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THE

BRIEF

News Worth Knowing



Namibia faces skills shortages and limited market access in diversification push

TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026

MAIN STORY

Namibia faces skills shortages and limited market access in diversification push

Limited market access, skills shortages and weak domestic processing capacity remain among the key structural constraints preventing Namibia from diversifying its economy beyond mineral extraction, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The findings were presented during the recent launch of a report examining value addition and economic diversification within the critical energy transition minerals value chain.

Speaking at the event, Chief of the Extractive Commodities Section at UNCTAD, Clovis Freire, said consultations with private sector stakeholders identified several structural barriers that continue to limit Namibia's ability to develop downstream industries.

Freire said businesses cited restricted market access, the absence of off-take agreements, high capital costs, shortages of specialised technical skills and regulatory and certification bottlenecks as key obstacles to industrial development.

"Key constraints emerged from consultations with the private sector. These include limited market access, lack of scale and off-take agreements, high capital costs, skills shortages, certification bottlenecks and weak domestic processing ecosystems," Freire said.



Crucial Dates

- **Bank of Namibia Monetary Policy announcement dates:**
 - * 22 April 2026
 - * 17 June 2026
 - * 12 August 2026
 - * 21 October 2026
 - * 02 December 2026
- **Namibia Oil and Gas Conference 18–21 August 2026 in Windhoek**

He noted that while some local firms believe activities such as battery assembly could be undertaken domestically, Namibia currently lacks sufficient practical expertise in areas such as electro-mechanics and industrial automation.

Freire also highlighted the role that national procurement systems could play in supporting local manufacturing, particularly in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, where government purchasing power could stimulate domestic

production.

The report identified more than 170 constraints affecting Namibia's ability to develop value-added industries and linked them to targeted policy interventions.

Proposed measures include the introduction of six- to twelve-month apprenticeship programmes with gender participation targets, temporary training subsidies for companies hosting apprentices and stronger collaboration between universities and industry in

Namibia's Path to Diversification: Bridging the Skills Gap

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

Critical Resource and Skill Bottlenecks

Skills shortages, high capital costs, and restricted market access hinder downstream industry development.

The Technical Expertise Deficit



Namibia currently lacks practical expertise in electro-mechanics and industrial automation for domestic assembly.

91% Correlation to GDP



Economic complexity and product variety explain the vast majority of global GDP differences.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS



Targeted Apprenticeship Programs

Implementing 6-12 month programs with gender participation targets and training subsidies.



University-Industry Collaboration

Strengthening applied research partnerships and creating shared technology platforms for new firms.



Modernizing Financial & Regulatory Tools

Introducing blended finance mechanisms and strengthening certification systems to ease market entry.



applied research. Other recommendations include strengthening certification and standards compliance systems, introducing blended finance mechanisms to ease capital constraints and developing industrial hubs and shared technology platforms to reduce entry barriers for new firms.

“In response to the challenges identified, more than 170 policy gaps were matched with targeted instruments, including apprenticeship programmes, training subsidies, university–industry research collaboration, improved certification systems, blended finance tools and shared industrial hubs,” Freire said.

Freire said the strategy is grounded in the principle that economic diversification is a key driver of long-term growth.

Research presented during the launch indicated that expanding the number of

products a country exports explains around 71% of differences in GDP levels between countries. When economic complexity is included in the analysis, that explanatory power rises to 91%.

He said diversification creates a reinforcing cycle of capability development, enabling countries to expand into more sophisticated industries over time.

“Diversification creates a virtuous cycle. As countries diversify, they build capabilities that open up further opportunities for industrial development,” Freire said.

“With coordinated action, targeted reforms and strategic investment, Namibia has the potential to transform its economic structure, reduce vulnerability to commodity shocks and generate sustainable industrial growth and employment.”





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Namibia records N\$9.8 billion in intra-Africa trade in January

Namibia recorded N\$9.8 billion in total trade with African countries in January 2026, with exports slightly exceeding imports as the country posted a trade surplus of N\$232 million, according to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA).

The agency reported that Namibia exported goods worth N\$5.0 billion to the African

continent during the month, while imports from African countries amounted to N\$4.8 billion. The figures highlight the continued importance of regional markets within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The AfCFTA, a flagship initiative of the African Union under Agenda 2063, seeks



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Namibia's Intra-Africa Trade: Achieving the Regional Balance

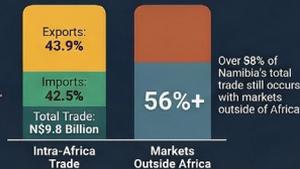


The Continental Trade Balance

Regional Integration & SADC Dominance



Intra-Africa vs. Global Trade



to progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers, liberalise trade in services and promote cooperation in areas such as

investment protection, intellectual property rights and competition policy.

