

**REPORT OF THE
GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND
DISABILITY SENSITISATION
FOR CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION
WORKSHOP**

Windhoek, 20 February 2003

1. Introduction to the National Civic and Voter Education Campaign

While Namibia is touted, with some justification, as one of Africa's most successful democracies, it is also true that its democratic institutions are still nascent and a culture of democracy is not yet firmly rooted. Democracy implies a large degree of informed participation by its individual citizens. However, declining voter participation in Namibia in previous elections has illustrated that many people enjoy the benefits of democracy without even participating in the most elementary way, such as by voting in elections.

Citizens largely do not involve themselves in activities that a democracy requires to thrive and function properly. People therefore need to be educated on how to exercise their civic obligations. In order to meaningfully do so, they also need to be made aware not only of the requirements of a well-functioning multi-party democracy, such as regular free and fair elections, civil society oversight of government decision making, and a policy of tolerance, but also of the potential implications of the candidates' or party choices they are making.

The Second General Voter Registration campaign to be held in October 2002, Regional and Local elections scheduled for 2003, and National and Presidential elections scheduled for 2004, present a unique window of opportunity to launch an intensive civic and voter education campaign to enhance and improve informed civic and voter participation in the political process. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN), the Legal Assistance Center (LAC), and the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), will jointly conduct and implement this campaign, in funding partnership with the Governments of the Netherlands, Sweden and United States of America (via USAID).

The overall objective of the campaign is to strengthen the democratic political culture in Namibia and to promote acceptance by both citizens and political elites of a shared system of democratic norms and values. Therefore, it will be important to increase public awareness of, and informed participation in the political process; specifically to increase public awareness of key democracy principles; of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic system; of the importance of broad and continuous citizen participation in democratic processes, including in particular, the upcoming local and national elections; of key issues relevant to the respective elections; and, to the extent that impartiality can be assured, of the political platforms of the respective parties.

Taking cognisance of the effects of political alienation, the partners resolved that an encompassing approach to civic and voter education would be required to counter the frustration and anxiety of subpopulations marginalised by and from the civic and political participation process. Specific initiatives include gender and disability mainstreaming to create awareness, empower and mobilise these subpopulations to assume their full and vital role in the democratic and political process.

Outcomes of this project would ideally include enhanced awareness of problematic issues pertaining to a democratic society and solutions thereof by the public, increased communication between the elected and their electorate, an understanding of the Namibian public's involvement on all levels and ultimately a stronger, vibrant and active civil society.

The main implementing partners (NID, LAC and ECN) in this campaign will each contribute according to their respective expertise. The overall campaign, which will be implemented over three years (2002 -2004) will thus comprise the following facets:

- ECN's Project Co-ordination and voter education;
- LAC's training of civic and voter educators and trainers;
- NID's multi-media civic education campaign.

In the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the partners in December 2002, the need for a new, inclusive approach to civic and voter education was identified, the question raised whether campaigns conducted in isolation, rather than consultation, with stakeholders could be truly effective. The workshop is indicative of the partners' commitment to gender mainstreaming and disability sensitisation.

2. Workshop Objectives

- Devising a strategy for disability and gender mainstreaming civic and voter education;
- Conceptualising civic and voter education messages that are:
 - gender and disability sensitive;
 - responsive to the needs and concerns of people with disabilities (PWDs);
 - focused on the needs of women, PWDs and minority groups.

3. Salient Points made regarding Successful Civic and Voter Education

- Mainstreaming strategies in civic and voter education should not be disconnected from the development and strengthening of democracy per se;
- Civic and voter education strategies should not be based on statistical outliers;
- Explicit institutional and political buy-in is a pre-requisite for mainstreaming initiatives;
- It is insufficient to merely cluster target groups, cognisance must be taken of the unique challenges posed by those groups (as indicated by statistical analysis) and civic and voter messages be tailored to meet the needs of such groups in order to be effective;
- Political participation is pre-empted by civic participation, hence campaign focus should be on instilling values of civic responsibility via innovative message conceptualisation and delivery that captures not only the attention but mobilises the political participation of less active sub-population profiles;
- Civic and voter education cannot be expected to alleviate associated societal constraints e.g. poverty, illiteracy, crime, it can, however, seek to empower for change through information and education;
- It must be remembered that democracy development via civic and voter education are instruments to convey abstract constructs which have not been translated to reality for many Namibians. Only when such abstracts have been inculcated will we reap the benefits of civic and voter education. Similarly, gender mainstreaming requires a paradigm shift from current socialised constructs of gender. The desired results of our input today may not ripple through in effect immediately, however, the value of this investment will undoubtedly yield returns in the future.

