

GUIDE TO ELECTIONS IN NAMIBIA



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THE IMPORTANCE OF ELECTIONS

An election is the process of actualizing representative democracy. It is a method of selecting representatives of the people to manage the affairs of the state. These elected representatives reflect their individual or group (political parties) intentions in terms of political programs and philosophies. When elected, the representatives have the mandate of the people and that mandate becomes the authorization of representation. Elections are important in any democratic system because it is through elections that the formal allocation of power occurs. Elections give legitimacy to governments and democratic systems. Elections encourage civic participation in

democratic governance. In deeply divided societies, elections may be instruments of conflict resolution since a free and fair election is a reflection of popular opinion. In addition, elections are important milestones in democratic transitions. They provide an opportunity for examining how institutions function and whether the tenets of good governance and democracy are being adhered to. Finally, elections serve as a means for people to have direct experience with pluralism and meaningful contests for power involving ballots rather than bullets. They are peaceful processes for making political choices in a democracy. An election is the

sovereign right of the people and manipulating it is a violation of their sovereign right.

Citizens are entitled to vote freely and in a responsible way to express their political will and choice during elections. Other ingredients of a democratic systems such as fundamental human rights, liberties, freedoms, gender representation, a fair voting process, security and tranquility, full recognition of all the political role players in the electoral process, trust and tolerance are all contributing factors to

a conducive election atmosphere. Free and fair elections can only be conducted in an atmosphere of trust, tolerance and mutual respect.



THE VALUE OF DEMOCRACY

"Many forms of government have been tried and will be tried... No one pretends that democracy is perfect and all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

- Winston Churchill



Why do we need democracy? Why is it important that Namibia is governed by a system which allows all the citizens of the country the opportunity to participate in, and have control over, government? Wouldn't it be better if a few qualified political leaders were allowed to rule the country according to their own judgment and to make decisions affecting the whole country based on what they personally believe would be the best for all the citizens? If we want to find reasons why democracy is important, we can start with the idea that all people are equal in some basic way. We all have the right to life, liberty and happiness – it doesn't matter who or what we are. There will always be people who have more than we do in terms of money or possessions, but we are all the same, because we are all human and we all need to find some way to live together peacefully. This means that we should all be treated equally when it comes to political matters. We should be equal in our right to decide the political direction of the community we live in. Reinhold Niebuhr, an American Churchman, once said that man's capacity for good makes democracy possible, but man's capacity for evil makes democracy necessary. Because we are all equal, discrimination of any sort should be eliminated by the existence of democracy. No longer should certain groups be viewed as more important than others and certain groups excluded from political participation. Those decisions that affect the whole country should be based on information from all the different groups within the country.

Namibia is a constitutional democracy – this means that the foundation on which democracy is built, is set out in a constitution. This is a document containing a set of rules, rights and procedures that regulate the relationships between the public and the government, and also the relationships between the different branches of government. The Preamble of the Constitution states that the basic human rights mentioned

above, are best maintained and protected in a democratic society. Apart from these general rights, there are other fundamental rights that are just as important and that are also protected in the Constitution. Rights are protected in Chapter 3 of the Constitution. In Chapter 3, Article 21 states that all persons shall have the right to:

- freedom of speech and expression;
- freedom of thought, conscience and belief;
- freedom of religion;
- freedom of association;
- freedom of movement.

These rights are all important to guarantee that the conditions and structures on which democracy rely (free and fair elections, open and accountable government, civil and political rights, as well as a democratic society) remain in place. The Constitution is important, because it not only guarantees these rights, but it protects citizens against unfair treatment by the state. It also ensures that the government cannot easily interfere with, or change, these rights on which democracy is built. It is important to keep in mind that democracy, as a political system, is not a miracle solution to all our problems. As a political system, and by itself, democracy cannot cure AIDS, create more jobs, help people in need, improve education, provide houses, or address any of the other problems in our country. However, democracy is valuable because it places us in a position to influence how these problems are addressed. We can a) elect those representatives who we think will be able to come up with solutions to the country's problems and we can b) express our preferences in how problems are handled, as well as which issues should receive attention. After all, it is the people who live in a country, who have to make a living for themselves, who have the best idea what problems there are and what solutions might work.

Democracy is important because it provides a fair playing ground where everyone has:

- The ability to try and improve their lives in whatever way they see fit within the law;
- the chance to express what their preferences are regarding political matters;
- guaranteed rights and freedoms;
- equality.

It is the system of government in which everyone has an equal chance to try and find their own happiness and success. It is the system in which everyone can express their freedom in whichever way they choose, provided that it does not interfere with someone else's rights or freedoms. It is also the system in which everyone has the ability to express their opinion on how the country should best be governed – it provides everyone with the chance to shape their own future.

ELECTIONS AND FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS



For an election to be free and fair, fundamental human rights and freedoms should be enforced and respected by all. The Namibian constitution is the supreme law of the land. Chapter three (3) of the Namibia Constitution guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms. Article 5 of the Constitution states that all the fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution should be respected and upheld by the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, all other organs of government and its agencies as well as all natural and legal persons.

In order to campaign and to conduct an election, people as well as political parties and organizations should be able to move freely within Namibia. They should also be free to campaign and present their programs to the electorate. They should also be able to come together to hold meetings, demonstrations and rallies. The Constitution guarantees these rights and freedoms. The existence of these rights and freedoms creates an enabling environment for elections.

The right to peaceful political activity

Article 17 of the Namibian Constitution provides for the right to political activity for all citizens. The right to political activity includes the right to:

- participate in peaceful political activity;
- to form and join any political party of one's choice;
- the right to elect any persons of one's choice to public office;
- the right to vote, for those who are 18 years or older; and
- the right to be elected to public office, for those who are 21 years or older.

• Are political parties exercising their right to freedom of speech without insulting their political opponents or saying things that are not true about them?

• Can the media report freely on all phases of the electoral process?

It is important to note that freedom of speech, however, does not mean that:

- You have the right to insult your opponent.
 - You have the right to hatred or violence.
 - You have the right to say things that are untrue about other people.
- No one is allowed to incite hatred against other members of the community.

• Physically attack your political opponents or those who do not share your views.

Freedom of Movement

Article 21 (1) (g) of the Namibia Constitution states: *All persons shall have the right to move freely throughout Namibia*

As an observant member of the public you therefore may ask yourself the following questions:

- Are politicians and political parties free to move throughout Namibia?
- Are political parties free to go to parts of Namibia, which are considered to be strongholds of other political parties?
- Has any political leader been restricted or harassed in any part of Namibia?
- Has any political leader been refused entry into or exit from Namibia?
- Has any political leader been detained unlawfully?

It is important to note that the right to freedom of movement does not mean you have the right to trespass on other people's property.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Article 19 *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression"*

Article 20

"(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association"

Article 21

"(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of



the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedures."

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 25

"Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) *To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;*
- (b) *To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors."*

Universal principles on elections and human rights



Namibia has ratified various international and regional instruments which sets out various election related rights and duties. All these agreements are binding on Namibia. These agreements are important for testing whether our elections are acceptable to observers and the general public.

