

Spot the Difference, 3rd Election in-lay Interview with SWANU

Interview questionnaire with the South West Africa National Union



If you were to predict the elections outcome, which will likely be true?

1. Your party wins majority seats in the National Assembly
2. Your presidential candidate wins the majority vote
3. 60% of Namibian youth will cast their vote

SWANU of Namibia believes in the potential of the Namibian youth, their willingness, ability and readiness to enter the political realm in order to determine their destiny. Therefore, it is our concerted opinion that 60% of the youth will cast their votes.

How will you go about achieving the above prediction?

SWANU of Namibia has already encouraged the youth to register to become eligible voters. We are at this moment in the process of discouraging apathy among the youth. Due to the generational bias within the ruling party, there is evidence that young people are frustrated and growing increasingly disenchanted with its discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies. Our expectation is that this could as well produce a 60% turnout among the youth.

Why is it important for young people to vote?

SWANU of Namibia believes that it is a civic and national duty for anyone including the youth to vote because the future of Namibia is in their hands. Voting has emotional significance for individuals who may reaffirm their patriotism as opposed to acceptance of the culture of poverty, despair and exclusion that prompt apathy and defeatism. Every generation is called upon to define its own issues and to fight to reaffirm and reassert its rights and freedoms. The young people of Namibia are ready to make history in that regard.

Why should the youth vote for your party?

We know that the youth believe in the correctness of our political ideology and our stance with respect to radical land reform policy, free universal and quality education, free vocational training and housing for all to mention a few crucial public welfare issues. Tuition must be paid for by progressive general taxation, because we believe that education is a public good.

What motivated the formation of your political party?

SWANU of Namibia was formed as a deliberate national and historical response to racist exploitation, oppression and dispossession. Our founding fathers declared and resolved to

resist and fight settler colonial and racial oppression through a broad national front transcending the parochial bounds of tribe and ethnicity. The immediate objective was the complete liberation of Namibia from the South African racist and fascist regime.

What philosophies/principles are at the core of your party's identity?

SWANU is a revolutionary and democratic organization which aims to ultimately create a progressive and pragmatic socialist system of governance based on social justice, democracy and the rule of law.

How do you think history will remember your party?

SWANU is the mother of all political parties as it was founded in 1959 and has persistently demanded the return of the land, including ancestral lands to the people. In the 60, 70 and 80s SWANU dispatched its members into exile to establish diplomatic ties with many countries, especially in Africa failing which they were tasked to take up arms for the liberation of Namibia. In 1967 SWANU was instrumental in petitioning the United Nations to declare the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa. The party vigorously fought the apartheid regime, which led to the arrest and imprisonment of its cadres on Robin Island.

In what ways do you think your party has changed since its formation?

Since independence, SWANU amended its constitution to replace the “Programme of Action” through which the liberation struggle was conducted with a “Socio-Economic Reconstruction Programme” that aims to replace the present capitalist system, which is inherently unjust and inhuman, by a new social order that places equity and the welfare of the people first and that will ensure that the natural resources of Namibia are exploited for the benefit of the people, and where human dignity and happiness will become government policy goals.

What is your party's stance on the following issues?

Unemployment amongst the youth

SWANU of Namibia is dismayed by the fact that the present government has steered the nation to near bankruptcy through reckless spending, extensive patronage and flagrant corruption and abuse of state resources. This failure has resulted in mass unemployment and below average economic growth, which has been described as an extended depression in some quarters. As the majority segment of the unemployed, the youth remains most severely and disproportionately affected.

The state's inability or failure to create a conducive environment, such as developing training programmes that match the employment requirements of industry, is unacceptable. There is no emphasis placed on mathematics and science which could enable the youth to become professionals which in turn could make them employable in other countries. There are no incentive programmes designed to encourage the youth to focus on education, vocational training and innovation.

There are limited scholarships and as a result students are subject to exorbitant debts on student loans. The growing alienation of the youth concerns SWANU of Namibia, but we also view the youth as a potent and emerging force in political life and thus encourage and stand firmly and unconditionally in support of the youth. The generational bias in the ruling party represents age discrimination and SWANU of Namibia condemns in the strongest terms all forms of discrimination and stigmatization.

Access to resources for young entrepreneurs

Access to resources for the youth is almost nonexistent. The government has failed miserably in ensuring access to resources. Companies are registered by the youth, but they enjoy no preferential treatment during procurement. Young entrepreneurs who identify projects such as providing hospital beds, pharmaceutical and equipment are elbowed by senior government officials and political office bearers. There is no involvement by the youth in many economic sectors such as mining, fishing and agriculture.

