



# BEYOND INEQUALITIES

Women in  
**Namibia**



Women in  
Development

Southern Africa Awareness





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Women in  
**Namibia**

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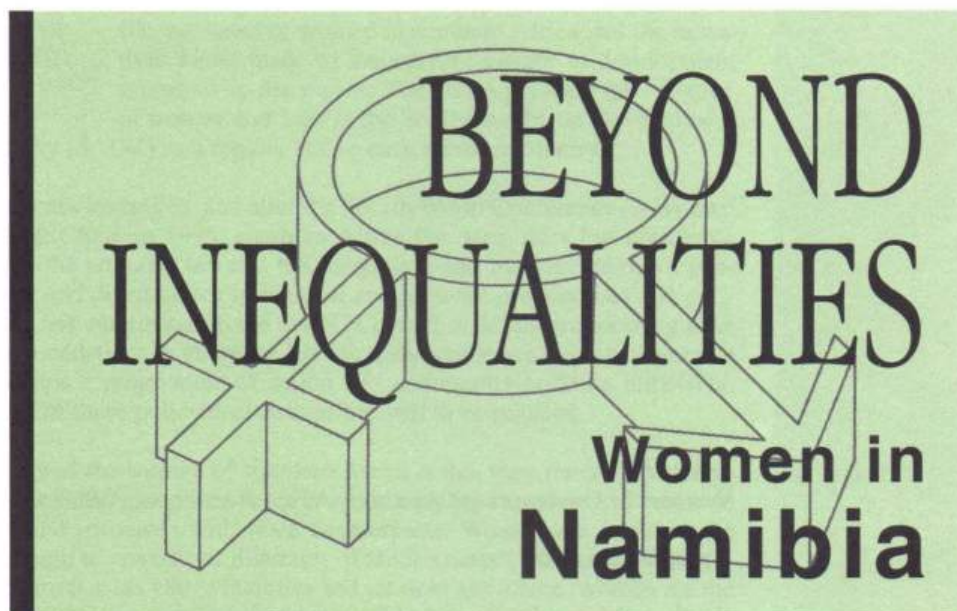
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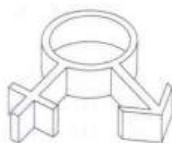
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# PREFACE



Community (SADC) as a region, and in each member country.

*Beyond Inequalities* is a series of publications which profile the status of women in southern Africa and the initiatives being made to mainstream gender in development processes in the region. The series presents the situation of women and men in the Southern African Development

In the process leading to, and after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, southern Africa has seen slow but noticeable change in the attitudes towards the integration and mainstreaming of gender issues and perspectives in national and regional programmes and policies. This has culminated in the SADC Council of Ministers adopting a set of recommendations in February 1997 to make gender an important element in the region's programme of action and community-building initiatives. The fruits of these policy declarations are still to be realised.

The reality of the women of southern Africa is that they remain a vulnerable, marginalised group that is yet to enjoy equality in status, and access to services and resources with male counterparts. Women are found at the "bottom rung of poverty, of illiteracy, of landlessness";<sup>1</sup> and are concentrated in the rural areas where facilities and services are scarce. Women are the most affected by negative impacts of economic adjustment programmes. Cuts in social expenditure such as in health and education mostly impact on women and girls, who are victims of the worst forms of violence.

While women are the daily managers and users of natural resources, largely for the benefit of others, women are not involved in the major decisions that affect these resources and the environment.

In politics and decision-making, women turn up in the largest numbers every election year as they constitute more than half the population of the different countries. Yet women are visibly absent in decision-making positions of government, of parastatal organisations, and of private companies. Women remain concentrated in the so-called "female professions" and at the very best are in the middle-management positions.

For strategies to be developed that address the subordination and vulnerability of women, it is important that the causes of this situation are identified. The series *Beyond Inequalities* reviews the roles and responsibilities, access to and control over resources, decision-making powers, needs and constraints of women *vis a vis* men.

The identification of the causes of these problems should lead to appropriate strategies to resolve them both at national and regional level.

The 12 country profiles in this series document and analyze information along themes drawn from the Critical Areas of Concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) and derived from what the countries of the region consider to be priorities. The profiles are therefore part of an initiative that seeks to bring to light gender issues as they relate to the development process. In addition to providing information for planning and





**UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA**

The University of Namibia was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992, in order to meet the country's development needs, including:

- ◆ development of a civil society that tolerates dissenting views; and
  - ◆ development of a research capacity that will give the university a voice in policy formulation.
- The mission of the university is, among other things, to undertake basic and applied research that will contribute to the social, economic, cultural and political development of Namibia.

Gender Training and Research Programme is a programme of the Social Sciences Division of the University's Multi-Disciplinary Research Centre.

**SARDC**

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) is a regional resource centre covering the SADC region. Its objective is to improve the base of knowledge about regional, economic, political, cultural and social developments, and their implications, by making information accessible to policy makers, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, development agencies and the media in the region and internationally. SARDC's main programmes are on the environment and disaster management, gender, sustainable democracy and SADC information. SARDC has offices in Harare, Maputo and Dar es Salaam. Patron is Julius Nyerere.

development purposes, the profiles indicate gaps for future research focus and will be updated at intervals.

These national profiles on the status of women in southern Africa are an achievement of Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness (WIDSAA), a regional networking information programme that covers the 12 member countries of the SADC region. WIDSAA is a programme of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), in collaboration with a range of national partner organisations and supported by the Netherlands Government Directorate of International Cooperation (DGIS), through the Royal Netherlands Embassy regional WID programme.

The WIDSAA objective is to contribute to the improvement of the status and position of women in the SADC region through awareness-building; and to collect, document and disseminate relevant and accessible information based on national and regional perspectives. WIDSAA aims to collect and organize gender information in such a way that it is easily accessible for analysis and presentation toward the development of policy frameworks; and seeks to assist governments, organisations and peoples of the region to move quickly and effectively towards the empowerment and involvement of women in development.

A workshop of WIDSAA national partners and local consultants reviewed the Terms of Reference and defined a framework for preparation of the profile series.

The WIDSAA partners consulted national stakeholders, interest groups and gender activists in the process of developing the national profiles.

A regional profile on Women in Southern Africa, mainly deriving from the 12 national ones, includes further contributions of more than 30 professionals from throughout the SADC region.<sup>2</sup> An advisory Gender Reference Group guided the process of organising and presenting information.

An Introduction to each profile outlines the methodology and conceptual framework.

Part I gives the national perspective and context, including a historical summary, macroeconomic framework and demographic information. This is followed by a situation analysis of gender issues by theme, containing baseline data on women in society and how they fare relative to men.

Part II reviews the programmes and policies of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor and development agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other stakeholders involved in mainstreaming gender into development, assessing the extent to which gender imbalances receive due attention.

Part III highlights the achievements and commitments in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as priorities for future action. This section seeks to establish links between the current situation and the future ideal, contrasting the situation of women with the policy intentions to address it.

Part IV contains a reference of materials used in compilation of the profile as well as a bibliography of country-specific WID documents and additional statistical tables.



The series title *Beyond Inequalities* is a forward-looking one, based on an assessment that inequalities are now generally acknowledged as an impediment to development and economic growth in most countries and regions of the world. The challenge, therefore, facing women and men is to look beyond inequalities to cooperation, peace, development and prosperity.

### Critical Areas of Concern

Box 1

A review of progress since the Nairobi Conference highlights special concerns — areas of particular urgency that stand out as priorities for action. All actors should focus action and resources on the strategic objectives relating to the critical areas of concern which are, necessarily, interrelated, interdependent and of high priority. There is a need for these actors to develop and implement mechanisms of accountability for all the areas of concern. To this end, Governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, are called upon to take strategic action in the following critical areas of concern:

- ◆ The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- ◆ Inequalities and inadequacies in an unequal access to education and training
- ◆ Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
- ◆ Violence against women
- ◆ The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
- ◆ Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- ◆ Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- ◆ Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
- ◆ Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
- ◆ Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media
- ◆ Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
- ◆ Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child.

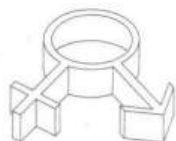
SOURCE: Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, United Nations Department of Public Information, New York, 1996

### Namibia National Platform for Action

- ◆ Rural development, environment and housing
- ◆ Education training and co-ordination
- ◆ Reproductive health and maternal protection
- ◆ Violence against women and children
- ◆ Economic empowerment and employment
- ◆ Women in decision-making
- ◆ Legal affairs
- ◆ Information, education and documentation
- ◆ Research, data collection and documentation
- ◆ The girl child.

SOURCE: Gender Training and Research Programme, SSD/MDRC, UNAM, 1997

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*Bookie Monica Kethusegile, Head of Programme*  
SARDC-WIDSAA, Harare

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Divorce was granted on the premise of 'guilt' or 'innocence'. In theory, if a couple married in community of property were divorced, the property was divided in half, but typically a larger share of the communal assets were awarded to the 'innocent' party, which frequently favoured men. If the couple was married under customary law, the 'native' authorities had the right to distribute property under 'native law and custom' which frequently meant that the husband or the husband's kin group gained the benefit of the couple's communal property.