The most relevant international agreements applicable to Namibia include:

Freedom of Speech

Article 21 (1) (a) of the Namibian Constitution states: *"All persons shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media"*.

As an observant member of the public you therefore may ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all political parties and politicians able and free to speak and express themselves in public without fear?
- Are people being physically attacked by their political opponents or people who hold different political views?

Freedom of assembly

Article 21 (1) (d) of the Constitution states: *"All persons shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms."*

As an observant member of the public you therefore may ask yourself the following questions:

- Are political parties free to assemble, organize and hold rallies and marches?
- Are political parties harassed, threatened or restricted in any way by security agencies or other organs of the state when they hold rallies or marches?
- Are political parties harassed or threatened by their political opponents when they hold rallies or marches?
- Are people free to assemble, organize and hold rallies, marches and demonstrations?
- Are people harassed, threatened or restricted in any way by security agencies or other organs of state when they hold rallies, marches or demonstrations?
- Are people harassed or threatened by their political opponents when they hold rallies, marches or demonstrations?

Freedom of assembly does not give you the right to:

- Destroy other people's property during or after a demonstration, rally or procession.



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NID
Head Office
7a Love Street
PO Box 11956
Windhoek
Namibia

T: +264-61-2291178
F: +264-61-2291119
hunter@nid.org.na
www.nid.org.na



Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
President Place
1 Hood Avenue / 148 Jan Smuts Avenue (corner Bolton)
PO Box 678, Wits 2050
Johannesburg
T: +27-11-5902600
F: +27-11-5902699
info@osisa.org
www.osisa.org



Electoral Commission of Namibia
Elections House, NDC Building
Private Bag 13352
Windhoek
Namibia
T: +264-61-376200
F: +264-61-237618



Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
95 John Meinert Street
PO Box 23652
Windhoek
Namibia
T: +264-61-237438
F: +264-61-237441
fes@fesnam.org.na
www.fesnam.org

Hubert H. Humphrey

Everyone has the freedom to say what they believe. This however, does not mean that everybody will always agree with you. Democracy thrives on debate and discussion.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

Article 5

States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights:

(a) Political rights, in particular the right to participate in elections-to vote and to stand for election-on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, to take part in the Government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Article 7

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country."

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter) is an international human rights instrument that purports to promote and protect human rights and

basic freedoms in the African continent. The ACHPR came into effect on 21 October 1986. 21 October was consequently declared "African Human Rights Day".

Article 13

"1. Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law.

2. Every citizen shall have the right of equal access to the public service of his country.

3. Every individual shall have the right of access to public property and services in strict equality of all persons before the law."

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

Article 22 of the Charter states that:

State parties shall create a conducive environment for independent and impartial national monitoring or observation mechanisms.

SADC Principles for conducting Democratic Elections

The SADC Principles for Conducting Democratic Elections states that SADC Member States shall adhere to the following principles when conducting elections:

1. Full participation of the citizens in the political process;



2. Freedom of association;

3. Political tolerance;

4. Regular intervals for elections as provided for by the respective National Constitutions;

5. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;

6. Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;

7. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;

8. Voter education, and

9. Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent National Electoral Authorities in accordance with the law of the land.

All the rights mentioned above impose three general obligations which the State must respect, protect and fulfill. For instance, the right to vote creates the following obligations:

Obligation to respect: To respect human rights simply means not to interfere with their enjoyment. For instance, the State should not intimidate or dictate to the people on how and for whom they should vote.

Obligation to protect: To respect human rights simply means to take steps to ensure that third parties do not to interfere with their enjoyment. For example, the State must protect the right to vote by ensuring that members and supports of all political parties are not assaulted, harassed or intimidated by members of other political parties.

Obligation to fulfill: To respect human rights simply means to take steps to realize the right in question. For example, passing laws and creating an environment in which free and free elections can take place.

An essential part of free and fair elections is freedom of political campaigning. Everyone has the right to express his or her political convictions and ideas, without threat or fear of intimidation. Freedom of political campaigning, however, also carries responsibilities which include the freedom of others to express their own and independent opinion.

The Namibian political parties, associations, organisations and independent candidates have thus, in order to pledge their commitment to free and fair elections, subscribed to the

following code of conduct:

1. Intimidation, in any form, is impermissible.

2. No weapon of any kind, including any traditional weapon, may be brought to any political rally, meeting, march or other demonstration.

3. Parties shall avoid holding rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations physically close to one another during the same time of the day.

4. Parties shall refrain from utilising public address system, either fixed or mobile and which could constitute a public nuisance.

5. Speakers at political rallies may not use language which incites violence in any form against any other person or group of persons. Parties will not issue pamphlets, newsletters or posters which contain materials which incite people to violence.

6. Party members and supporters will not disrupt other parties' rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations.

7. Party members and supporters will not seek to obstruct other persons from attending the political rallies of other parties.

8. Party members and supporters will not disfigure or destroy political or campaign materials of other parties.

9. Party leaders will use their good offices to seek to ensure reasonable freedom of access by all political parties to potential voters, including those at farms and on state owned properties, outside working hours.

10. Parties will establish lines of communication to one another at headquarters, regional and local levels, and will appoint liaison personnel who will be constantly on call to deal with problems that may arise.

11. The Director of Elections will meet party representatives on a weekly basis to discuss all matters of concern related to the election campaign and the election itself. Emergency meetings will be convened as and when necessary.

12. Designated members will attend their parties' rallies to ensure compliance with this Code.

13. All allegations of intimidation and other unlawful conduct in the election campaign will be brought to the attention of the Police and to the attention of Directorate of Elections at the place where they are alleged to have occurred.

14. Party leaders will issue directions to their members and supporters to observe this Code of Conduct, and take all other necessary steps to ensure compliance.

15. The Electoral Commission of Namibia and party leaders undertake to publicise this Code of Conduct throughout Namibia by all means at their disposal.

16. Parties will in their advertising and propaganda efforts take care not to disfigure the environment.

TAKE A STAND BY VOTING IN THE 2009 PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Voting Procedures

Namibian voters will on 27th and 28th November vote for a Presidential candidate who is nominated by a registered political party or as an independent candidate. The presidential candidate who achieves more than 50% of all votes cast during the elections will be declared the winner. If no candidate obtains more than 50% of the votes, the law requires that the ECN conducts a second ballot. At the same time, Namibian voters will also vote for the political party of their choice in the National Assembly election. Political parties that participated in the National Assembly election will be allocated seats according to the number of votes they receive during the polls.

In order to ensure transparency during polling, the ECN has invited political parties and independent candidates to appoint agents at both the polling and counting stations. There will also be international and domestic observers to observe that the Elections of 2009 are conducted according to international standards and that they are indeed free and fair.

What do you need to bring along

You need your voter card as proof that you are a registered voter. Polling will commence each morning at 07h00 and end at 21h00.



At the polling station

When arriving at a polling station you will meet the following persons:

- The presiding officer, who is in charge of the polling station;
- The identity controller who checks your voter card;
- The ultraviolet light controller who checks that you do not have the indelible or delible ink on your thumb and fingers;
- The inker who marks your thumb with indelible ink;
- The ballot paper issuer who will give you the presidential ballot paper and directs you to the voting booth; after you have made your choice you will be issued with the national assembly ballot paper and directed to the polling booth again.