Gender equality and Women empowerment

The current laws and regulations are not gender sensitive. Lip service is being paid to the 50/50 gender balance or so-called Zebra system. Careful examination reveals that all senior positions in government are filled by males. Heads of police stations, the navy, air force and military are mostly men. There is no mandatory equal pay for equal work policy in place. Maternity benefits remain paltry. Working spouses are not compelled by law to share their salaries on a 50/50 basis. Scores of uneducated, unemployed and previously disadvantaged Namibian women have been reduced to mere domestic servants, shop assistants and tellers without a living wage. They constitute the majority of the working poor. SWANU of Namibia is committed to the meritocratic principle and believes in the innate and human potential of all women, including their ability and capacity to excel on a level playing field.

The Land Question in Namibia

SWANU is proposing the establishment of a Joint Commission on Ancestral Land claims between Namibia and Germany and South Africa to raise money to buy land for distribution purposes. The party believes that Germany and South Africa should bear such responsibility as they administered the process of land acquisition, alienation and distribution during the illegal occupation of Namibia. Now that there is intransigence on both parts, SWANU advocates expropriation of foreign owned land without compensation and to expropriate excess land held by locals with just and reasonable compensation.

Nation-building amidst gender-based violence, ethnic heterogeneity

SWANU will put an end to Gender-based Violence and virulent tribalism, which retard nation-building. Women are routinely abused and as a result fail to go to work, but rather fill our police stations, hospitals and cemeteries. SWANU will ensure that relevant gender-friendly laws and regulations are enforced. Social workers will be deployed on outreach programmes to regions to counsel families and to explain the contents of such laws.

Moreover, SWANU will create shelters for women and children and half-way houses for released inmates in order to ease them back into society following their reform.

Government procurement processes of goods and services?

Although the new Procurement Act curtailed some irregularities, it is cumbersome and breeds inefficiency in the procurement process. As a result, government institutions run out of supply. SWANU views strengthening of the Act, either through amendment or more streamlined regulations a very important and priority policy intervention to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Corruption and Accountability

A SWANU government will stamp out corruption through a zero-tolerance approach. SWANU will demand and field candidates who have integrity and who will act as stewards of the welfare, wealth and resources of the nation and not as the owners. SWANU will follow the Singaporean approach and target high profile perpetrators and make them an example of our commitment to clean and responsible government. All assets of those found guilty of corrupt practices whether in the public or private sector will be confiscated and forfeited to the state and perpetrators will be held accountable, locked up and rehabilitated until this cancer is cured.

Decentralization: Devolution to Regional and Local councils?

In its inception, the policy of decentralization and devolution of power to regional and local councils was well intended. However, the policy is on the verge of collapse. SWANU will ensure that the policy is not given lip service, but is implemented to the letter and spirit. 90% percent of government vehicles will be based in the regions so that there is no GRN vehicle being dispatched from Windhoek. All procurement such as housing, including mass housing, provision of goods and services will be done at the regional and local levels.

What is your party's short and long-term vision for Namibia?

Our-short term vision is to establish industries to reduce our imports and to add value to our raw materials such as granite being transported to other countries, including timber charcoal, salt, lime stone, fishmeal, dairy products, minerals, meat and meat products.

Our long-term vision is to make Namibia a self-reliant welfare state with a socialized economy.

Additional questions:

How can we make colonial and apartheid-past wrongs right for Namibians?

A SWANU government will first and foremost restore the dignity of persons as enshrined in the United Nations charter.

Secondly, we will lead efforts to give practical expression to the so-called policy of national reconciliation and genuine national unity, without consideration to race, complexion, gender, sexual orientation, creed or religion.

Thirdly, South Africa must top-up the social grants of Namibians, as a special responsibility, and to raise them to the level enjoyed by South African citizens today.

Fourthly, South Africa must take full responsibility for the Namibians, who fought on their side during the liberation struggle.

Fifthly, South Africa must grant bursaries to the children of parents who were deprived of knowledge and skills by the Bantu Education system.

How will political parties ensure that Namibians are justly compensated to be able to live decently?

SWANU will prioritize efforts to increase the social grants to the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children, as well as persons living with disabilities. SWANU will introduce a Basic Income Grant for all to be able to live decent and dignified lives and by so doing stimulate local business development and commerce.