Data from the NSA shows that 43.9% of



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Namibia's total exports were destined for African markets, while 42.5% of imports originated from the continent, underlining Africa's significant role in Namibia's trade structure.

However, the data also indicates that a larger share of Namibia's trade still takes place outside the AfCFTA area, with 56.1% of exports and 57.5% of imports conducted with markets beyond the continent.

Within Africa, Namibia's exports were mainly absorbed by South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. Imports from the continent were primarily sourced from South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Eswatini and Morocco.

Exports to African markets were largely dominated by non-monetary gold, fish, diamonds, petroleum oils, and sulphur and unroasted iron pyrites. Gold accounted for 36.6% of Namibia's exports to the Southern African region, followed by fish at 12.3%, diamonds at 11.1%, petroleum oils at 7.5%, and sulphur and unroasted iron pyrites at 3.6%.

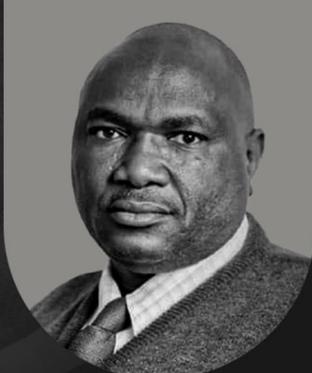
The statistics agency also noted that Namibia's intra-Africa exports remain heavily concentrated within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which accounted for 98.5% of the country's exports to the continent in January. In global terms, exports to SADC represented 43.2% of Namibia's total export value

for the month.

The agency said the figures illustrate the growing importance of regional trade integration as African countries seek to expand intra-continental trade under the AfCFTA framework.

On the import side, 98.2% of goods sourced from Africa originated from SADC countries, representing 41.8% of Namibia's total global imports.

Key imports from the region included nickel ores and concentrates (17.0%), ores and concentrates of base metals (4.6%), alcoholic beverages (4.5%), commercial motor vehicles (3.1%), and sugar, molasses and honey (2.4%).




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04 JUNE 2026

Restoring Namibia's railways: A national duty, a shared opportunity

By Moses Aipinge

Namibia's railway network is more than steel tracks laid across the land, it is a symbol of economic connection, national integration, and industrial growth.

The rail system, managed by TransNamib, has historically played a vital role in linking our ports, towns, mines, farms, and communities. However, recent challenges, including the tragic accident that claimed two lives, remind us that railway maintenance is not optional; it is a matter of urgency, accountability, and national responsibility.

As a young, 100% Namibian-owned organisation, we believe that the time has come to restore our railway industry with discipline, innovation, and a unified national spirit.

The Current Maintenance Reality

Many sections of Namibia's railway infrastructure date back decades some lines as far back as 1975. Over time, insufficient maintenance, budget constraints, and aging systems have weakened the reliability of the network.

Aging Infrastructure. Rail tracks, sleepers, signalling systems, and drainage structures have not consistently received the level of preventative maintenance required. Reactive maintenance, fixing problems after failure, has become more common than proactive inspections.

Budgetary Limitations. As a state-owned enterprise, TransNamib depends largely



Many sections of Namibia's railway infrastructure date back decades some lines as far back as 1975.

on national budget allocations. Financial constraints often limit the workforce and technical resources needed to maintain the entire rail network effectively.

Workforce Capacity Gaps. Railway maintenance requires skilled technicians, inspectors, welders, and engineers. Namibia has trained young professionals, including 94 candidates through the TIIP programme under the Ministry of Works and Transport, yet many remain underutilised.

Delayed Response Systems. Without strong public-private collaboration and clearly assigned accountability structures, maintenance interventions can be delayed, increasing safety risks and long-term repair costs.

A Restoration Spirit: Our Vision

Our goal is not merely to repair tracks, it is to nationalise the spirit of railway ownership and re-establish public trust in rail transport.

We believe that effective railway maintenance will improve passenger and freight safety, reduce operational disruptions,

lower long-term infrastructure costs, create sustainable employment, stimulate local economic empowerment, and promote cost-effective transportation for industries and communities across Namibia.

Rail transport remains one of the most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable modes of moving goods and people. By strengthening our maintenance systems, we can help communities realise the economic benefits of rail, from farmers transporting produce to businesses reducing logistics costs.

The Case for Public-Private Partnership

The recent accident that resulted in the loss of two passengers should serve as a turning point.

If government institutions and private Namibian companies work closely together, accountability becomes clear, interventions become faster, and safety standards become stronger.