The presidential ballot paper goes into the ballot box with the blue lid, while the national assembly ballot paper goes into the ballot box with the yellow lid. After voting, you will be required to leave the polling station.



Voters who need assistance

A voter who has any disability or who is nervous may request a relative or friend who is 18 years or older to assist him or her to vote. The presiding officer may assist a voter in the absence of a relative or friend.

Do's and don'ts at a polling station

Political parties may not hold any meeting closer than 500 metres from any polling station or have a meeting place, such as a

tent or caravan or any other structure closer than 500 metres from any polling station.

You are not allowed to enter the pollings station with clothes or materials that directly resemble the colours of a political party or candidate, this includes T-shirts, badges, stickers or brochures. You are not allowed to have any conversation with a voter after he or she has been issued with a ballot paper and before he or she deposits the ballot paper in the ballot box.

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

The position of Regional Coordinator is a requirement of the electoral law. The regional co-ordinator is a vital link between important election functionaries, namely the Director of Elections and his senior staff on the one hand and the returning officers and their subordinates on the other. The duties of regional co-ordinators can be summarized as follows:

- Providing accurate and continuous information to the Director of Elections about the readiness of returning officers to deliver credible, free and fair elections;
- Being conversant with the electoral process to provide training and advice to returning officers and presiding officers
- Reviewing the election timetable with returning officers on a regular basis to ensure that all returning officers under

his/her supervision are up-to-date in terms of election preparations;

- Ensuring that returning officers are provided with adequate facilities and supplies;
- Monitoring and co-ordinating security arrangements in his/her region;
- Liaison with logistical personnel at the ECN's offices to ensure that polling day supplies reach returning officers on time and in sufficient quantities;
- Liaison with returning officers to ensure that election supplies are returned for storage after the counting of the votes;
- Informing the Director of Elections of any aspect of a returning officer's performance which may negatively impact the ability of the ECN to deliver free and fair elections.



THE ROLE OF RETURNING OFFICERS

Provision is made in the electoral legislation for the appointment of returning officers by the ECN. The duties of returning officers are many and varied and the need for him/her to perform such duties with integrity and competence cannot be over-emphasized. He/she has to declare his/her secrecy under oath, meaning that they will not pass on secret information to the media, political parties or any other unauthorized person or institution. Returning officers are responsible to establish an operation centre and to ensure that they have been provided with all the necessary election materials for the conduct of elections in a particular constituency, he/she will especially have to take care that adequate security for all election materials under his/her control are provided.

Returning officers will be required to interact with the representatives of political parties and candidates in a courteous and attentive manner, and provide assistance to these to the best of his/her ability. Returning officers will be required to receive a list of election agents and counting agents from political parties and candidates not later than 15 days after Nomination Day. Public notice of the name and address of each election agent and the polling station in respect of which such agent is appointed must be given.



A returning officer must make all the necessary arrangements for ensuring the smooth running of the elections in his/her constituency. One aspect of this responsibility relates to the establishment of mobile polling stations. It is the duty of the returning officer to exercise control over mobile polling stations in a particular constituency and make known the time when and the places where mobile polling stations will operate. The Director of Elections must provide returning officers with the following items:

- Polling booths
- Ballot boxes

- Ballot papers
- Instruments for marking ballot papers
- The official stamp
- Seals
- Copies of the relevant voters register
- Other requisites as may be required

The returning officers remain responsible for the secure handling of these at all times.

Returning officers must ensure that all arrangements for the use of buildings identified as polling stations pertaining to their suitability in terms of safety, space, access, furniture,

water and toilet facilities and electricity for example are made. Returning officers are expected to ensure that polling stations under their control open and close punctually.

As soon as is practical after the announcement of the results the returning officer must enclose in separate sealed packets all counted ballot papers, all rejected ballot papers and all ballot paper accounts received from polling station. These are then to be forwarded to the ECN.



THE ROLE OF ELECTION AGENTS

The role of election agents in the elections is as visible as it is important. Representatives of political parties and independent candidates who attend polling stations are called voting agents, while at counting stations they are called counting agents. All these persons are also referred to as election agents. The function of election agents is to observe the proceedings at the polling station and to draw the attention of the presiding officer to any irregularity which they may observe. No more than two election agents per political party or candidate are allowed into a polling station at any time. An authorized election agent or counting agent may place the seal of his/her political party or candidate on a ballot box, packet or any other item required by law to be sealed. They are also entitled to inspect any ballot box, packet or anything sealed which is to be opened. A person who is a candidate or not a Namibian citizen may not be appointed as an election or counting agent.

The responsibility of an election agent is not to interfere with the polling process, but rather to observe and inform the presiding officer of any grievances which he or she may have. They are also allowed to move around the polling station in order to observe the voting process during polling. However, they are not allowed into the voting booth while a voter is marking his/

her ballot. During polling, party agents will observe whether the election materials arrive safely and under police protection and they will ensure that the ballot boxes are empty before being used for the first time at the polling station. Party agents will also observe whether ballot boxes are well closed and sealed before voting starts and whether ballot papers are cast in the correct ballot boxes.

At the commencement of the voting process it is the responsibility of the party agent to observe whether the election officials are checking the voters' fingers to ensure that they have not been previously marked. Agents also see to it that the election officials examine voter cards and mark the fingers of the voters with indelible ink. They also check whether the election officials issuing the ballot papers are giving correct instructions and that he/she demonstrates the correct way to fold the ballot paper to each voter. Party agents ensure that eligible voters are voting in secrecy and that no other person is entering the voting booth while a voter is making his or her vote.

At the closing of counting they observe that all ballot boxes are properly sealed and when possible, put their seals on the ballot boxes. They are also allowed to watch the ballot boxes during the night between the two election days.

THE ROLE OF ELECTIONS OBSERVERS

What is election observation?

Observation is the purposeful gathering of information regarding the elections, and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such a process on the basis of the information collected, by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the process and whose involvement should not be such as to jeopardize their main observation responsibilities. Observing an election can be divided into three phases: i.e. observing what occurs before, during and after the election.

Observing the pre-election period includes all activities that occur before the actual day of voting. By using the provided legal framework and documents such as the Constitution, the Electoral Act and Regulations, observers monitor the media, membership of the electoral machinery, political party campaign/rallies, voter education and delimitation of constituencies, etc.

Election Day observation covers all activities that occur on the day of actual voting: i.e., logistics, accreditation, the process of voting, conditions and atmosphere around the polling stations, electoral officials and party agents and their activities, counting and collation of votes; and the announcements/publication of results.

Observing the Post-Election period includes all activities that occur after the actual elections. For instance, the resolution of election disputes, petitions and the formation of the newly elected government.

Why Domestic Observation?

The primary purpose of an independent observation program is to encourage openness and enhance transparency in the election for the benefit of all. It also:

- promotes public confidence in the electoral process;
- deters those who would want to engage in improper practices or fraudulent activities;
- reduces opportunities for frivolous or misguided allegations of impropriety; and,
- provides information which lawmakers, election officials, and activists can use to assess the process and plan for future improvements.