### Conclusions

Namibia's history has been one of suppression, discrimination and disenfranchisement of indigenous populations. This dismal state of affairs severely affected women's status under apartheid. Apartheid laws and social structure tore Namibian families apart, produced widespread social disorganisation and disempowered the women of Namibia. The Contract Labour System, in particular, severely undermined Namibian family structures and negatively impacted women. Apartheid's Roman-Dutch Laws discriminated against women, relegating them to positions as second or third class citizens. Namibia's liberation struggle, although also causing family separation, contributed to the enhancement of women's social and economic status since some women were trained and given the opportunity to practice in professions not available to them under the apartheid regime. Much of women's economic, political, legal and social status in Namibia today is a direct result of discrimination under apartheid.

### INDEPENDENCE

On 21 March 1990, after the implementation of Resolution 435 supervised by UNTAG and other international observers, Namibia became an independent state.

### Political Structure

At independence Namibia adopted a Constitution as the fundamental law of the country. The Constitution characterized the country as a Republic which is, "a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all". It also states that, "All power shall vest in the people of Namibia who shall exercise their sovereignty through the democratic institutions of the State".<sup>23</sup>

Women's equality is enshrined in the Constitution which declares that discrimination based on sex is against the law. It also recognises the previously disadvantaged position of women and encourages the implementation of affirmative action policies which advance women's social status and roles within society.<sup>24</sup>

The Constitution established three main organs of the State — the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.<sup>25</sup> Executive power is vested in the president who is the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief, assisted by the Cabinet. The President is elected by direct, universal and equal suffrage and can serve for a maximum of two five-year terms.<sup>26</sup>

The legislature consists of the National Assembly with 72 members elected for a five-year term, and the National Council made up of two representatives drawn from each of the 13 geographical regions of the country who are elected for a six-year term from among the various Regional Council members. The National Assembly is vested with the power to pass laws based on a two-thirds majority vote.<sup>27</sup>

Judicial power is vested in the Courts of Namibia which consist of a Supreme Court, a High Court and all Lower Courts such as Magistrates' Courts and District Labour Courts. All courts are independent bodies and subject only to the Constitution.<sup>28</sup>

### Macro-economic Structure

The economic structure of Namibia exhibits the classic characteristics of post-colonial exploitation whereby large multinational firms and commercial farmers exploit natural resources for export while other sectors of the economy are under-developed. The economy is further characterised by a dominance of primary industries. The key industry is mining since it contributes to about one-third of Namibia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately 75 percent of its annual export revenue.<sup>29</sup>

The economy of Namibia is weak, consisting of primary sectors based on mining, livestock production and fishing; however, these are overwhelmingly export industries. About 57 percent of the country's GDP is exported to earn hard currency and economic prospects are largely influenced by the international environment. The Namibian economy is characterised by high interest rates, weak prices for commodities and economic recessions. Due to its dependency on exports and imports, the economy is influenced by both South African and international business cycles. The economy is also susceptible to climatic uncertainty accompanied by periodic droughts, such as the devastating droughts of 1991/1992 and 1994/1995.<sup>30</sup>

Due to its history, the Namibian economy is tightly linked to that of South Africa. For example, more than 60 percent of all consumer goods are imported and 85 percent of these come from South Africa, while only 16 percent of its exports go to South Africa.<sup>31</sup> Namibia is a member of the South African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and is part of the Common Monetary Area (CMA) which links South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland into one monetary zone. The national currency is the Namibian dollar which is on a par with the South African Rand.

Namibia's inherent economic constraints are alleviated through the implementation of structural changes. Among other reforms, government is trying to make the economy more equitable, diversifying its components, reducing its vulnerability to outside forces and trying to keep a larger margin of profits and savings within the country. Government passed the Investment Act of 1990 in a bid to attract foreign capital, revitalise the economy and create employment opportunities. The Act allows foreign investors the right to repatriate their capital and profits. An Export Processing Zone (EPZ) was also established to promote employment creation.<sup>32</sup>

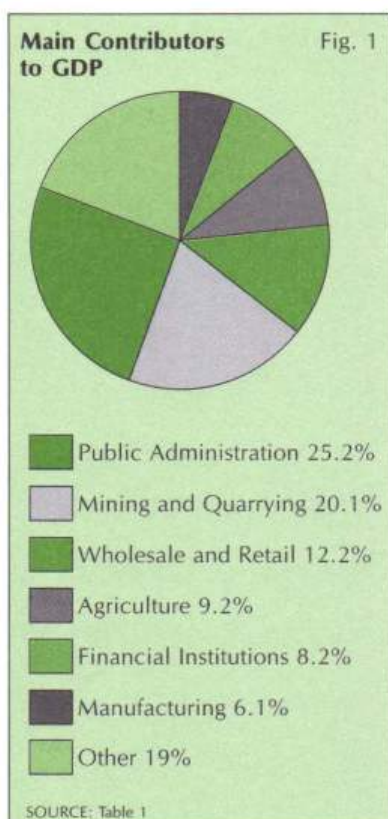
The Namibian economy has developed through three distinct phases: the mid-1940s to the late 1950s, the economy grew at a rate of 10 percent; during the next 10 years, the rate decreased by 6.1 percent; and in the early 1980s the rate dropped even further, at times as low as minus seven percent, but it rose again slightly in 1985 to reach two percent in 1988.<sup>33</sup> The economy of Namibia has performed better since independence than the 1980s. Real GDP grew at an average rate of 2.2 percent per year between 1990 and 1993 and 5.5 percent for the first quarter of 1994.<sup>34</sup>

The major contributors to GDP for 1992 are shown in Table 1. At slightly more than a quarter (25.2 percent) of the overall GDP, public administration was the single largest contributor, followed by mining and quarrying at 20.1



<b>Main Contributors to Gross Domestic Product, 1992</b>		Table 1
Contributors	%	
Public Administration	25.2	
Mining and Quarrying	20.1	
Wholesale and Retail	12.2	
Agriculture	09.2	
Financial Institutions	08.2	
Manufacturing	06.1	

SOURCE: DWA, 1995a:5



SOURCE: Table 1

percent and wholesale-retail's contribution to was 12.2 percent. These figures illustrate Namibia's dependence on raw materials, service and sales and its lack of development from the production sectors of the economy. Namibia's per capita income of US\$1,760 (at 1992 prices) ranks the country quite high for sub-Saharan Africa. However, income distribution in the country is very skewed (the Gini coefficient is the highest in the SADC region) which makes this figure misleading. There is a very small percentage of the population which earns such high figures while the majority of the population remains impoverished.

What manufacturing does exist in Namibia is concentrated in urban areas, mostly in the central, south and western parts of the country. This concentration of industry has given rise to the rural-urban migration of people, mainly young males, in search of employment. The rural areas have a demographic imbalance with more females, children and older people there than in the urban areas. Because of this imbalance, women have less access to formal employment and the cash economy than men, making them dependent on the remittances of men working in the urban areas.

Water, electricity and construction industries are relatively under-developed, which means that Namibia does not have the infrastructure to provide people, especially rural populations, with formal housing and access to water and sanitation facilities. Because more women than men live in rural areas, lack of infrastructure disproportionately affects more women than men. Due to the dependence of Namibia on the extraction of raw materials, its commerce, trade and financial sectors are also under-developed. As a consequence manufacturing and industrial employment opportunities are scarce, causing the majority of unskilled labourers to search for employment as domestic servants (for women) and day labourers (for men).

Additionally, Namibia's social services are still not fully developed and have inherent regional and urban-rural discrepancies. Social services are still more concentrated in the urban and former 'white' areas. Again women are disproportionately affected by inadequate social services in the rural areas and are left to be responsible for the children and elderly, are more likely than men to be in need of health and other social services. However, the shortage and unequal distribution of social services, is a remnant of the apartheid era of under-development for African populations and the government is making a concerted effort to address this problem.

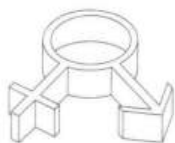
### Conclusions

After more than 100 years of colonial domination, Namibia became an independent democratically ruled country in 1990, only seven years ago. Namibia has a constitutional government which guarantees equality for all people. It also addresses equality for women and makes provisions for affirmative action recognising women's previously disadvantaged position. Namibia's three-tier structure of government ensures checks and balances in the decision-making process. However, Namibia has made much greater strides in its political reforms than in its economic reforms. Namibia still bears the scars of a colonial economy characterised by a high dependency on exports and imports, lack of manufacturing and industrial sectors and unequal distribution of infrastructure, resources and social services. The structure of Namibia's economy disproportionately affects women more than men due to women's concentration in the rural areas.



## PART I

## SITUATION ANALYSIS



This section presents a brief analysis of the gender implications for men and women as well as trends over time which show changes in women's situation. It illustrates the gender differentiation between men and women, as well as discusses differences in women's status based on class, ethnicity and the rural-urban dichotomy. Topics discussed in this section include women in the economy, in politics and power, within the social structures, access to education, in the media, their living conditions and in relation to violence. Essential quantitative data in the form of summary tables and supplementary quantitative data are presented. They are cross-referenced with the summary tables to simplify reading. In addition, qualitative information is used to contextualise and explain quantitative data.

#### WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE ECONOMY

Women's role in the economy has always been grossly undervalued. Economic research and policy analysis usually focuses on formal sector employment, ignoring those engaged in subsistence agriculture, other non-wage earning activities and the informal economic sector. The following sections analyze women's activities and roles in the economy: their participation in production, employment, income-generating activities; their participation in agriculture and issues of food security; sexwork behaviour and the impact of donor aid on women's economic development.