We stand ready to serve as a proactive partner, not a competitor, but a unifier of the industry.

We believe in collaboration over domination. We believe in strengthening TransNamib, not replacing it.

Private local contractors can supplement workforce capacity, conduct routine inspections and preventative maintenance,

implement rapid-response maintenance teams, provide cost-effective service delivery, and introduce performance-based maintenance contracts. This model ensures that responsibility is shared but clearly defined, and that performance is measurable.

Nationalisation Through Maintenance

When we speak of "nationalising our railway line," we do not mean ownership alone, we mean national participation. We mean empowering Namibian companies to manage and maintain critical infrastructure. We mean trusting local expertise, even when dealing with complex and high-risk systems.

Namibia has successfully managed other costly infrastructures locally. Railway maintenance should be no different. The belief that only large-capital foreign entities can manage railway maintenance must be reconsidered.

With proper governance, transparent contracts, and strict safety compliance frameworks, Namibian companies can deliver world-class results.

Job Creation and Economic Emancipation

MA Railway Maintenance and Construction was established with a clear social mission: to accommodate and empower 94 trained young Namibians from the TIIP programme under the Ministry of Works and Transport.



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Our commitment is to integrate these trained individuals into active maintenance pipelines, expand training programmes for additional technical teams, build specialised railway maintenance units, and create long-term employment pathways.

Railway restoration is not just an infrastructure project; it is a job creation engine.

It promotes economic emancipation and social justice by ensuring that young skilled Namibians are not left behind.

What Is Needed to Ensure System Excellence

To transform Namibia into a leading railway nation, we recommend a Comprehensive National Rail Audit, a technical assessment of all lines to prioritise urgent interventions.

This must be supported by a Preventative Maintenance Strategy covering scheduled inspections, track geometry monitoring, sleeper replacement programmes, and drainage restoration.

A Public-Private Maintenance Framework with clearly defined contracts and performance benchmarks must be established alongside Independent Safety Oversight and transparent accountability structures.

Further, sustained Skills Development Investment is needed to ensure continuous training aligned with modern rail technologies.

A Dedicated Maintenance Budget Allocation with ring-

fenced funds specifically for preventative maintenance is essential, as are Community Engagement Programmes to build public awareness on railway safety and the cost-effective transport benefits that rail offers.

A National Call to Action

Namibia has the potential to become a regional leader in railway efficiency and safety, but only if we maintain what we have already built. Infrastructure deterioration is not inevitable; it is preventable.

As Managing Member, I firmly believe that restoration is possible. We are prepared to be part of the solution, working hand in hand with government, TransNamib, and private stakeholders.

We do not seek competition. We seek unity. We do not seek control.

We seek contribution. We do not seek contracts alone. We seek national transformation.

Let us trust our Namibian capability. Let us strengthen accountability.

Let us restore our railway industry with purpose.

If we maintain our lines properly, we will not only prevent accidents, we will create jobs, lower transport costs, stimulate trade, and build a railway system that truly serves the people of Namibia.

*** Moses Aipinge
Managing Member, MA
Railway Maintenance and
Construction**

NSA extends Statistician-General Alex Shimuafeni's contract to September 2026

The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) has extended the contract of Statistician-General Alex Shimuafeni until 30 September 2026 to allow for the completion of key institutional projects and ensure a smooth leadership transition.

NSA Board Chairperson Justus Tjituka said Shimuafeni's current contract is scheduled to end on 31 March 2026, but the board resolved on 14 August 2025 to extend his tenure by a further six months.

According to Tjituka, the decision forms part of the agency's succession planning efforts and is intended to support operational continuity while preparations are made for new leadership.

"The NSA Board resolved to



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extend the Statistician-General’s contract from 31 March 2026 to 30 September 2026 to allow for the completion of critical projects and to facilitate a smooth handover process,” Tjituka said.

He noted that the appointment of a Statistician-General is governed by Section 23 of the Statistics Act No. 9 of 2011, which requires the board, with the approval of the Director General of the National Planning Commission, to appoint a suitably qualified candidate with expertise in statistics, information technology, economics or related disciplines.

Shimuafeni was first appointed as head of

the NSA on 1 April 2016 for a five-year term that ended in March 2021. His contract was subsequently renewed for a second five-year term running from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026.

The agency also confirmed that the contract of Deputy Statistician-General Otilie Mwazi was extended from 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026 after she reached the statutory retirement age on 31 December 2025.

Tjituka said the extension was granted to allow Mwazi to assist with the completion of ongoing projects and support a smooth transition within the agency.