Observers play a significant role in reassuring the public about the importance of the electoral process and the relevance of each voter's participation. Publicity surrounding the formation of an observation operation, coupled with the pre-election activities of observers and their presence at polling stations on Election Day, enhances public confidence and encourages citizens' involvement in the process. Public statements and reports issued by observing groups may lead to changes in policies that promote fairness in the election process. The presence of observers at polling stations may deter fraud, intimidation as well as reduce voting irregularities. In addition, when observers monitor the counting process they provide an unbiased source for verifying official results. Finally, a post-election report by an independent observation group also influences the positions taken by electoral contestants regarding the overall legitimacy of the process. A relatively positive assessment should encourage acceptance of the results by all parties. In contrast, a negative critique may lead to rejection of the results if the process is suspected to be illegitimate.

Election observation is a sensitive activity in which the observer must be vigilant. In order to achieve this, the observer must keep to certain standards of operations, behavior and attitude. In all these, s/he measures his/her assessments against accepted international standards, the national constitution, national electoral laws and regulations as well as the general principles of democratic governance. In short, election observing is an instrument of checks and balances within the electoral system.

The Observer is equipped with his/her eyes, ears and sense of judgment. S/he watches every phase of the election; puts his/her ear to the ground to collect information and uses his/her best judgment in volatile situations. Put simply, an observer is an election information-monger. Through information and documentation, s/he serves a dual purpose of analysis and quality control. The observer observes each phase of the electoral process and watches all acts and decisions and assesses their impact on the election outcome.



THE ROLE OF THE POLICE



A great number of police officers are to be deployed at polling stations countrywide to ensure that law and order is maintained during the two days of elections. It is endeavoured that at least two police officers will be deployed at every fixed polling station, while at least one police officer will accompany the mobile teams. These police officers will remain outside

the polling stations and will, therefore, not affect the electoral process. They are there to ensure that law and order is maintained. The police will also keep ballot boxes at safe places and will watch them. Police officers must be present in the counting centres at all times when counting is in progress to ensure that proper order is maintained.

NAMIBIA IS YOUR BUSINESS!

YOUR VOTE WILL ENSURE ITS SUCCESS.



NAMIBIAN POLITICAL PARTIES ON PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

On 27th and 28th November 2009, all adult Namibian citizens will be called to the ballot boxes to vote in the national and presidential elections. The following 14 political parties are registered with the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) and will contest the National Assembly elections while 12 candidates representing different political parties will contest the Presidential elections:



All People's Party (APP)

In order to offer all voters an optimal basis for an informed decision, the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), in partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES), conducted standardised interviews with representatives of parties on 12 topical issues.

Responses obtained during these interviews are as follows:

General Issues

The NID asked party representatives to identify the main political challenges the country faces in the near future.

The SWAPO Party identified socio-economic development as the main task. The country needs further educational progress, but with the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic the foundations are laid. The health sector needs further attention, it is necessary to train more medical practitioners. Challenges also include rural development and the continuous improvement of infrastructure. The implementation of the land reform programme aims not only at redressing historical wrongs of the colonial past. It provides the framework for poverty reduction and social equity.

The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA) focused on the global economic meltdown and unemployment, in particular of the youth. The high number of young people forced to leave school without school-leaving certificates denotes a serious weakness of the educational system. Namibia needs more vocational training schools.

For the Monitor Action Group (MAG), job creation constitutes the only way to root out poverty effectively. Education suffers from poor performance standards of the educators. Namibia's biggest health challenge, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, not only requires systematic policy responses but also a principled declaration of moral values. The Republican Party of Namibia (RP) criticized that after nearly 20 years of independence the quality of life and the standard of living leave a great deal to be desired. The major challenges are the level of education and unemployment. Creating employment is not the responsibility of the government but also of the private sector.

The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) named poverty reduction as main challenge. Namibia can only achieve poverty reduction by setting the country on a firm path of sustained economic growth

through the provision of health care, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation.

The Congress of Democrats (CoD) focuses on the consolidation of democracy and the process of nation building. Together with poverty and unemployment, they are the main challenges. There is definitely the need to safeguard the separation of powers. Though Namibia in some instances succeeded in overcoming the racial and tribal divisions of the past, some communities still perceive themselves as marginalized.

For the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO) the protection of democratic principles and institutions, and an inclusive government are the main challenges.

For the United Democratic Front (UDF), free and fair elections represent the essential challenge. The Electoral Commission must ensure that all parties have an equal and fair chance, which is why their funding through state coffers should be revised.

The Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) addressed corruption, poverty, unemployment and political intolerance as main challenges. To the South West African National Union (SWANU), issues of political tolerance, national unity, promotion of democracy, the rule of law and justice are equal in weight to challenges in the social and economic field. The All People's Party (APP) is of the opinion that because for the first time in the young history of the Namibian nation, the so called "born frees" are admitted to the vote, their interests must find representation. The Democratic Party of Namibia (DPN) listed several socio-economic and political issues central to their election campaign: education, labour, health, unemployment, poverty, the land question and political tolerance. The National Democratic Party (NDP) considers underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty and the spread of diseases as the main socio-economic challenges. Among the political challenges are oppression, tribalism, discrimination, as well as the politi-

cal ignorance.

The questionnaire also requested the parties to point out what they intend to do to ensure that the election campaign enjoys a climate of peace and mutual tolerance. All political parties committed without reservation to peace and tolerance.

SWAPO said that it would organize rallies responsibly and in cooperation with the police authorities. The party vowed not to send antagonizing messages to other parties and advocates for honesty of all the parties' messages to the electorate. CoD and SWANU pointed to the significance of an issue-orientated election campaign. NUDO sees itself as the only party that refers to the Political Code of Conduct discussed amongst the political competitors at an early stage of the current election campaign. DPN, MAG, RDP, RP and SWAPO emphasized the importance of educating the citizens. They called upon their supporters to refrain from any kind of political violence, intimidation and intolerance.

Several parties critically raised the issue of abuse of power. As a point in case, the RDP questioned the impartiality of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) and criticized the fact that the ECN has in the past awarded the printing of ballot papers to NamPrint, a company owned by SWAPO. RPD also questioned the procedure allowing the transportation of ballot boxes after voting, which opened the possibility of "cheating and tampering".

Democracy and Human Rights

Parties were requested to state whether fundamental freedoms as protected and guaranteed by the Namibian Constitution are adequately protected by the law and respected in daily life.

The SWAPO Party pointed out that human rights become real only when citizens internalize these norms of social co-existence. Citizens should respect each other and accept that their own personal freedom ends where the freedom of their neighbour begins. As a form

of governance, democracy may not be without fault but it still is the best option in the endeavour to manage society.

CoD affirmed that political parties have to take responsibility for creating the conditions necessary for "living freedom in practice". From civil society, CoD requested training of political players to facilitate education for tolerance. CoD perceives Namibian democracy as incomplete as long as an inadequate balance of powers between the executive, the judiciary and the legislature impedes their strict separation.

