15 NAM dollar, the shop owner will add a 50 cent or even one dollar because it was bought on credit”.* Care giver

Alternative pension payments instead of cash, key informant as stated below

- *“in the olden days the elderly people did not receive pension money but tangible allowances in the form of mealie meal ,milk, fat, etc was given.. nowadays elderly people get money, but the money is not used properly. To increase the pension is not the solution, the solution could be food parcels for the elderly.”* Key informant



# Theme two: Drought relief food distribution

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- Drought relief food not reaching all rural communities:

- *“something that I’m wondering why does older people not get the mealie meal and cooking oil (drought relief) why don’t they get it? All the surrounding areas are getting drought relief but why don’t we get any? There are people who really need that cooking oil and the mealie meal. How come does it take that long for the government to process the list of beneficiaries?”* Older person

Misuse the drought relief food distribution:

- *“some people are selling these sponsored stuff to the same elderly people.”* Caregiver

# Theme three: Community soup kitchen initiative

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- Community food distributions initiatives:
  - *“Monthly, on various cash pension pay points we give bread and juice, we rotate and are not always at the same cash pension pay point, at the end of the year we give every elderly person a food parcel.”* Key informant
- Motives for community initiatives:
  - *“One of the main things that we achieve, is rather to have the feeling that they are worth something, somebody is looking after them.....just that concept that people care about us.”* Key informant

## Equity and fairness in the redistribution of food donations

- *“there are so many welfare organizations here, people receive donations in the form of food, but divide it amongst their family. The little that remains is distributed to the people that were apparently on the list. Even here in our village, we see it every day in our country, people are forming organizations for their own benefit.”* Older person



# Discussion

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- Parallel State and community initiatives to respond to the food security needs of older people
- Need for policy formulation on food prizes and credit purchases.
- Need for a more participatory and empowering approach to respond to needs of older people