“The Deputy Statistician-General reached retirement age on 31 December 2025 and the board resolved to extend her contract until 31 March 2026 to ensure completion of critical projects and a seamless transition,” he said.

The recruitment process for a new Deputy Statistician-General is already under way and is at an advanced stage, according to the board.

Tjituka added that the NSA has implemented systems and internal processes aimed at safeguarding institutional stability during the leadership transition.

“The board remains confident that the agency’s systems and processes are in place to ensure business continuity,” he said.

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From prophecy to reality: How Dubai's disruption validates Namibia as the next Dubai of Africa

By Gabriel Nghituwamata Haulyamayi

The recent escalation in the Middle East has dramatically exposed the vulnerabilities of even the most iconic global hubs. In retaliation for U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, dubbed "Operation Epic Fury" Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones across the Gulf, directly impacting the UAE.

Dubai International Airport (the world's busiest for international passengers) sustained minor damage to a concourse, with debris causing injuries to a few staff members and forcing evacuations amid smoke-filled terminals.

The sail-shaped Burj Al Arab hotel caught fire from falling debris, while explosions hit the Palm Jumeirah area including the Fairmont The Palm hotel and Jebel Ali Port. Airspace closures grounded thousands of flights, stranding passengers worldwide in the worst disruption since COVID-19, with ripple effects on trade, tourism, and investment.

This crisis shatters the carefully cultivated image of Dubai and the Gulf as an eternally secure, neutral gateway, immune to regional turmoil. What seemed unassailable stability crumbled in days, highlighting the inherent risks of relying on a geopolitically exposed location.

Strikingly, my original article in this publication from December 2025 "Why Namibia Should - and Could - Become the Dubai of Africa" now appears almost



This crisis shatters the carefully cultivated image of Dubai and the Gulf as an eternally secure, neutral gateway, immune to regional turmoil.

prophetic. Penned well before these events unfolded, it precisely flagged the limitations of models dependent on conflict-prone regions and positioned Namibia as a superior, more resilient alternative.

It emphasized advantages Dubai never had at its inception: vast open land for unconstrained development, a low population density (around 3 million) enabling ambitious planning, exceptional political stability, top-tier African rankings in rule of law and ease of doing business, plus over 1,500 km of Atlantic coastline featuring world-class natural deep-water harbors like Walvis Bay.

Unlike Gulf ports vulnerable to Middle East flashpoints (e.g., Strait of Hormuz or Red Sea disruptions), Namibia's Atlantic access provides safer, diversified routes connecting Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia - free from equivalent chokepoints or threats.

”
 Namibia isn't imitating Dubai's past; it's charting a more secure, Atlantic-oriented path for Africa's future.

The article's foresight feels even more compelling today. As global players reassess risks and seek alternatives, Namibia's trajectory accelerates: projected GDP growth of around 3.5–3.8% in 2026 (driven by mining, services, and emerging energy sectors), Orange Basin oil discoveries (with majors like TotalEnergies nearing final investment decisions, potentially leading to first oil by 2029–2030 and contributing up to 18% of GDP at peak), and green hydrogen ambitions (e.g., Hyphen Hydrogen Energy's \$9.4 billion mega-project in Tsau//Khaeb National Park, targeting production start

in phases from 2026–2029, aiming for hundreds of thousands of tonnes annually and thousands of jobs). These, alongside uranium, renewables, tourism recovery, and AfCFTA integration, position Namibia for inclusive, sustainable growth.

Revisiting the original piece is not merely relevant, it's essential. The Dubai events serve as real-time validation: enduring hub status requires geopolitical safety, strategic diversification, and forward-looking foundations. Namibia isn't imitating Dubai's past; it's charting a more secure, Atlantic-oriented path for Africa's future.

A milestone worth celebrating. Namibia Mining & Energy has reached 50,000 followers on LinkedIn. Thank you to our readers, partners and industry stakeholders for being part of the journey. Continue to read, share and engage with us as we tell Namibia's mining and energy story.

50K followers

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Hospital admissions account for a third of NHP spending

Hospital admissions account for approximately one third of total expenditure at the Namibia Health Plan (NHP), making them the largest cost component for the medical aid fund.

NHP Principal Officer Dantago Garosas said healthcare claims remain the primary driver of rising costs at the scheme, with hospitalisation representing the biggest spending category. This is followed by medicines and pharmacy claims, and then specialist and general practitioner services.

“If we look at our cost components, hospitalisation is our largest expense and accounts for about a third of our total costs. After that come medicines and pharmacy costs, followed by specialists and general practitioners. Healthcare claims are the main factor pushing up our expenditure,” Garosas told The Brief.