#### Means of Production

Due to the fact that policies and programmes continue to overlook the central role of women in the

economy, they reinforce inequality in women's access to productive resources including land and labour; and support services such as credit, agricultural extension and gender research. In addition, the failure to recognise women's knowledge and experience makes the divisions over decision-making even more pronounced. Women need access to land and credit to equip themselves with resources which will allow them to control their own means of production.

#### Access to land

The Constitution maintains a distinction between commercial land and communal land on a national level. Under colonialism, legal control of the communal areas was placed in the hands of the colonial government or the reserve administration. At independence, this ownership was transferred to the GRN. Property held under private title, including commercial farms, is seen as lawfully owned and therefore exempt.<sup>35</sup> There are wide disparities and structural inequalities in Namibia in terms of ownership of major economic resources. For example, about 4,000 commercial farmers, predominately white, control 44 percent of arable agricultural land in contrast to about 67 percent of the African population who have access to only 41 percent of agricultural land, much of which is of poor quality. Since the majority of Africans continue to reside in communal areas, they remain disadvantaged by inequitable distribution of land. Women are particularly affected, although the impact varies by communities and regions.<sup>36</sup> In addition, most commercial farmers are men, which means that women also do not have direct access to, and control over, land in these areas.

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In the communal areas, customary allocation of land by traditional authorities is prevalent. Under this system households gain usufructuary rights to residential land, for crop production or grazing as well as access to common pasturage. Even today, rural women still only gain access to land through their relationships to men.<sup>37</sup> The security of their rights to use land is jeopardized by discriminatory marriage customs and inheritance systems which favour men. Although it is assumed that most households have access to land, there are no accurate data on households without access to land under customary law. However, it is known that some widows have been forced off their land and into the households of relatives.<sup>38</sup> In many traditional societies, women are not allowed access to land in their own right.<sup>39</sup>

#### Communal land in trust

Box 2

In Owambo society headmen hold communal land in trust and the household head pays the headman for usufructuary rights to the land. When the household head dies, the rights to the land revert back to the headman, who may reallocate the land or charge the deceased man's family again for the land. It is a fact that men hold communal usufructuary land rights which contributes to the subordination of women, since women do not have these rights which would give them access to their own means of production.

SOURCE: Hishongwa, N., 1992:38

Although men own the land, women are the users of land. The 1991 Census shows that in general, 60 percent of all persons engaged in subsistence agriculture are women. Agricultural production is most common in the northern, and to a lesser extent, the central-eastern regions of Namibia since the aridity of the south, eastern and western regions precludes them from this economic activity. In the Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena, Oshikoto and Okavango regions 64 percent of subsistence farmers are women, while in the Caprivi 59 percent of agricultural work is done by women.<sup>40</sup>

However, women do not just use land for agricultural production, they are also users of the environment. Women collect wood for fires, fetch water for the household and gather wild *veld* foods. How women use land and the environment depends upon the culture and region in which they live. In the Hardap, Karas and Erongo regions, subsistence is primarily based on goat- and sheep-farming, with little or no crop production and small

amounts of *veld* foods collected. In the Omaheke and western Otjozondjupa regions, cattle are the primary livestock production, with some crop production and some *veld* food collection. In the eastern Otjozondjupa region, some cattle husbandry takes place, but game and *veld* food collection are important sources of household subsistence. In the Kunene region cattle husbandry is important. However, there is no crop production and households rely heavily on *veld* food collection.

In the north central area (Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto regions) subsistence agriculture is based on a mixed system of livestock production (cattle, donkeys and goats) and crop production (millet and sorghum), with food sources supplemented by *veld* food collection. The Okavango region has a similar subsistence base as the north central regions but there is also subsistence fishing due to the presence of perennial rivers. In the Caprivi region, animal husbandry (mostly cattle and small numbers of goats) and maize production are the basis of subsistence; however, subsistence fishing and *veld* food collection are important dietary components to household food consumption.<sup>41</sup>

A study shows that there is a gender division of labour for *veld* food collection in the western Caprivi. Women typically collect *veld* foods but men show little interest in the activity and will only accompany women when the collection is far or foods are difficult to reach. Men express the attitude that *veld* foods are less desirable than other foods and are only used until economic circumstances improve.<sup>42</sup>

#### Access to credit

NDPI describes Namibia's financial sector as small and dualistic. It states that, "as is the case in many developing countries, there is on the one hand, a well developed

financial system, mainly serving the urban centres, while on the other hand large portions of the rural areas are left with little or no access to financial services".<sup>43</sup> Due to women's concentration in the rural areas while credit institutions are found in the urban areas, the distribution of credit institutions is a major barrier to rural women's access to credit.

Formal sources of credit in Namibia include five commercial banks, two building societies, several parastatals including the Namibian Development Cooperation (NDC), National Housing Enterprise (NHE) and the Agricultural Bank of Namibia (ABN). There is also the Build Together Programme (BTP) administered by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, as well as NGOs and a number of credit unions and rural saving schemes. DWA, although not a source of credit, does provide financial support to a few female owned and operated income-generating projects.<sup>44</sup>

Although there is, in theory, no discrimination against women by commercial banks and all customers are supposed to be treated equally, women tend to have more difficulty acquiring loans due to a lack of collateral and credit record. There are no statistics on loans by these institutions which distinguish between customers on the grounds of gender, so loan prevalence rates can not be determined. However, in the past women married in community of property were required to have the consent of their husbands to enter into contracts and obtain loans due to the husband's 'marital power' over his wife. This situation has changed as from 21 May 1996 when the Married Persons Equality Act was passed which abolished marital power.

Commercial institutions such as banks do not have any programmes

directed specifically at women and they do not have any significant programmes or activities in the field of micro-economic enterprise development.<sup>45</sup> Interviews with bank officials reveal they do not feel that they discriminate against women when extending credit. However, Standard Bank officials say that women can get loans if they have repaid previous loans on time. The City Savings and Investment Bank loans money for informal investment if an applicant can meet a list of criteria including proof of regular income. The Commercial Bank only gives loans to invest in the formal sector. All of these various criteria, although not specifically directed at women, form an effective barrier to women's access to credit, although women tend to have better repayment records on home mortgage loans than men.<sup>46</sup>

The NHE has only given an estimated 10 percent of its loans to women. However, other sources of credit have had a more substantial impact on women's access to credit. For example, BTP has been particularly successful in reaching women as recipients of credit. The BTP provides loans of N\$1,000 to N\$22,500 for the construction of new houses, purchasing of plots, upgrading and extending of old houses and the servicing of sites. The programme began in 1992-1993 and reached 3,379 families within its first three years of operation. An average loan amount for customers of BTP is N\$12,600. In 1992-1993, 45 percent of the participants of the programme were female-headed households and by 1993-1994, 47 percent of loans were to such households. The loan recovery rate of BTP is good and it plans to encourage more women to participate. It also encourages women to form savings and credit societies for other credit needs. For example, BTP has already assisted 22 women to form a private savings scheme called People's Square.



These women have all completed work on their houses with loans of N\$7,000 each and their repayment rate was a 100 percent.<sup>47</sup>

The experience of NGOs who extend credit to women is also positive. For example, the Co-operative Support and Development Agency Trust (COSEDA), which began in March 1995 to provide loans to small-scale entrepreneurs, reports that 85-90 percent of its loan recipients are women. There have been no loan defaults since the programme began which COSEDA attributes to the fact that women in its programme are more entrepreneurial than men because many of the loan recipients are single mothers. COSEDA supports projects such as informal trading, selling of food and tailoring services.

Other NGOs which have given small-scale loans to women in the informal sector include the Rossing Foundation and the Private Sector Foundation (PSF). Women make up 85 percent of the PSF's loan recipients and the repayment rate is 70 percent. Groups such as Rural People's Institute for Social Empowerment (RISE) and the Namibia Credit Union League (NACUL) have given support to local groups who wish to organise savings schemes and it has been estimated that almost 75 percent of the members of Namibian savings and credit unions are women.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the Institute for Management and Leadership Training (IMLT), which has a Small Enterprise Development programme, also gives loans for small enterprises. Of 42 loans given, more than half (22) were to women; however, only one-third of the money loaned went to women, while two-thirds of the money went to men who made up less than half of the recipients.<sup>49</sup>

As already mentioned, a serious constraint which women previously faced was the marital power of the husband to control access to credit

by controlling communal property. Although this problem has now been rectified, improvements in women's access to credit are yet to be realised since women still do not have credit ratings nor do many women have access to collateral which they need to secure credit. Informal female traders have expressed an interest in expanding their businesses, but cite a lack of access to capital as a constraint towards doing so.<sup>50</sup> In addition, women's access to credit is undermined by a lack of gender sensitivity on the part of many formal lending institutions and prevailing gender stereotypes of women as not 'business-minded' like men. For example, commercial banks and parastatals should make an effort to market to female clients and to keep gender-disaggregated statistics. Such statistics would be important to determine the practical impact of The Married Persons Equality Act as well as other gender-sensitive legal reforms.<sup>51</sup>

### Employment

Women's participation in the labour force is particularly difficult to measure since the majority of women are technically unemployed or involved in informal enterprises. There is a lack of recognition as to the importance of women's labour. Economic measures such as GDP do not recognise women's domestic and unpaid economic activities. However, it is the labour and coping skills of women which have to a certain degree subsidised the low wages paid to migrant workers in the mines and other sectors.