In the DTA's view, the players in the political field largely respect the principle of separation of powers despite occasional violations. However, the DTA criticized Government for infringing press freedom by boycotting a daily newspaper just because it is sometimes critical of government. DTA also mentioned the case of the 2008 by-elections in the Windhoek Tobias-Hainyeko constituency when SWAPO supporters engaged in violent clashes with RDP supporters, infringing on their rights to associate and assemble.

NUDO doubts that human rights and fundamental freedoms are adequately protected. Freedom of association is at risk when established parties obstruct the formation of new political organisations. NUDO assessed the ruling party's two-third majority as a major challenge to democracy and advocates for a system of participatory democracy.

UDF pointed to the discrepancy between human rights protection in the Constitution and the respect for these rights in daily life. UDF regards the predominance of SWAPO as a serious hindrance on the way to democracy, more so as it becomes the vehicle of "ethnic prejudice and nepotism".

In general, MAG sees no restrictions of fundamental rights but criticised the marginalization of minorities. The dominance of the Government in Parliament reflects another shortcoming in governance.

From the RP's point of view, fundamental human rights are not always respected in daily life. RP fears that SWAPO's unchallenged predominance breeds arrogance. Politicians should set an example of tolerance. RP asks the opposition parties for their part to be objective and fair towards SWAPO.

The RDP differentiated between fundamental human rights that are recognized and the present political culture that falls behind these constitutional principles. RDP referred to autocratic tendencies and the arrogance of power in the ruling party. RDP pronounced itself for the need to deepen the values and practice of democracy, to learn to respect different political views and to promote debate and tolerance.

SWANU values the constitutional freedoms and believes that democracy and human rights are linked to socio-economic development. Education is needed to internalize the principles of the Constitution. The APP pointed out that ordinary people often do not know their rights and have no access to the relevant institutions, in particular rural communities. DPN maintained that currently, peoples' lives are not respected. According to the DPN the high crime rate is caused by high levels of unemployment and intolerance. The DPN supports stiffer jail sentences and that the police should act more professionally. For the NDP, democracy and human rights exist "only on paper". It criticised SWAPO for using government resources for party purposes.

Decentralisation

According to the government's policy of decentralisation, various responsibilities, functions and resources are delegated to the regional and local authorities. Parties were asked to explain their general view of decentralisation and to evaluate the present state of affairs.

Most parties regard decentralization as an important instrument to fight poverty but criticised the slow manner in which the decentralisation policy is being implemented. MAG and NDMC were of the opinion that Namibia is not yet ready for the decentralization process.

SWAPO emphasized that it was under its government's mandate that decentralization was introduced. The SWAPO-led government established the regional authorities, created the office of the regional governor and set up the necessary administrative infrastructure. Regional capitals need further development. The regions deserve a

better infrastructure, health facilities, roads, water supply and sewage disposal.

CoD pointed to the lack of resources and criticised corruption on the regional and local level. CoD believes that SWAPO has little political will to delegate functions to the regional and local authorities.

In the same vein, the DTA criticised that the decentralisation process moves in "snail pace". Nevertheless, the DTA believes that decentralisation will come despite the obvious resistance of the Government. After all, SWAPO members make up the majority of the National Council, and they will claim their share of power.

Both NUDO and the UDF advocate strongly for the decentralisation process. It is important that the citizens have direct access to government offices throughout the country.

RDP finds that the decentralisation process leaves much to be desired. RDP criticised inefficiency and incompetence of public servants and the fact that appointments in the public sector are not merit-based. As an example, the RDP mentions the "jobs for comrades".

MAG considers decentralisation to be implemented too soon as civil servants in the regions still lack administrative knowledge.

In principle, the RP welcomes decentralization. They feel, however, that it is still a reality today that people must come to Windhoek if they want to approach the Government. Until now, the offices of the Regional Councils are only budget-consuming institutions.

NDMC is of the opinion that decentralization helps to alleviate poverty. However, NDMC underlines that it is important that local decision not just favour the elites but help the poor. SWANU compares the decentralisation process with the so-called Marshall-Plan. After World War II, the United States of America intervened in Western Europe's economies to reconstruct them after widespread war-related destruction.

Governance and Public Service Delivery

The questionnaire asked party representatives to give their assessment of the current state of the civil service in Namibia. What does their party suggest to maintain and to improve the quality of public administration and service delivery? How does their party intend to tackle corruption?

The UDF and DTA praised service delivery notwithstanding the workload most branches of the public service have to carry. Parties generally complained about low professional standards and bad service delivery. They also criticized partisanship and nepotism, which most see as the cause of bad performance. To improve the standards of human resources, the parties recommend training and a system of recruitment and promotion strictly based on qualification and work performance.

SWAPO abstained from openly criticizing the civil service but urged public servants to see their work as a contribution to the developmental of the nation. They must not just act as bureaucrats. There are public servants who do not deliver because they lack training. The Office of the Prime Minister has started setting up a training institution to meet these challenges and improve the quality of the public service.

CoD bemoaned a "tendency of entitlement". Jobs are not given to individuals because of their qualification but because of the country's historical background, which made them victims of racial discrimination. Family and ethnic relations also play a role, as well as political affiliation.

In the same vein, the DTA addresses nepotism. The party considers the civil service as bloated. It recommends continuous training and recruitment based on quality and competence.

For NUDO, the public service not only is too large in relation to the country's financial resources; it also suffers from low salaries and low motivation. NUDO recommends the introduction of a new staff policy for recruitment, training and promotion.

RP and MAG are concerned that the public service is overstuffed and service delivery is insufficient. They advise to downsize the service and devise consistent promotion criteria.

According to RDP "competence, professionalism and dedication of the Namibian public service leave much to be desired". The "jobs for comrades" policy is one reason, the shortcomings in the education system the other. Clear targets should be set, which allow to measure work progress.

SWANU blamed the Namibian Government for not recruiting the best Namibian candidates with the

highest qualification. Public administration needs an attractive salary structure comparable to similar professions. In the same vein, NDMC regards the public service as not efficient, as partisan and not free. According to the APP, the public service is bloated, unreliable, incompetent and ineffective. APP proposed to downsize the whole Government, starting with Cabinet. According to the DPN, public servants are not service-minded and not adequately qualified. Incompetence in any public institution is widespread. Loyalty to the ruling party, ethnic origin, community and family background are more important than qualification. The NDP demanded that Namibia should invite the developed countries to send qualified trainers for the public service.

Unanimously, all parties condemned corruption and support the fight against it. SWAPO refers to the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission and endorsement of the Anti-Corruption Act that prohibits direct, indirect and attempted corruption.

The CoD acknowledges, "Government is trying hard" to fight corruption. Education is needed to strengthen a "culture of honesty".

Both, DTA and RP criticised nepotism and abuse of power as widespread in the public sector. Since many officials are members of the ruling party, they close ranks, defend, and protect one another. RP demanded that prosecutors should find the courage to incriminate the "big fishes" in the public service.

RDP assessed corruption as an indicator of bad governance. Corruption may not be as bad in Namibia as it is in other African countries but it is getting worse. RPD demands more power for the anti-corruption agencies and stiffer punitive measures. RDP and DPN underline the importance of public awareness and the role of the media. Whistle-blowers need protection.