Garosas said maintaining sustainability in an increasingly consolidating medical aid sector requires active cost management across several areas, including healthcare claims, investment



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performance and operational expenses unrelated to healthcare services.

“Our strategy is centred on sustainability. The areas we can influence directly are effective claims management, maintaining strong investment returns and controlling our non-healthcare operational expenses,” she said.

She added that provider tariffs remain a significant pressure point within the private healthcare sector, although she cautioned against describing higher tariffs simply as overcharging, noting that healthcare providers operate within a market-based system.

According to Garosas, when healthcare providers charge above established industry

tariff benchmarks, the additional costs are often transferred to members through co-payments and out-of-pocket expenses.

“In a market environment, providers are able to charge what they consider appropriate. We try to manage this by adhering to industry tariff guidelines and benchmarks. However, when providers charge above those tariffs, the member ultimately carries the cost through co-payments and additional out-of-pocket expenses,” she said.

Garosas said tariff pressures are not unique to the Namibia Health Plan but represent a broader challenge across the private medical aid industry.

“The issue of provider tariffs affects the entire private medical aid sector. It is something that all schemes must manage carefully within what they can afford while still ensuring long-term sustainability,” she said.

She added that the scheme conducts annual benefit design reviews, supported by actuarial modelling and analysis of utilisation trends, to ensure that benefits remain affordable while maintaining the financial stability of the fund.

“The balance between affordability and sustainability is always challenging. Through our annual benefit design process we analyse utilisation trends and adjust benefits in line with what the scheme can sustainably provide,” Garosas said.

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AI will not replace Graphic Designers - It will redefine the profession

By David Luwaya

You may have seen AI create stunning logos overnight, but can it truly understand what your audience feels? The rapid rise of artificial intelligence tools such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and image-generation systems like Adobe's Firefly has sparked a familiar fear across creative industries:

Will AI replace graphic designers? The short answer is no. The long answer is far more interesting.

AI is a Tool, not a Thinker

Artificial intelligence can generate logos, layouts, and social media visuals within seconds. However, it does not understand culture, emotion, strategy, or human context. Graphic design is not simply about arranging text and images, it is about solving communication problems.

According to research by McKinsey & Company, generative AI can automate certain tasks, but creative direction, brand storytelling, and complex decision-making still require human judgment. Design is rooted in empathy, understanding the audience's needs, values, and aspirations, something AI cannot genuinely experience.

Creativity is more than generation

AI generates content based on patterns from existing data. Designers, on the other hand, create from insight, lived experience, and strategic intention. A brand identity is not just a logo; it reflects positioning, differentiation, and long-term vision.



Artificial intelligence can generate logos, layouts, and social media visuals within seconds.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report consistently shows that creative thinking, originality, and problem-solving remain among the most in-demand skills globally. These are human strengths, not algorithmic outputs.

In Namibia, organisations like MTC Namibia, rely on designers to craft campaigns that resonate with local culture and values, something AI alone cannot replicate. From culturally sensitive imagery to locally relevant messaging, the human touch is essential for meaningful communication.

Strategy cannot be automated

When businesses launch a campaign, they are not merely asking for graphics; they are seeking results, engagement, conversions, brand equity. Graphic designers work closely with marketing teams, interpret briefs, research target markets, and align visuals with business objectives.

AI can assist in speeding up production, but it does not attend client meetings, interpret ambiguous feedback, or understand local market nuances. In

When businesses launch a campaign, they are not merely asking for graphics; they are seeking results, engagement, conversions, brand equity.

emerging markets especially, cultural context plays a critical role in visual communication, something that cannot be fully automated.

The real shift: Designers who use AI will replace those who don't

History shows that technology does not eliminate professions; it transforms them. When design software like Adobe Photoshop was introduced, some feared it would replace designers trained in traditional methods. Instead, it expanded creative possibilities and increased efficiency.

The same applies to AI. Designers who embrace AI as a collaborative tool, using it for brainstorming, mock-ups, or rapid prototyping, will enhance their productivity and creative range. Those who resist adaptation may struggle.

The human touch remains irreplaceable

Design involves storytelling, emotion, ethics, and responsibility. Brands require authenticity and trust; qualities built through human relationships and understanding. AI can support the creative process, but it cannot replace human imagination, intuition, and strategic thinking.

Graphic design in Namibia and beyond is not dying. It is evolving. AI may change how we work, but it cannot replace the insight, emotion, and strategy that only a human designer brings to every project.

And if businesses need meaningful communication, human designers will remain at the center of the creative industry.

****David Luwaya, Namibian Graphic designer and founder of DNL Marketing Agency, passionate about combining creativity and strategy to elevate brands.***

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