### Formal sector employment

The 1991 Census reveals that among the economically active population, 23 percent of rural women are "own account" workers, while 33 are unpaid family workers. In 1991 approximately 388,014 adults aged 15 years and over were formally employed; of these approximately 44 percent were women while 56 percent were

*Women's access to credit is undermined by a lack of gender sensitivity on the part of many formal lending institutions.*



male. The breakdown of those in formal employment was: 40 percent in the private sector, 19 percent in government and 21 percent unpaid family workers. Approximately 20 percent of all employed people were "own account" workers, of which 50 percent are women who carry out 80 percent of all agricultural activities.

Approximately 81 percent of the labour force is employed in the formal and informal sector with 19 percent unemployed (although this figure does not include those not looking for work outside of the home).<sup>52</sup> The mining industry alone employed almost 15,000 persons which is about four percent of all employed persons. The 1991 Population and Housing Census shows that government employs one in every five people; however, only one in every three is a woman. According to the Census, at least 21 percent of employed persons are classified as unpaid family workers, of whom 70 percent are female. The largest group of people classified as employed are subsistence farmers, 60 percent of whom are women. Most office and clerical workers are women, while women only account for 20 percent of people in senior management positions.<sup>53</sup>

Examples of male-dominated occupations are machine and plant operation (99 percent), military forces (96 percent), mine labour (92 percent) and management and senior official positions (80 percent). The labour force participation rate for men is about 90 percent in the 25-59-year groups and peaks at 93 percent for those aged 35-39. However, the rate for women 25-59 is only 60 percent, peaking for those 25-29 years. Both men and women in these age groups who are not economically active have home-making as their main activity but it is classified as an economically inactive group which tends to underestimate the participation rate of women in the labour force.

A breakdown by urban and rural areas reveals that 64 percent of people in urban areas are economically active, while only 56 percent of people in the rural areas are part of the labour force (Table 2). Rural women have the lowest employment rate in comparison to their urban counterparts and males in general. However, rural women's activity rates are underestimated since the majority of women are involved in domestic duties which were classified in the 1991 Population and Housing Census data as 'inactive'.<sup>54</sup>

Workers in agriculture amount to 51 percent of all employed women in contrast to about 43 percent of all employed men. Female agriculture workers do the following: unpaid family work (60 percent) and own account work (35 percent). This indicates that very few women are employed in the formal economic sector but are busy in agricultural activities. Males working in the agricultural sector mainly consist of private sector employment (37 percent), own account work (32 percent) and unpaid family work (25 percent). These figures indicate that formal employment favours men over women, while women tend to do unpaid agricultural work.

The second largest industry for female employment is domestic work in private households (10 percent). This is closely followed by trade and education (eight percent) and manufacturing (seven percent).<sup>55</sup> There are approximately 24,000 domestic workers in Namibia of whom 75 percent are women. Female domestic workers may work as much as 15 hours-a-day doing domestic chores for themselves as well as their employer's household. The demographic profile of female domestic workers varies by the region of the country in which they live.<sup>56</sup>

Although the Labour Act of 1992 provides for voluntary affirmative

## Employed

Box 3

Employed, as used in the section, means economically active with or without payment. Own account workers are those who have no paid employees but may have unpaid family workers. An unpaid family worker is someone who works without pay for a relative.

**Labour Force** Table 2  
**15+-year-olds by**  
**Gender and Urban-Rural**

	Urban %	Rural %	Total %
Males	75	65	69
Females	53	48	49
Both	64	56	58

SOURCE: reprinted from DWA, 1995a:90

## Domestic workers

Box 4

In the northern Oshana region, domestic workers tend to average about 25 years old and have a grade eight education, while their counterparts in Keetmanshoop and Windhoek tend to be older, more experienced and less educated. Payment for domestic work ranges from N\$30-a-month in the Oshana region to N\$700 per month in the Khomas region. Most women who work for such low wages do not complain for fear of dismissal.

SOURCE: Legal Assistance Centre, 1997: 26-27, 38



action, few private sector companies comply. For example, in the fish-processing industry in Walvis Bay there are no female managers, but women work long hours in the production factories for low pay. Women in the work place and in labour unions still face a number of obstacles such as lack of self-confidence, gender stereotyping by men of women as sex-objects, lack of support by partners or husbands and a lack of female role models.<sup>57</sup> Formal sector employment still tends to favour men over women in high paying-high profile positions, while women's employment is concentrated in agriculture and domestic service. In addition, the classification of domestic duties (women's work for her own family) as economically inactive underestimates women's contribution to the nation's growth.

#### *Informal sector employment*

Many men and women who can not find formal sector employment engage in trading and other informal economic activities. Research indicates that between 30 and 40 percent of peri-urban and urban households engage in some form of informal income-generating activity. Women in the informal sector tend to have low levels of educational attainment, lack capital input and do not keep records of their income and expenditures. As in formal sector employment, men dominate high income-generating occupations such as driving taxis, while women are relegated to lower income-generating activities such as cooking and selling food, brewing beer and making handicrafts. Windhoek municipal records indicate that women are predominant in street vendor activities, while men are more likely to dominate trade in formal shops. These records indicate that only 10-15 percent of formal shop-licence holders are women. Women's average income from informal activities is low at about N\$50-80 per month.

Regional specific informal sector activities also exist. For example, women in the Caprivi dominate the fish-selling market while Owambo women in the north central regions make and sell large baskets.<sup>58</sup> In the urban areas, informal sector activities tend to focus more on the resale of consumer items rather than on small scale production. In Katutura there are five main informal sector types of activities: street vendors, backyard mechanics and metal workers, taxis, shebeens in private houses and home-based activities such as needlework and child care. There are three times as many women than men who participate in street vending.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, many donor, NGO and government organisations have attempted to identify income-generating activities for women. However, most of these activities focus on women's participation and production in traditionally gender stereotyped work such as needlework, bakeries and handicrafts. Emphasising income-generating activities that focus on these traditional skills only serves to reinforce gender stereotypes. However, there are women's projects such as several brickmaking cooperatives, wire fence-making in Okambahe, mat-making in Okambahe and market-gardening in Khorixas which focus on less stereotyped income-generating activities for women.<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, there are some constraints to women's income-generating activities, especially in the rural areas. There are not as many ready markets in the rural as in the urban areas, raw materials are difficult to get and expensive, many communities are inexperienced in cooperative ventures and hand-made items must compete with South African manufactured products.<sup>61</sup>

#### *Prostitution and Sex Workers*

Prostitution in Namibia is governed by the Combating of Immoral Practices Act of 1980,<sup>62</sup> based on

the South African Immorality Act of 1957. The Act prohibits keeping brothels, procuring prostitutes, soliciting by prostitutes, earning a living by prostitution and enslaving women for sexual purposes. Prostitution is defined as, "any person who, in any public street or place, entices, solicits or importunes or makes any proposals to any other person for immoral purposes".

The punishment for prostitution is a fine of not more than N\$2,000 or imprisonment of not more than two years, or both. The Act also outlaws pimping in that it prohibits the earning a living from the avails of prostitution, as well as making it illegal to assist in the commission of an immoral act. Keeping a brothel is subject to a fine of not more than N\$3,000 or imprisonment for up to three years. The Act also includes a section which prevents sex slavery and trade in prostitution by outlawing, "detention for the purposes of unlawful carnal intercourse".

Basically, there are two forms of prostitution known to exist in Namibia. The first is classic prostitution where a person actively solicits money for sexual favours. The second type, which is much more common, is the act of engaging in sex in exchange for material rewards. Classic prostitution is clearly illegal under the Combating of Immoral Practices Act; however, the legal status of exchange prostitution for material reward is unknown since this has not yet been argued in Namibian courts.

There is very little information and data on classic prostitution in Namibia since there have been no formal studies; however, classic prostitution is known to be practised by both men and women in Namibia. Child prostitution is also known in Namibia, including children of both sexes and is common among street children. Information from the

Namibian Police (NAMPOL) indicates that there were few arrests for prostitution-related offences in 1994; four men were arrested for solicitation and a very small number of arrests were made on other prostitution-related charges.<sup>63</sup>

Namibia is also characterised by sexual relationships which, while not exactly prostitution, are based on the provision of cash or gifts by 'boyfriends'. This type of exchange prostitution manifests itself in women who have 'boyfriends' who provide cash or gifts to help support her in exchange for sexual favours. One study found that a fifth of their study population are young, unemployed women who live with a 'boyfriend', of whom 64 percent also receive cash from the 'boyfriend'. The study also found that the 'boyfriends' are typically older affluent men, many of whom are married and do not support the woman if she becomes pregnant. The authors conclude that, "while this type of social arrangement is not prostitution in a conventional sense... it does point to the disadvantaged position and vulnerability of many young women in Katutura".<sup>64</sup>

Another form of sexual favours in exchange for cash and goods occurs with school girls. Many young girls are approached by older men who offer to buy them soft drinks, sweets and even clothes in exchange for sexual favours. In one court case in Windhoek a wealthy sheep farmer was accused of picking up young girls (average age of 14) and taking them to his farm for sex in exchange for cash and alcoholic drinks.<sup>65</sup>

The indication is that people in Namibia tend to engage in both classic and exchange prostitution due to economic factors. One prostitute interviewed on the NBC television show *Talking Point* explained: "If you are poor and you do not have any assistance and



nobody is going to love you, then you have to do something for yourself to just live in a world, so there is nothing wrong with prostitution because you are doing a business to survive... There is nothing wrong with prostitution. It is my business. I feed my kids from this money. I'm looking for work but I don't get it. What can I do?"<sup>66</sup> However, feminists explain that the root causes of sexual exploitation is gender discrimination, rapid urbanisation, growing poverty, the breakup of traditional family structures and loss of community controls.<sup>67</sup>