4. Gender and Political Participation

Presented by Mr. C. Keulder (Institute for Public Policy Research)

- Whilst gender gaps in household time and task allocation are borne out statistically, not all gaps have a significant effect on political participation;
- There is no significant gender gap with regard to political participation overall;
- Gender is a significant predictor of political participation in urban areas only (men more inclined to participate than women);

- The influence of standard political variables (civic participation, political interest, party support and membership) on political participation are consistent for all social groups (sub-populations) and remain the strongest predictors of participation;
- Education is a significant negative predictor of political participation, higher levels of education correlates with lower levels of political participation;
- The most likely civic/voter education participant is profiled as: Active in civil society, above-average interest in politics, medium to lower education levels, likely to be members or at least supporters of a political party.

5. Gender Checklist for Elections

Presented by Ms. L. Frank (Sister Namibia Collective)

- The Gender Checklist serves as a tool for stakeholders in assessing whether an election is free and fair from a gender equality perspective, the premise being that a critical mass of women is needed in a male dominated political arena.
- An analysis of the gender checklist in Namibia indicates:
 - Policy: Sound incorporation of international policies through legislation;
 - National Constitutional Framework
 - Customary law should be addressed in terms of Article 14 of the Namibian Constitution;
 - Review the issue of independent candidates in the long term.
 - Legal Framework
 - Sexual harassment is used as a deterrent to female political participation and needs to be addressed.
 - Political Parties
 - Parties require training regarding female participation within parties;
 - The zebra list system must be fully incorporated.
 - Institutional Framework
 - Registration of Voters: A mechanism is in place for the counting of men and women (not in place for the actual elections);
 - Voter education programmes: Women's mobilisation may be seen as a threat to various establishments (e.g. traditional leaders), concise briefing and consultation must occur with such actors prior to implementation of programmes to ensure success;
 - Procedure for voting: Provision must be made for the elderly, pregnant women, women with children and PWDs. The safety of women should be prioritised.

6. Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

Presented by Mr. M. Conteh (UNAM Gender Training and research Unit)

- Strategies for gender mainstreaming include taking cognisance of the following:
 - In order to mainstream the election process, it is necessary to translate strategies to concrete actions by addressing gender as a social construct, necessitating behavioural change from the current socialisation process, which instils and reinforces a set of ideas and expectations;
 - The issue of gender is exacerbated particularly in rural areas, where mainstreaming efforts and initiatives are dominated by male participation;
 - Message development must be culturally and locally specific using local groups as a vehicle for message dissemination.

7. PWDs in the Civic and Voter Education Process

Presented by Mr. J. C. Uheka (Namibia Federation of the Visually Impaired) & Mr. T. Tjombumbi (Office of the Prime Minister)

- The conceptualisation and development of civic and voter education campaign materials must take cognisance of the needs of PWDs and incorporate these in campaign. This includes:
 - Making printed materials available in large print, Braille and audio format for the visually impaired;
 - Making extensive use of the radio medium in the vernacular (all language services);
 - Supplementing audio visual materials with sign language.
- Following an inclusive approach by utilising PWDs for campaign material production.

8. Recommendations for Civic and Voter Education Campaigns

The challenge for civic and voter education is to construct and channel messages that are:

- Inclusive from a gender and PWDs' perspective, hence advocating and lobbying for institutional and political commitment, consultative in nature with relevant stakeholders in campaign material design and production;
- Innovative and attractive to other civic and voter education participant profiles;
- Tailored to meet the specific needs of various sub-populations;
- Subject to cost/benefit analysis with regard to the implementation of various measures to accommodate the needs of PWDs in civic and voter education and ensure value-added principles;

Furthermore:

- Potential resource constraints identified in the mainstreaming process (particularly financial) should not abrogate need identification and strategy formulation for successful campaigning, rather, the campaign should seek to form attachments with existing institutions for mutual benefit.

9. Recommendations Regarding Elections

Whilst election logistics were not the focus of the workshop, points raised warranting further attention include:

- Conducting environmental scanning to assess the needs of PWDs and formulating a strategic response approach to catering for those needs. Responses may include:
 - revising the accessibility of stations;
 - printing of tactile ballots;
 - training of election officials for enhanced disability sensitivity;
 - mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of PWDs as election officials / observers;
 - mobilisation of certain PWDs to specific stations equipped to provide for their needs.