SWANU underlined the importance of moral values and identifies "human greed" as the root cause of corruption. SWANU stated that education is needed but also stated that the present economic system encourages corrupt practices. Both, APP and MAG pleaded for strong punitive measures irrespective of the suspect's position. According to DPN and NDP, punishment should include compensation for any financial damage.



South West African National Union (SWANU)



Congress of Democrats (CoD)



United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)



The Lord is our Rock

Democratic Movement for Change (DMC)



National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO)



Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA)

International Relations

The questionnaire requested respondents to expound the interests that Namibia should pursue in her international relations?

SWAPO referred to the solidarity and support that African countries and other nations throughout the world gave the liberation movement during the fight for independence. This experience informs the party's foreign policy of peaceful relationships. SWAPO sees Namibia as a valuable member of the African Union and of SADC. SWAPO supports the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations. In order to extend Namibia's foreign relations and to look for further development partners, SWAPO suggests establishing new embassies. However, diplomatic missions represent a considerable cost factor.

The CoD wants Namibia to focus primarily on its own development and its own interest. In the international arena, the country should act in favour of this self-interest and advocate for the recognition of SADC countries as powers equal to the other players in the world.

The DTA conceives foreign relations mainly from an economic point of view. Namibia is an exporter of raw materials and importer of manufactured goods. This economic structure disadvantages the country as it entails unfavourable terms of trade. Therefore, the DTA calls for change: The diamond industry shows the way; export of raw diamonds has become conditional on a certain percentage of local polishing.

NUDO recommended concentrating on establishing good relationships "with the modern and democratic countries of the world" in order to engage in successful partnerships for progress and development.

The UDF stressed that good relations with other countries are extremely important. As a major exporter of uranium, Namibia is destined to play a role in global relations. To reduce unemployment, the UDF proposes to curb the "Chinese monopoly on industrial development of Namibia".

The RP, MAG and SWANU all questioned what they perceive as the Government's unconditional support of Zimbabwe. RP and MAG underline the importance of good neighbourhood and but urge the Namibian Government to be truthful in dealing with the "mistakes of neighbouring countries". SWANU added that Namibia is obliged to re-

spect the right of self-determination of other countries but is also under moral obligation to remind partners violating the principles of democracy and human rights.

The RDP also gives priority to promoting peace and democracy. At the same time, RDP protests against the silent acceptance of state-caused violence against people in other countries. RDP also warned against the establishment of new embassies instead of closing down missions to cut costs.

The DPN favours the strengthening of relations with democratic countries that support Namibia's development. Thereby, Namibia should focus on "nations (which) have historical ties with Namibia", such as Germany. The APP stated that Namibia's foreign policy should be guided by the Constitution, because then Namibia will achieve its economic and political goals in cooperation with foreign partners. Both, the NDMC and the NDP believe that financial and commercial relations must be to the mutual benefit of the partners involved.

Global Financial Crisis

The majority of parties were of the opinion that the state must support the Namibian economy to make it less vulnerable to further economic shocks. The NDP is the only exception, pleading for the self-healing power of market forces. However, NDP would turn to donors for assistance and training of Namibians.

According to SWAPO, the extent of the financial and economic situation is such that it demands government intervention. The state should mobilize all its economic and societal resources, limited as they may be. The expansion of the infrastructure and programmes for job creation will help to limit the negative consequences. The ruling party is aware of the fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, to protect the national economy from future economic shocks set off by the world's economic networks of which Namibia is part.

The CoD advised to refrain from state subsidies for private companies. Local banks, however, cannot do without Government's backing to avoid that an individual crash puts at risk the entire financial system of the country. As a matter of principle, Namibia should strengthen local financial institutions.

The DTA maintained that even in a free market economy the state must intervene when the market forces fail. Greed lies at the roots of the

global crisis. Namibian banks should devise careful loan policies; they should be obliged to request and check securities. The DTA supports the recent decision by the Bank of Namibia to cut its interest rate.

The RDP shared this assessment, seeing it as a necessary measure to stimulate consumption and investment as a countermeasure to the effects of the global crisis. RDP also demanded an increase in public investment in infrastructure. In the long term, only the diversification of the national economy will reduce its vulnerability. The RDP and the APP agree on this issue. APP pointed to the obvious negative impact of the external crisis on the local mining and agricultural sectors. Namibia's future depends on the ability of the economy to reduce its dependence on the primary sector. For RDP, diversification means expanding the secondary and the tertiary sector.

The MAG takes a different angle. Economic policies should focus on the mining sector and creating opportunities for investors. MAG also criticizes the squandering of public money "on unnecessary prestige projects" such as a new Falcon jet for the President or the new office building for the Founding President.

The increasing public debt disturbs the RP. Paying off the deficit brings the state under pressure. As a point in case, the party cites the enormous bailouts for the parastatals Air Namibia and TransNamib. Consequently, the state has to take cuts in the budget posts for health provision and education.

SWANU strictly rejects any reliance solely on market forces. The majority of Namibia's population "have no shelter, food or clothing" – this is the legacy of apartheid. Their well-being is paramount and requires development planning by the state. The NDMC believes that the current economic and social challenges require a thorough understanding of the current crisis and the appropriate policies. The DPN recommended employment creation. This should be achieved through developing labour intensive industries, and through subsidizing the mining sector. In DPN's view, there is one lesson the country could learn from the current crisis: Namibia should start focusing on agriculture. There are too many "foreign players" in the economy and the Namibian people remain "excluded".

Economic Development

Namibia's economy relies on the principles of a mixed economy, which combines market forces and state intervention. The questionnaire

requested the respondents to outline the role of state in the economy. What does their party propose to do – if in government – to reduce unemployment and to create jobs? What is their understanding of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)? What are their budget priorities? Most parties pronounced themselves in favour of an active role of the state though their opinions differ regarding the extent of intervention necessary or desirable. They see the state principally as service deliverer and provider of infrastructure.

The Monitor Action Group (MAG) favours the free market system. The Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) portrays the state mainly as a promoter of the private sector. The Republican Party (RP) leaves no doubt as to the leading and exclusive role of private entrepreneurship. The National Democratic Party (NDP) sees the most important role of the state in approaching donors for fundraising.

The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) holds to the principle of a mixed economy. The ruling party lays stress on the private sector as "the engine" of development. However, the state is not left out, as it is the government's task to "ensure the smooth running of things" and to intervene when problems demand a solution. Similarly, the Congress of Democrats (CoD) asks "guiding and intervention where necessary". The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) is in accord with this view, expecting the state to "look and watch", where the market forces fail.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) wants the state's role limited to the delivery of "essential services". The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) expects decisive "investment for development programmes" in infrastructure, education and the environment.

The All People's Party (APP) attributes the state just a complementary role. Government is under obligation where the private sector shies away from investing, for instance in rural areas. The South West Africa National Union (SWANU) demands the state to be instrumental in redistributing wealth.