#### Income

In Namibia, there are wide gender disparities and marked inequalities in wages and salaries. These differences exist within and between various classes in society. For example, there is a wide disparity in income between the various population groups (especially white and black), between regions and across economic sectors. The Manufacturing Establishment Survey of 1993/94 conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources confirmed that wages vary according to industry, occupation, size of enterprise and other characteristics. The structure of wages in Namibia is characterised by variations within and across the industrial and occupational categories. A comparison of remuneration scales across the main sectors of the formal economy demonstrates that mining and finance pay the highest wages, while the agricultural sector pays the lowest.<sup>68</sup> Agricultural labourers are paid about N\$366 per month which is less than half the wage of workers in elementary occupations who earn N\$656, while senior managers in the mining sector are paid twice the overall average of senior managers in other sectors.<sup>69</sup>

Women are concentrated in industries, occupations, types of establishments associated with low levels of payment. As previously dis-

cussed, the majority of women are primarily involved in subsistence agriculture, domestic work and social services, all of which are low wage-earning occupations. Women are also dominant in clerical and sales categories whereas in management level categories their presence is inconsequential. Female representation in the two top-earning occupations, professionals and senior managers, is 44 percent and 22 percent respectively. However, they are concentrated in the lowest pay earning brackets.

The distribution of salary groupings by sex among public service employees in Namibia illustrates women's lack of representation in higher paying employment categories. During 1994, approximately 89.8 percent of all women and about 88.3 percent of all men earned less than N\$30,000 a year. A further 9.6 percent of all women and 9.7 percent of all men earned between N\$30,000 and N\$73,454 a year and about 0.7 percent of all women and 1.9 percent of all men earned more than N\$73,455 per year. Based on the above figures, disparities in female to male earnings in the public service sector are clearly visible. More women are in the lowest income group, while there are one percent more men than women in the highest income category (management).<sup>70</sup>

#### Workload<sup>71</sup>

Namibia is no exception to the gender division of labour which exists in rural communities throughout Africa. Much of the structure of rural communities is based on a division of labour along gender lines. Women carry out most domestic and agricultural duties, while men are responsible for specific spheres of work such as herding and marketing livestock, ploughing fields and sometimes building homes.<sup>72</sup> It is widely known that the burden for crop cultivation, household chores and childcare falls disproportionately

*In Namibia, there are wide gender disparities and marked inequalities in wages and salaries.*

on women. Women (and female children) do many more chores much more often than men.

A workshop on Gender and Reproductive Health which was held on the 7-9 June 1996 at Eenhana revealed that Namibian women, particularly those who reside in rural areas, have more responsibilities than men in terms of day-to-day activities. Women have to cultivate fields, fetch water and wood, go to the shops and markets, make and sell baskets, process grains, feed the family and watch the children. The following example illustrates how women perform the task of crop production while men reap the benefits. In Owambo society, men have control over arable land and divide their land between themselves and their wives. Although men allocate themselves a larger piece of the land, women are responsible for crop cultivation on all of the homestead's arable land. The men keep the production from their land for their own use (frequently for traditional beer), while women use their products to feed the family.<sup>73</sup>

The lives of men and women are very different. Men spend much of their time with other men and do not see the world as women do. Men typically do not believe that their women are discriminated against, nor do they see the need for change. Men believe 'this is the way it has always been and this is the way it should be'. Men are more likely to allocate or share specific tasks with other men or take on tasks that utilise higher levels of technology, such as animal-drawn traction. In contrast, women are more likely to be engaged in the actual work itself. One survey found that women in the northern regions are twice as likely as men to work in the fields.<sup>74</sup> Children also share in domestic and agricultural tasks while still young, but develop gender-based divisions of labour as they grow older.

### Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture in pre-independent Namibia was neglected due to apartheid policies which impeded the social, political and economic development of communal farmers. People in the rural areas were denied access to social services and resources which supported the commercial farming sector. Most communal farmers had little or no access to extension services outside the sale of fertilizers and seeds.

Differential resource allocation created great disparities not only by race but by region and ethnicity. Inexperienced and poorly trained extension workers were assigned to the communal areas. They frequently did not support agricultural extension *per se*, but worked on infrastructure projects such as roads. During the apartheid era, little research on communal crop and improved farming systems was undertaken. Marketing, inputs and access to credit services were neglected. In contrast, white farmers enjoyed the benefits of a credit, marketing and supply institutions network, designed to advance their interests and to subsidise the commercial farming sector. In 1979, the Land and Agriculture Bank was formed to assist commercial farmers in financing the purchase of land and inputs.<sup>75</sup> By requiring farmers to have surveyed, freehold land as collateral, the bank excluded communal farmers who usually only had usufructuary rights to land. Furthermore, low interest rates offered by these banks served as a readily available subsidy for white farmers. Just prior to independence, four percent long-term loans were offered which ensured that freehold land would remain in the hands of whites.<sup>76</sup>

Today, as it was under apartheid, subsistence agriculture provides the livelihood for the largest number of people in Namibia. Unfortunately, the legacy of neglect by the apartheid regime still haunts the



communal areas. For example, in the north-central regions, there is only one extension officer for every 3,000 communal farmers and in the Okavango region only one-fifth of households report having received extension assistance.

Based on the 1991 Census, women constitute the majority of those engaged in subsistence agriculture, but they remain under represented in commercial agriculture (Table 3). In addition, women are less able to take advantage of extension services due to a lack of transport and cultural constraints, as in the eastern regions, where there are restrictions against women's travelling far from the homestead.<sup>77</sup>

ous problem for many rural households due to variable rainfall, cycles of drought, environmental degradation and lack of alternative sources of income. As women are the majority of subsistence farmers, they are more likely to experience the risk and uncertainty of subsistence farming. In the rural areas most households must augment their food production with purchased food. Although three-fourths of the Namibian population participate in agriculture, most depend heavily on cash income to buy additional food stuffs.

Female-headed households are more likely to be prone to food insecurity due to fewer employed household members and less cash remittances. In some areas such as the southern and eastern communal areas, the majority of households rely on purchased foods.<sup>79</sup> Urban food insecurity comes about due to high rates of migration which formal sector employment can not keep pace with. Women in the urban areas who do not have household members working tend to rely more heavily on informal sector activities such as trading or brewing beer to secure food for their families.

Another vulnerable group is women employed on commercial farms or who are in households headed by a labourer on a commercial farm. It is estimated that over 36,000 farm workers support 230,000 dependants, on wages of between N\$80 and N\$380 per month.<sup>80</sup> Female workers on farms are in an unstable position, as their work is often on a casual basis and they lack job security. Wives of farmworkers have often found themselves evicted if their husbands die. Farmworkers frequently face food insecurity due to low wages and insufficient food rations by the commercial farmers.<sup>81</sup>

Types of food stuffs depended on by households differs from region

**Population Employed in Agriculture and Fishery Work**

Table 3

Description	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Market oriented/skilled	6,851	781	7,632	10.2
Subsistence	56,469	86,126	142,595	60.4
Labourers	34,002	2,564	36,566	7.0
Total	97,322	89,471	186,793	47.9
% of work in subsistence	58.0%	96.3%	76.3%	

SOURCE: reprinted from DWA 1994:31

Food security depends to a large extent on a household's ability to acquire enough food to adequately feed all members of the household. Food insecurity occurs when households can not provide for an adequate intake of food to ensure healthy members of the household. Food security depends on a household's ability to either produce enough food or to obtain enough cash to purchase food supplies. Food insecurity can be a chronic or a transitory problem. In Namibia, which is prone to droughts, food insecurity in many regions is transitory due to variations in rainfall.<sup>78</sup>

Production and access to food at the individual household level are marginal in many regions of Namibia. Food insecurity has become a seri-



to region. In the north and central regions cattle production is important, in the south many households purchase their food and in the north-eastern regions smallhold crop production is important. The NDP I identifies specific groups at risk of food insecurity as: the Bushmen, commercial farm workers, female-headed households, remote rural area dwellers and households in peri-urban areas.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusions

Women in Namibia are economically active; however, their participation and contribution to Namibia's economy is greatly undervalued. Women tend to have less access to land and credit than their male counterparts, which prevents them from more fully participating in the economic development of the country. Women are typically employed in a narrow range of jobs which focus on stereotyped gender employment. The largest employment area for women is subsistence agriculture, followed by domestic employment. In the informal sector women tend to do lower income/lower prestige jobs than their male counterparts. Women's income is also typically lower than men's due to the types of employment available to them. However, women also have heavier workloads than men and bear the burden of household duties and domestic production. Women are the main producers of subsistence agriculture and the main users of the environment. Women are more likely than men to live in the rural areas and as such are more prone to food insecurity.

### POLITICS AND POWER

The following section discusses women's political position and power within the society. It looks at women's rights under Roman-Dutch Law as well as customary law, their voting behaviour, their decision making power vis-a-vis men and Namibia's women's movements and organisations.

### Roman-Dutch Law and Legal Reform<sup>83</sup>

With the abolishment of apartheid and the establishment of a constitutional government, women's rights have been enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. However, since Independence the government has been grappling with how to realise the gender equality promised in the Constitution.