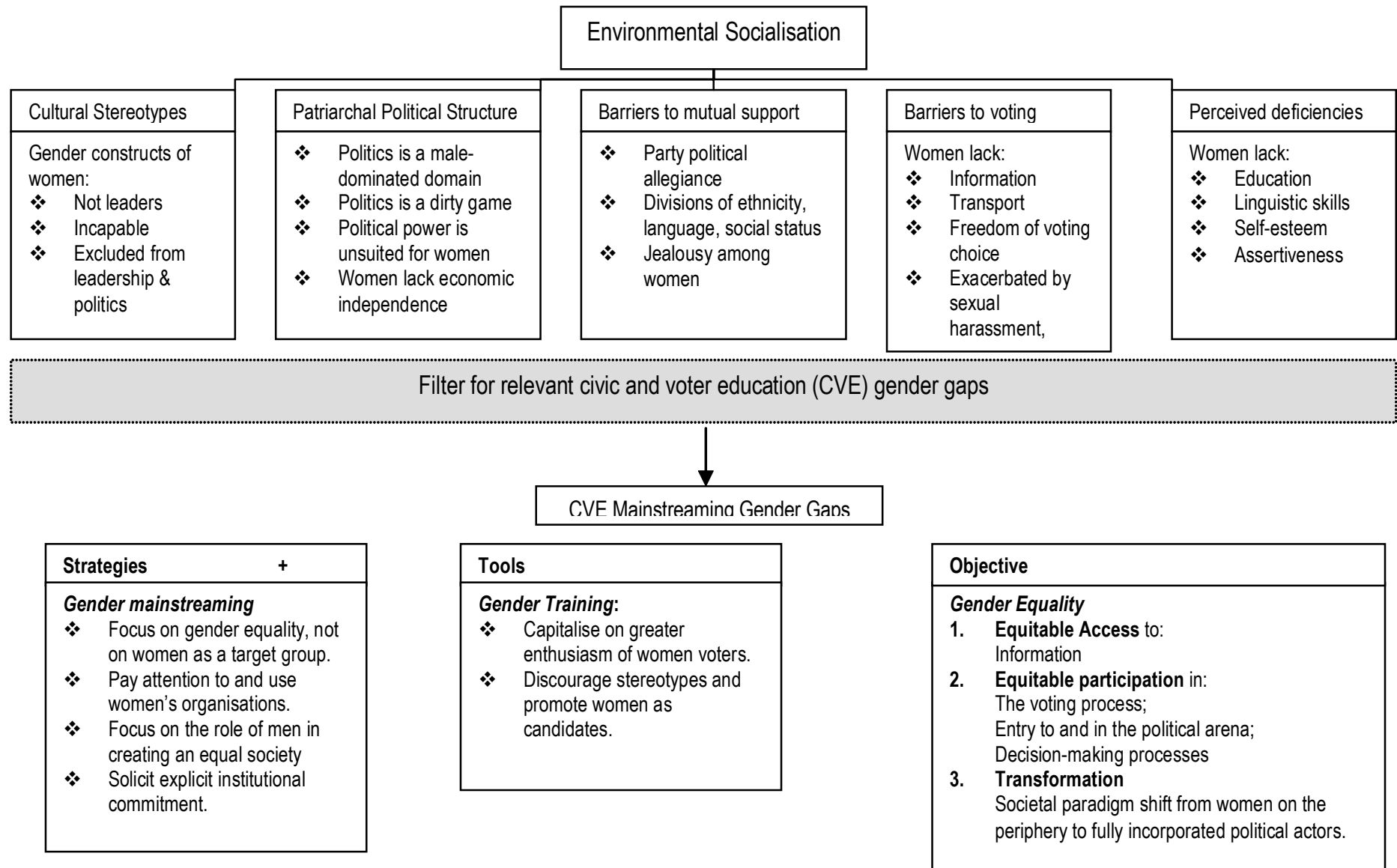
10. Proposed Areas of Future Research

- Statistics and analysis of PWDs in Namibia;
- Impact of women in Local Authorities.

11. List of Participants

Mr. J. Rukambe	(Electoral Commission of Namibia •ECN)	Ms. L. Martin	(Electoral Commission of Namibia •ECN)
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Mr. T. Tjombumbi	(Office of the Prime Minister)	Ms. L. Frank	(Sister Namibia Collective)
Mrs. M. Koep	(USAID)	Mr. C. Keulder	(Institute for Public Policy Research • IPPR)
Mr. W. Aalman	(Dutch Embassy)	Mr. R. Wiersma	(Dutch Embassy)
Ms. D. Weissnar	(Namibia Institute for Democracy • NID)	Mr. T. Keulder	(Namibia Institute for Democracy • NID)
Ms. J. Mupurua	(Ministry of Lands Resettlement and Rehabilitation)		
Ms. E. Erasmus	(Namibia National Association of the Deaf • NNAD)		
Mr. M. Tjivera	(Namibia National Association of the Deaf • NNAD)		
Mr. J. C. Uheka	(Namibia Federation of the Visually Impaired)		
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12. ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING



13. ACTION PLAN FOR SENSITIVITY TO PWDs