Two main strands become evident in the parties' recipes for fighting unemployment and creating jobs. Most parties, i.e. SWAPO, CoD, DTA, RP, RDP, SWANU, NDMC, APP, DPN and NDP, give priority to the diversification of the Namibian industry and the local processing of the country's raw materials such as

uranium and diamonds. SWAPO, UDF, RDP and DPN support public investment in roads and railways, health, education, water supply and sanitation as a developmental tool. UDF and SWANU point to the positive effects of public spending specifically on agricultural infrastructure, thus creating employment in the rural areas. RDP addresses the promotion of the tourism sector and the development of the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector as another component of the state's activity.

SWAPO maintained that employment creation cannot be demanded from Government only. The mining industry and private companies should also create opportunities for employment. The country also needs the initiatives and readiness of private individuals to invest and take economic risks by starting their own business. MAG asks of the state that tenders should be awarded only to Namibians.

SWANU turned its attention towards job creation rather "at lower levels", providing employment for those who leave school without a certificate. NDMC advocates for a stronger support of entrepreneurship skills and vocational training in school curricula. APP called for assistance for "upcoming entrepreneurs". The party also encourages preferential treatment of foreign investors. To reduce unemployment, NDP proposed a strategy compelling all Namibians who completed senior secondary education to do "national service in the army for a period of two to five years".

For all parties, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) represents a factor of importance for the economic future of the country. However, most parties agree that up until today BEE mainly served a minority of black Namibians with political connections. SWAPO admits that "influential individuals" benefited "more disproportionately". RDP mentioned blacks "with good connections to the former State House" which "have become rich overnight... amidst rising poverty". NDMC perceives BEE as "hijacked by a few black elites". SWANU and DPN locate the elite within the ranks of the ruling party.

The CoD recommended that a specific law should regulate BEE. According to the DTA, empowerment should not privilege any specific population group defined by race or ethnic origin. APP and MAG seem the only parties that are reluctant to support to the idea of BEE at all. RP expressed cautious scepticism. It welcomes empowerment, in prin-

ciple, but criticized that the historically disadvantaged groups of the population remain disadvantaged.

Budget priorities are a sensitive issue. All parties with the exception of the ruling party proposed changes. SWAPO is satisfied with the current priorities, namely education, health, housing, sanitation and agriculture. Most opposition parties in Parliament and the new parties advise to cut the defence budget. CoD, DTA, UDF, RP, NDMC and DPN see no need to spend heavily in this field. Namibia is not at war, does not have to fear getting involved in a conflict, and the relations with her neighbours are good and peaceful. CoD, DPN, NDMC, RDP and RP give absolute priority to education.

DTA and UDF focussed on safety and security and demand more support of the police force. Peace and stability of the country are essential for attracting foreign investment. UDF would freeze spending on the Office of the Former Head of State and rather direct the money to social welfare programmes. MAG, RDP and SWANU stressed the necessity of providing public funding for employment creation and the promotion of the manufacturing industry.

Education

The questionnaire requested the respondents to outline their party's proposals for the improving of the quality of education in Namibia.

The DTA recommended the further training of teachers. Other parties, especially SWAPO, NUDO, the RDP, and UDF support this idea. The DPN, the NDMC, the RP and APP hold the introduction of the Cambridge System after independence responsible for the present poor quality standards in education. The system was not suitable for Namibia, as it did not meet the country's special needs. The MAG wants that the teachers' salaries to reflect the quality of individual performance.

To improve the quality of education, SWANU and NUDO proposed an earlier entry of children into the educational system at pre-primary level. NUDO, DPN and the NDP criticize the practice of automatic promotion children from one grade to the next, which refuses pupils the option to repeat and acquire the knowledge basis for the higher grade. The CoD, NDP, RDP, RP and SWANU identify the shortage of equipment and the inadequate infrastructure in schools throughout the country as a major setback. The educational budget should aim to provide more

funds for teaching materials, books and additional classrooms, especially in rural areas.

RPD and SWANU pointed to the fact that vocational and technical colleges are very important to confront the shortage of productive skills and train students for industrial professions. The establishment of more such centres throughout the country is important. Both parties give preference to vocational rather than to academic qualifications, to meet the economy's present needs for human resources.

Finally, SWAPO urged children and young people to change their attitudes towards education. Namibians should commit themselves to academic excellence. Moreover, they should regard learning and improving their skills as a lifelong task.

Health

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria, tuberculosis, but also poor nutrition and hygiene pose a constant threat to the health of the population. The questionnaire requested the respondents to outline their critique of the current health policies and their suggestions for a change in policies.

SWAPO does not see any reason to change direction. Government's programmes plan for fair access to public health facilities for every citizen irrespective of their income and their location. The decentralized system of primary health care serves the needs of communities. The party witnesses significant progress in fighting malaria and polio. However, the number of nurses, doctors and specialists is still too small. Nevertheless, according to the ruling party, health is not Government's responsibility alone. The state can provide facilities but people must also take care of themselves through a healthy way of life.

Other parties paint a less satisfactory picture. The CoD, the NDP and SWANU called for health insurances for everybody. Currently, only 16% of the population has a private insurance. The DTA, the MAG, the DPN, NUDO and SWANU are concerned about the difficult conditions under which health workers have to work, especially nurses. They are not properly trained, generally underpaid and often they endure a bad working environment. Better salaries are essential. DTA and SWANU pointed out that many Namibian health workers work in other countries. DPN intends to encourage more students to study in the field of health and medical sciences.

Other parties, the APP, DPN, the NDMC, the RDP and the RP criticised the status of hospitals and the lack of professionalism in health management. RP criticized that everywhere in the country state hospitals are in a bad condition, buildings, medical equipment and even beds. The UDF referred to language barriers in cases where patients are transferred to other regions of Namibia for specialized treatment.

All parties agree that the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS poses a serious problem. However, in SWAPO's view, there are some positive trends. The infection rate amongst pregnant mothers and the youth dropped, according to recent statistical evidence. About 70% of people living with the disease are now on anti-retroviral therapy. Nevertheless, there is no reason to relax. Every official, every public servant is reminded of his duty to make the public aware of the danger of HIV/AIDS.

MAG, the RDP, the RP and SWANU emphasized the need for preventive education to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. The RP commended the SWAPO government for doing a good job, but proposed that sex education in schools starts earlier as children are already sexually active at the age of 10 to 12. The CoD and the UDF asked for more testing. The UDF advocated for compulsory testing of every patient visiting clinics or hospitals.

Several parties, like the APP, the DPN, MAG and the NDMC, insist on the importance of moral values and respect for tradition. The DPN complained about the neglect of religion after independence. That neglect goes hand in hand with the decline of morality. Sexual promiscuity is on the rise in the country. The NDMC supports the campaign for condom use, yet "emphasis should be put on abstinence". The DPN connects the frequency of sexually transmitted diseases with widespread alcohol abuse and the spread of shebeens.

Land Reform

Land and its redistribution remains a highly sensitive topic. The questionnaire requested the respondents to outline their party's view on land reform and the land issue in Namibia. Largely, parties agree that the state has to redress historical injustice and to redistribute land to those historically disadvantaged. In their statements, respondents refrained from proposing radical measures but rather respect the Namibian Constitution and the law.



Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP)



South West Africa People's Organisations (SWAPO Party)



Republican Party of Namibia (RP)

National Democratic Party of Namibia (NDPN)



Monitor Action Group (MAG)



Communist Party

In the opinion of SWAPO, the land issue is a colonial legacy and confronts Namibian society with a “difficult historical challenge”. The colonial masters took land away from the original owners by force and without compensation. On the other hand, land is an important economic factor. Therefore, the SWAPO government adopted the policy of purchasing land, compensating the owners and distributing it to the landless. “That may not be sufficient and that may not be quick but at least for now it balances the issue of economy and peace in the country as well as the issue of national reconciliation.”

The CoD questioned the effectiveness of the current policy and called it “lots of heat and no light.” The DTA and the RP believe that the very expensive price levels for agricultural land are to be blamed on the Government’s policies. DTA demands that the value of land be established according to the productive capacity per hectare. The DTA suspects that it is also corruption and incompetence in the Ministry of Land and Resettlement that contribute to the inflation of prices for commercial farmland.

MAG acknowledged that the land issue has become a racial issue, and therefore a “very powerful weapon”. There is the perception that white people stole the land they own. Notwithstanding that, MAG argues, today whites are also Namibian citizens. Anyhow, MAG supports the claim for land reform and refers to agricultural land owned by foreigners and Namibians that do not use their land productively.

The RP appealed to big commercial farmers to make land available for others at a reasonable price. Without a fair distribution, there will be no peace in the country. The RP argued: “We know that the Namas, the Hereros and the Damaras lost their land. The Kavangos, the Owambos and the Caprivians never lost land.”

On the other hand, the nation must accept the fact that Namibia is an extremely arid country and fertile land is scarce. Not everyone can have land.

The UDF shared the view that one also has to consider economic factors that might limit commercial farming. One has to distinguish land reform plans from poverty reduction issues such as farming for subsistence needs and housing.

The RDP agreed that land reform is a highly emotional matter and has often been exploited for political purposes. Still, and because of this, it should be handled without emotions and the targets of the reform should be clearly defined. Funding may be secured by turning to the international community for financial support.

According to SWANU, the fight for land had been “the central pillar of the struggle for liberation”, and those historically disadvantaged still need land. NUDO is of the opinion that resettled farmers should to possess the land only for a limited number of years. During that time, they must prove that they are able to farm commercially. Along the same lines, the NDMC argues, “that not every previously disadvantaged Namibian can be a farmer”. The DPN believe that those who fought for independence should not automatically be entitled to land. The DPN points to neighbouring Zimbabwe as a dangerous example. The DPN, NUDO, the RDP and SWAPO recommend supporting and monitoring programmes for resettled farmers to guarantee efficient and productive use.

Social Policy

Namibia belongs to the countries with the highest inequality in the distribution of income, though global statistics rate her as a middle-income country. The questionnaire requested the respondents to outline what efforts the government should

undertake to reduce poverty.

To SWAPO, the fight against poverty is not just a programmatic matter but also mainly an ongoing political reality long tackled by the ruling party’s government. The already existing “safety net” for the “poorest of the poor” has become an essential part of social policy. Senior citizens receive pensions, orphans and vulnerable children a social grant. The SWAPO government recently started to integrate the veterans of the liberation war into the state’s welfare system. The issue of children born in exile is the latest on the agenda.

The concept of the Basic Income Grant [BIG] aims at providing every citizen with a minimum monthly cash amount. The UDF and the APP do not support the social grant. The UDF would rather empower individuals to start their own businesses. Instead of just “giving people money”, the APP is of the opinion that more money should be spent on education and job creation.

SWAPO does not doubt the economic feasibility of BIG in principle, though scepticism prevails. A social grant for everybody may drain the state’s financial resources as Government already assists “those who are in dire need”. Further research on this is needed. In principle, the DTA and the RDP welcome BIG, but remain sceptical whether the idea of a social grant presents a financially viable solution for poverty reduction. The DTA goes a step further, questioning whether Namibia can really “afford to be a welfare state?” Yet, the party considers an unemployment allowance as a possible alternative. The RDP supports BIG as it would without doubt “help to alleviate the difficult plight” of the many poor. On the other hand, Government must also take care for the future generations and must therefore find a “balance between present consumption and investments in the future”. The MAG

and the RP are supportive of the idea but the RP cautions that such a grant should not go to the “wrong people”. The CoD, the DPN, the NDMC, the NDP and the SWANU support BIG unreservedly.

Elections

Respondents were requested to provide three reasons why voters should vote for their party.

SWAPO indicated that it was their party, their founders, leaders and members who suffered and fought for the independence of Namibia. The party proudly points to its tradition of collective leadership as a guarantee for continuity. As the largest party, SWAPO will keep developing the country and unite “Namibians of all regions, all colours and all creeds.”

The CoD promised that under its government Namibia would be better off economically. CoD “has the best approach in uniting Namibians” and building the nation. The DTA is convinced that over time it has “been extremely consistent in articulating all shortcomings” of the SWAPO government, in particular addressing nepotism. Voting for DTA entails opting for change and improvement of the education system. Lastly, DTA assesses itself as the party that will reduce unemployment.

The NUDO stated: “NUDO is the alternative to any other political party in Namibia.” The UDF gave its first reason by referring to the Christian fundament of the party itself: “We are a party of believers guided by the Preamble of the Constitution”. Voters will “thus feel safer under the UDF”. Secondly, UDF is proud to be the only party apart from SWAPO that governs a region, the Kunene Region. Thirdly, UDF remarked that it is the only party, which did not split as SWAPO, CoD and DTA, did.

The MAG reckons that their “solutions are not popular for the majority”. Precisely this readiness to take

responsibility for unpleasant but necessary steps should convince the electorate to vote for MAG. The party intends to “change the way in which affirmative action is implemented” as civil servants should be appointed according to their qualifications and held accountable for their work. Crime prevention will become a priority for MAG.

The RDP mentioned three topics that should get voters on their side. Firstly, RDP promises the protection of fundamental freedoms that are currently violated. Secondly, RDP promises to strengthen Namibia’s democracy by breaking the monopoly of power of one dominant political party. Lastly, RDP offers to achieve socio-economic progress by presenting an alternative to the current “political culture of fear and blind loyalty to the leaders” that suffocates any initiative.

SWANU portrays itself as a “socialist, democratic and revolutionary” party, which stands for “caring, sharing and solidarity as opposed to personal greediness.” Because SWANU is the oldest Namibian party, it “has stood the test of time.” The NDMC “provides a platform for young people to be themselves and to think independently.” The party portrays itself as the mouthpiece of the needs of the “voiceless minority groups”.

The DPN characterizes itself as a “grass roots”-party, which is driven by the interest of communities. The DPN stands for inclusiveness, communication, tolerance, and inter-party democracy. The APP says that it represents both the old and the young Namibians. Its leadership does not consist “of former elite members” but of “ordinary people” with the interests of the ordinary people at heart. The NDP is open for all tribes and ethnic groups. The NDP cabinet will be multi-ethnic in character and would introduce free education and health provision.



**Democracy isn't what you believe in
– it's what you do!**

Therefore – observe and report any issue relating to the elections by
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After all, feedback encourages openness and enhances transparency in the election for the benefit of all.