Namibia is in the process of initiating legal reforms to address previous gender discrimination based in Roman-Dutch Law. Several apartheid laws which discriminated against women remained on the books at Independence and have only recently come under review.

The Income Tax Act, Labour Code, Married Persons Equality Act and the Abortion and Sterilisation Bill (yet to be passed) are some of Namibia's first steps in redressing legally sanctioned gender inequality.<sup>84</sup> However, this progress in legal equality has been difficult since most lawmakers are still men while most advocates for gender equality are women.<sup>85</sup>

The Married Persons Equality Act became law in July 1996. It makes men and women in marriage equal before the law. The act invalidates marital powers which made the husband the head of the house. It also provides for women married in community of property to have equal access to bank loans and ownership of property. Under this legislation, immovable property such as the communal house must be registered in both spouses' names and the sale of communal property needs the approval of both parties. However, there has been confusion on the part of both men and women as to what privileges and obligations the new Act entails.

The practice of divorce being granted on the proposition of 'guilt' or 'innocence' is still in force in

### Law of the land

Box 5

Namibian law can be divided into civil law (Roman-Dutch law and statute law) and customary law. Civil laws dictates commercial transactions, the functioning of government, labour matters criminal matter and some aspects of personal law. Customary laws are derived from the customs and practices of different cultural communities in Namibia.

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1997, in press

### Married persons equality

Box 6

The emotional pleas against the Married Persons Equality Act, which is clearly in line with the Constitution, reveal the deeply held cultural belief that the man should be the head of the house and have marital power over his wife:

Hon. Erastus Hendjala of the National Council: "...this Bill is supported mostly by single women, by women who have problems in their families and by those who know that they are not going to marry".

Hon. Nathaniel Maxuilili of the National Assembly: "We are not allowed to change the status of men and women, not at all. That is what God said. The women must be subject to their husbands as the head...We must be very careful of women...that women want to take over power...We will never allow it!"

Hon. Asser Hango of the National Assembly: "The move behind this [bill] is to legalise the women to ruin men in terms of property and run away after acquiring the property she was in need of...We know the desire of certain women to have love affairs with young boys...Is that what you are trying to get?"

SOURCE: Becker, H., 1996a: 7-8



**The house is his**

Box 7

The following case study illustrates what can happen when a woman leaves her husband she has married in community of property.

Francina is an Owambo woman who was abused for 10 years and decided that the risk to her life was greater than her material needs and so she left her husband Petrus.

"When I divorced I noticed that this communal marriage makes people to be robbed. I bought many things but Petrus took everything with him. He did not even give me anything...I came [to this house] with bare hands...Even a building we built in the North is his, the house in the North is his, the house here is his, the chairs are his, everything, everything...To take the thing into court?...Where can I find money to pay for that? I found out that ah, it does not matter. Oh the communal marriage, oh let the law look at it with big eyes, and examine it. They used to blame the woman, that it is you who went out from the house. What takes a woman from the house is that she does not have strength. Will we not be killed? It is only me [a woman] who is powerless? He beat me deliberately because he knew that if I went out he would take everything from me."

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1996: 134-135

Namibia today. A larger share of the communal assets are assigned to the 'innocent' party. However, when the 'innocent' party is a man he will get a larger share of the communal property than when the injured party is a woman. In extreme cases, all of the communal assets may be awarded to the 'innocent' party, again usually when the 'innocent' party is a man. One rationalisation for this is the prevailing attitude that it is the man's labour that accumulates the communal assets, while another common attitude in African societies is that if something goes wrong in a marriage it is the woman's fault.<sup>86</sup>

Although there are legal provisions for child maintenance it is difficult to enforce since most Namibian men do not have resources that the courts can readily attach. If the man is not formally employed, the courts do not issue maintenance orders.<sup>87</sup> However, this overlooks the fact that between 30 percent and 40 percent of urban households engage in some form of informal economic activity. One female informant describes how she has been raising her ex-husband's three children, from his previous marriage, for over five years without any maintenance support. The eldest daughter took the father to maintenance court because the woman had no legal rights to maintenance since the children were not hers. The daughter was informed that her father was not working and therefore there was nothing the courts could do for her (facts corroborated by court documents and legal papers). However, a new Maintenance Bill is being drafted.

Some ideas being discussed:

- ◆ Giving the courts the power to order assets held in the rural areas, such as cattle, to be attached for sale;
- ◆ Order men to work on Government projects such as road-building and the money sent to the mother for maintenance;

- ◆ impose a minimum maintenance on all fathers and jailing those that do not pay.

A new draft Abortion and Sterilisation Bill was made public in June 1996 and has been the topic of controversy ever since. Most debates which have surfaced, centre around the 'pro-life'-'pro-choice' arguments. 'Pro-life' issues have been promoted by religious groups over the moral implications of abortion, while the 'pro-choice' position is backed by most Namibian women's associations which contend that the bill further empowers women because it gives them more control over their own fertility and lives. The proposed bill would legalise abortion upon demand for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, without having to secure the father's consent. Under the current Abortion and Sterilisation Act abortion is illegal except in extreme situations such as where pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. Currently illegal abortion and infanticide are the only choices for desperate mothers, mostly single women, who can not afford to bring up a child.

Namibia has made advancements in legally enshrining women's equality guaranteed in the Constitution. However, there is still a difference between hypothetical rights and legal reality. Recent interviews with poor urban women reveal that these women feel the law says one thing, but reality is another. Many women say they may have rights, but no one tells them what their rights are, nor is there any easy way to access formal legal systems to secure these rights. Most women interviewed vocalised the feeling that nothing has changed for women in Namibia and that most women still 'get a raw deal' by both society and men.<sup>88</sup>

#### Customary Law<sup>89</sup>

The Constitution also states that customary laws may be practised in Namibia, if they do not infringe

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# ACRONYMS

ABN	Agricultural Bank of Namibia
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APSF	Annual Programme Sharing Forum
BTP	Build Together Programme
CASS	Centre for Applied Social Studies
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCN	Council of Churches in Namibia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMA	Common Monetary Area
COSEDA	Co-operative Support and Development Agency Trust
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DANIDA	Danish Aid Agency
DWA	Department of Women's Affairs in the Office of the President
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EWON	Ecumenical Women of Namibia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNCC	Gender Networking Coordinating Committee
GNP	Gross National Product
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMLT	Institute for Management and Leadership Training
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
MAWRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (renamed Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1995)
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MHEVTST	Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology
NACP	National Aids Control Programme
NACUL	Namibia Credit Union League
NAMPOL	Namibian Police
NANAWO	Namibia National Women Organization
NBC	Namibia Broadcasting Corporation
NDC	Namibian Development Corporation
NDHS	Namibia Demographic and Health Survey
NDPI	National Development Plan 1
NDT	Namibian Development Trust
NEPRU	Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHE	National Housing Enterprise
NHIES	National Household Income and Expenditure Survey
NISER	Namibia Institute for Social and Economic Research
NLPN	National Literacy Programme in Namibia
NPC	National Planning Commission
NORAD	Norwegian Aid Agency





PHC	Primary Health Care
PSF	Private Sector Foundation
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
PVO	Private Volunteer Organization
RISE	Rural People's Institute for Social Empowerment
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARDC	Southern African Research and Documentation Centre
SIDA	Swedish International Cooperation Agency
SSD	Social Sciences Division
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization of Namibia
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme On AIDS
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNO	United Nations Organization
UNTAG	United Nations Transitional Assistance Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WID	Women in Development
WIDSAA	Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness

upon rights granted to an individual in the Constitution.<sup>90</sup> The customs and laws of a specific group determine women's legal status within that society. However, most of these customs and laws strongly discriminate against women and few women traditionally hold positions of political power, though some individual women have political leverage through their male relations. A system of customary laws applies to most women in Namibia's traditional African societies. Customary laws are those sets of unwritten laws under which traditional African societies conduct their marriages, divorces, inheritance, land tenure and other such affairs.<sup>91</sup> These sets of laws have developed within specific societies over time and usually reflect the 'collective consciousness' of the society at that moment in time.<sup>92</sup>

Many customary laws have been reinterpreted and manipulated by colonialism. Colonial authorities, with the collusion of traditional leaders, used customary laws to advance South African governmental policy. Traditional courts, which implement customary laws and hear disputes within the community, are usually comprised of men in positions of power.<sup>93</sup>

Many customary laws are discriminatory. Under customary laws the allocation of common property after death or divorce depends on the specific practices of that society, but many discriminate against women. In some traditional societies, after the husband's death or a divorce, all common property goes to the husband's kin group, leaving the wife without means of support. In these cases, it is expected that the woman's adult male children will provide for her or that she will return to her father's house.

#### Women's Movements and Organisations<sup>94</sup>

Until the late 1970s women's isolation due to apartheid and interna-

tional sanctions precluded women from access to knowledge and participation in women's social movements taking place elsewhere in the world. When apartheid authorities loosened restrictions, female activists began to organise and deal with gender issues within the context of the apartheid struggle.<sup>95</sup>

For example, several leading women activists from inside the country were educated at institutions abroad, the founder of the most important women's organisation of the 1980s (Namibian Women's Voice) was supported by international donors, churches encouraged women to form women's organisations and 30 women activists from Namibia attended the 1985 Women's World Conference.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, women in exile were also in contact with international women's democratic and social movements.<sup>97</sup> Since independence, Namibia's women's movements have steadily gained momentum.

Probably one of the single most important events for these movements was their participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Namibia sent a 56-person delegation headed by then Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who was rapporteur at the conference.<sup>98</sup> The major topics addressed by the Namibian delegation were violence against women, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, the girl-child, poverty among rural women and illiteracy. The primary goals of the delegation were to learn from other countries with similar problems and to adopt a Global Platform for Action. Most of these social movements and organisations are spearheaded by educated urban women. It is mainly due to the efforts of women activists in these organisations and social movements that legal changes have come about in Namibia.

#### Traditional chiefs

Box 8

Several traditional African societies in Namibia had women chiefs in the pre-colonial era; however, only two did so at independence. Although the prevalence of female chiefs differs from society to society, female chiefs in traditional African societies are the exception rather than the rule.

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1997, in press



The Constitution states that all laws in force at Independence remain valid until revised or declared unconstitutional by a court.<sup>99</sup> There are many aspects of Roman-Dutch Law, as well as customary law, in force which are contrary to the Constitution. In addition to formal legal redress, there are several governmental, NGOs and CBOs which have formed to represent women's interests and lobby for improvements in women's legal and social status.

In 1992, the Law Reform and Development Commission was established to give attention to law reform on gender-related matters. In addition to being consulted on various legislative reforms, it initiated the Married Persons Equality Act and is involved in the drafting several other bills such as a new Maintenance Bill and a new Rape Bill.<sup>100</sup> DWA, within the office of the president, was established shortly after Independence. It plays a dominant role in bringing gender issues into the national agenda, facilitating communication between women and the government, and helping to identify priority areas for action on issues relating to women. DWA is involved in gender-sensitisation and other forms of training in seeking input on gender issues from Namibia's different regions, as well as in funding small businesses and projects owned and operated by women.<sup>101</sup>

The Domestic Workers' Union and the Teachers' Union deal with women's employment issues.<sup>102</sup> The Namibia National Women's Organisation (NANAWO) provides education to parliamentarians on gender issues. The Legal Assistance Centre advises women and conducts research on women's rights under the law. Many women's organisations such as Sister Namibia and Women's Solidarity have mobilised to provide counselling and education on gender

issues. The Gender Training and Research Unit at the University of Namibia trains young Namibians to conduct research on gender-related issues.

### Implementing Affirmative Action

As previously stated, the Constitution, as well as making it illegal to discriminate against a person on the basis of their sex, also recognises the previous disadvantaged position of women by encouraging affirmative action initiatives with particular emphasis on women.<sup>103</sup> The general provisions on affirmative action are strengthened by the chapter of the Constitution which pronounces principles of state policy.<sup>104</sup> One of the goals included in this section is the enactment of legislation to guarantee, "equality of opportunity for women, to enable them to participate fully in all spheres of Namibian society".<sup>105</sup> Statutory affirmative action in Namibia has taken two forms since independence:

- ◆ "provisions which ensure the presence of women in important government decision-making bodies"; and

- ◆ "general authorisation for affirmative action".<sup>106</sup>

The different acts legislated are discussed in detail in Part II of this document.

In 1992, the Namibian Parliament ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The ratification of this Convention exemplifies Namibia's commitment to ending discrimination against women and paves the way for the implementation of affirmative action policies for women. Based on the ratification of this Convention, a workshop on its implementation was held at Windhoek 7-9 December, 1992. At this workshop priority areas were identified for further gender empowerment:

- ◆ law and property ownership,

- ◆ education, labour and employment,
- ◆ poverty and income generation,
- ◆ family life, fertility and reproduction,
- ◆ violence against women,
- ◆ care of the aged and
- ◆ gender awareness.<sup>107</sup>

There has also been an escalating appreciation of gender issues at policy levels in various ministries. For instance, a number of government employees have taken part in training programmes aimed at encouraging gender-sensitive planning. National literacy trainers, from the National Planning Commission (NPC), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD) have been trained in such programmes. These agencies' participation in gender-sensitive training has acted as a catalyst for gender-sensitive policy planning and some ministries have increased their capacity to produce gender disaggregated statistics to help guide policy makers. For example, the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology (MHEVTST) and Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MEC) have increased their capacity to produce information on gender differences in enrolment and drop-out rates of learners. In addition, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) of the NPC has begun publishing gender-specific statistics. A few ministries have also established structures specifically designed to give attention to gender issues. For example, MAWRD has established a Steering Committee on Gender Sensitisation to guarantee that the needs of women farmers are sufficiently embodied in agriculture policies and programmes.<sup>108</sup>

### Voting Powers

Prior to independence, only the white population of Namibia could vote, all other groups were disenfranchised. However, the new

Namibian Constitution guarantees that all citizens 18 and older have the right to vote and all citizens who are 21 and older have the right to be elected to public office, with the exception of the president. To be elected president, the candidate must be a Namibian citizen by birth or descent and at least 35-years-of-age. The Constitution further guarantees that all citizens, male and female, have a constitutional right to:

- ◆ "...participate in peaceful activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the Government...
- ◆ to form and join political parties... [and]
- ◆ ... subject to such qualifications prescribed by law as are necessary in a democratic society, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely-chosen representatives".<sup>109</sup>

Women and men equally take part in the voting process; however, women tend to be influenced by husbands, boyfriends and relatives as to how they should vote. Research indicates that both men and women feel it is their duty to vote and expressed the feeling that it is wrong for people not to vote, no matter where they lived. One woman from the rural areas says: "Yes, they have an obligation to vote because if you do not vote no one will know where you stand. People elect leaders in order for there to be order and the rule of law. If people do not vote there will not be any order. Everyone will just do as they wish. Voting is therefore very necessary".<sup>110</sup> A survey of voters attitudes during the 1992 elections showed that almost a quarter of the respondents, men and women alike, said they would not vote for a women candidate. The most commonly given reasons were that women are not suitable for public office and the man is the head of the house.<sup>111</sup>

Due to Namibia's history of disenfranchisement of the majority of its



population, most Namibians now feel that voting is not only their right, but their duty. This general air of responsibility ensures that women also take part in the voting process, but they are less likely to run for or be elected to public office.

### Participation in Decision Making

As previously stated, women under German and South African rule were completely disenfranchised. Under both forms of colonial rule women were excluded from political participation and legally discriminated against. Since Independence, women's participation in decision-making in both the public and private spheres has improved

considerably. However, key leadership and policy-making positions are still male dominated.<sup>112</sup>

It is constitutionally guaranteed that women have equal rights to hold public office; however, women are under-represented at all political levels in the country. The government has given only a few positions to 'returnee' women in acknowledgment for their contribution to the liberation war.<sup>113</sup> Prior to recent elections, women were only seven percent of the National Assembly but are now 16.7 percent. In the National Council they are still less than four percent and in the regional councils three percent.<sup>114</sup> In the private sector the figures for women in management positions are even lower than those in the public sector. Affirmative action is provided for in the constitution but has yet to be realised, however, many returned exile and well-educated women are challenging gender roles and stereotypes.<sup>115</sup>

Table 4 shows a comparison between two election periods. Although there was an increase in the number of women elected to both houses of Parliament, the percentages are still significantly lower than those for men. Prevailing gender attitudes and stereotypes are a constraint to women fully participating in the decision-making process.

### Conclusions

Women have made significant strides in theoretical gender equality before the law. However, the reality is that it will be sometime before actual gender equality is realised. Laws that discriminate against women are being replaced with more equitable laws. One area of law which still seriously discriminates against women and needs to be addressed is customary law. Women's movements and organisations have played a significant role in organising and lobbying for gender equality. Affirmative action is

**Senior Positions in Government, 1989-94 and 1995-present** Table 4

Position	Women 1989 -94	Men 1989 -94	Women 1995 -	Men 1995 -
National Assembly	6	72	13	65
National Council	1	25	1	25
Ministers	2	16	3	18
Deputy Ministers	2	16	3	18
Permanent Secretaries	1	20	3	21
D/Permanent Secretaries	1	16	2	28
Under Secretaries	*	*	1	15
Directors	*	*	16	77
Deputy Directors	*	*	36	154
Ambassadors	2	11	2	18
Regional Governors	0	190	0	13

Notes: Ministers include NPC and the Attorney General, Permanent Secretaries include secretary and deputy to the cabinet and the secretary and deputy to the President.

SOURCE: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1996

**Senior Positions in Government 1989-94 and 1995-present** Table 5

Position	% Women 1989	% Women 1995	% Change 1989-1995
National Assembly	7.7	16.7	116.8
National Council	3.8	3.8	0
Ministers	11.1	14.3	28.6
Deputy Ministers	11.1	14.3	28.6
Permanent Secretaries	4.8	12.5	162.6
D/Permanent Secretaries	5.9	6.7	13.4
Under Secretaries	*	10.2	*
Directors	*	12.3	*
Deputy Directors	*		
Ambassadors	15.4	10	-35
Regional Governors	0	0	

SOURCE: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1996



enshrined in the Constitution and many ministries are making an effort at implementing it, although the implementation of affirmative action is not required by law. Women have equal voting rights and exercise those rights as their duty, but women are reluctant to run for public office and people are reluctant to vote for them. Women are seriously under-represented in the decision-making process due to deeply ingrained cultural attitudes, values and norms.

### SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Namibia's population in 1991 at the time of the Population and Housing Census was 1,409,920.<sup>116</sup> The Namibian population is comprised of 686,327 males and 723,593 females, giving a sex ratio of 95 males per 100 females (see Table 6). The population growth rate is estimated at three percent per annum creating a 1995 population estimate of 1,602,000. Namibia has a population density of 1.7 persons per sq km, however, the population is unevenly distributed throughout the country due to environmental conditions and historical factors. Approximately 72 percent of the population live in rural areas. Namibia has a classic age-sex pyramid indicative of a developing country with 42 percent of the population under 15. The main language spoken by about 51 percent of the population in Namibia is Oshiwambo, while English, which is the national language, is only spoken by one percent.<sup>117</sup>

The following section examines women's position within the Namibia social structure. Regional and urban-rural variations in women's living situations are examined. Sexuality and the image of women are discussed. The impact of traditional kinship systems, the influence of culture, religion and marriage customs and attitudes on women's status within society are evaluated. Finally, this section considers the situation of

the disabled in Namibia, with special reference to disabled females.

### Urban and Rural Dichotomy

Approximately 28 percent of the Namibian population live in urban areas. More females (73 percent), relative to their male counterparts (71 percent), live in rural areas. It is estimated that 52 percent of the population in rural areas are females, compared to 51 percent of the urban population which are male. This slightly skewed urban-rural sex ratio is the result of large numbers of men migrating to urban areas in search of employment.<sup>118</sup>

This gender imbalance favours men over women since men in the urban areas have better access than their rural female counterparts to health care, education and employment. In addition, women in the rural areas shoulder the burden for the care of small children and the elderly, are the main participants in subsistence agriculture and are left to maintain the rural homesteads while the men are away in the urban areas. The history of the Contract Labour System is a contributor to the fact that 39 percent of all households in Namibia are female-headed because the migration of men has influenced the breakup of the family unit.

**Population by Gender Ratio and Region** Table 6

Region	Total	Women	Men	Ratio
Omusati	189,919	106,296	83,623	79
Ohangwena	179,634	99,469	80,165	81
Oshana	134,884	73,340	61,544	84
Okavango	116,830	61,067	55,763	91
Oshikoto	128,745	66,766	61,979	93
Caprivi	90,422	46,357	44,065	95
Kunene	64,017	31,658	32,359	102
Hardap	66,495	32,767	33,728	103
Omaheke	52,735	25,423	27,312	107
Erongo	55,470	26,531	28,937	109
Khomas	167,071	79,365	87,706	111
Otjozondjupa	102,536	47,315	55,221	117
Karas	61,612	27,239	33,923	125
All regions	1,409,920	723,593	686,327	95

SOURCE: 1991 Population and Housing Census as reprinted from CSO, 1995, 1996



**"Traditional"**

Box 9

Through this section on social structures, the word 'traditional' refers to these attitudes and practices which are handed down from generation, to generation, embedded in cultural beliefs and derived from the history of the ethnic group. Many of these attitudes and practices have been influenced by colonialism and apartheid while others remain relatively unchanged from pre-colonial times. However, the important point is that these traditional attitudes and practices have the force of culture behind them and represents a socio-political environment in which gender identity is constructed; it is within this environment which women must negotiate their legal and social status. For many black Namibians, especially in the rural populations, traditional values and norms still apply today.

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1997, in press

**San, Bushman, *Ikung*** Box 10

The term 'bushman' refers to a group of ethnically and linguistically related people who have been called by various terms such as 'san', 'bushman' and '*Ikung*'. None of these terms are satisfactory and even the people themselves disagree on single term. However, for reference purposes the term 'bushman' shall be used. Similarly, the term Owambo, Kavango, Caprivi and Herero are used in this report to refer to related language groups generally known by these terms.

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1997, in press

**Regional Provincial**

Prior to Independence, Namibia was regionally divided along ethnic and racial lines. In the outlying areas of the country were apartheid defined 'homelands' while the central, more fertile areas, were allocated to white commercial farmers. After independence the Namibian government redrew Namibia's regions to more appropriately recognise population size differences and to incorporate together the previous 'homelands', urban and commercial farming areas. There are now 13 regions in Namibia and each region has a municipal centre for administrative purposes. The north-central area previously known as 'Owamboland' was divided into four regions due to the density of population. Those regions are Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshikoto and Oshana. Windhoek, the country's capital, is located in the Khomas region.

As stated above, the average population density of Namibia is 1.7 persons per sq km. However, this average is misleading since some regions have many more people than others. For example, the Karas region only has 0.4 persons per sq km, Kunene has 0.5, Hardap 0.6, while Khomas has 4.4. The regions with the highest population density are the Oshana with 26 persons per sq km and Ohangwena with 17.9.<sup>119</sup>

Some regions also have more young people than in other regions. For example, 50 percent of the population in Ohangwena and 48 percent in Omusati regions are under 15, while Khomas has 30 percent and Karas 32 percent.

As with other demographic indicators, the gender ratio in Namibia also differs considerably by region. Some regions have more males than females. For example, Karas has the most skewed sex ratio with 125 females for every 100 males, Otjozondjupa has 117 and Khomas

111. The northern regions have the lowest male-female ratios: Omusati is the lowest with 79:100, Ohangwena 81, Oshana 84, Okavango 91 and Oshikoto 93 (see Table 6). These differing sex structures are the result of the historically uneven incorporating of the various regions within the labour market characterised predominantly by male migration to regional centres of formal economic activity.

**Kinship Systems**

Traditionally, there are three dominant methods of tracing kinship in Namibia. Kinship lines are used to determine who has what names, property rights, obligations and duties to whom. In patrilineal societies kinship is traced through the father's line, in matrilineal groups kinship is traced through the mother's line and in bilateral descent kinship is traced through both lines. For example, in matrilineal societies a man's social rights over the children does not extend to the incorporation of the children into his clan or lineage, where as in patrilineal societies he has that right. In patrilineal and matrilineal kinship systems, patriarchal ideology plays a major role in male dominance. The authority of men over women is exercised in the hierarchical structures of male dominance. Male authority roles are institutionalised and exercised through the organisation of kinship groups and manifest themselves during the decision making process related to such issues as inheritance, death and marriage. Although more than half of the Namibian population are matrilineal by custom, these societies (Owambo, Kavango and Caprivi) are still characterized by patriarchal dominance.<sup>120</sup>

Cultural attitudes about gender in these different groups vary from relative equality to rigid inequality. Although pre-colonial 'Bushmen' concepts of egalitarianism have been altered by colonial influence,



'Bushmen' men and women today still have relatively equal gender roles. In pre-colonial Herero society the gender distinction between men and women was weak; however, in contemporary Herero society men are considered *omuhona* (lord or master) a term once reserved for chiefs.<sup>121</sup> In Owambo societies women are, and have always been, subordinate to men in all spheres of public and private life.<sup>122</sup> In traditional African societies individual women do have *de facto* social power. Women exert considerable pressure on men both as mothers and wives. However, the social and political organisation of the Owambo, Herero and Nama, as well as most other traditional groups in Namibia, is that of male dominance.

Cultural attitudes about gender also vary by urban and rural location. For example, urban Afrikaner women have a far more egalitarian position than rural Afrikaner women who are typically farmwives.

A recent study on marriage and customary law in Namibia concludes that, "although women in all of the communities investigated have certain *de facto* decision-making powers and a varying degree of control over their property, they were nevertheless generally subordinated to men in areas such as decision-making in family matters and control over property".<sup>123</sup> This study also looked at the women's legal capacity in matrilineal communities with the Owambo and Kavango ethnic groupings, as well as the dual descent system of the Herero and the matrilineal system of the Caprivian peoples. The study found that women were in subordinate positions to men in most traditional African societies.

Patriarchy has different implications for women in each society in such a way that women who have enjoyed certain legal rights in one

aspect of life may lack certain legal capacity in other aspects of life at the same time. Power and control of women differs radically from one society to the next. Kinship patriarchy manifests itself as the social and ideological power of men over women. The power ranges from being relative to absolute depending on the particular socio-cultural system. Patriarchy is a dynamic system of male control over women that manifests itself in, among other ways, the sexual division of labour within the authority of the kinship system.<sup>124</sup> It should be noted that in the urban and 'modern' areas of Namibia, kinship plays less of a role than it does in the rural and 'traditional' areas, although patriarchy is found throughout Namibia.

### Sexuality

There is a strong tendency to control female sexuality among all Namibian cultures. Many women in Namibia do not have the right to control their own sexuality nor their own fertility.

Men have sexual control over their wives and it is considered a grave offense to have sex with another man's wife, while male promiscuity is commonly practised and accepted as part of being a man. During interviews concerning sexual behaviour it was pointed out by several male informants that it is more acceptable to have sex with an underage schoolgirl than with another man's wife. Women also do not have control over their own fertility. Many men in Namibia believe that a woman should not use contraceptives, and if she does it is because she wants to have an extra-marital affair. Male attitudes about sexual control over women also influences incidents such as rape in the country. It is frequently reported that a man who takes a woman to a nightclub demands sex from her since, 'she has had her fun, now it is time for him to have his'. Recently, it was reported that it is becoming common for men to insist that a

### Marital rape

Box 11

An example illustrates male attitudes towards sexual control over women when a Herero community leader stated in an interview:

"On the issue of marital rape he laughingly answered that the woman who refuses to have intercourse with her husband then deserves to be hurt as she is withholding what is rightfully the husband's".

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1996:85



woman prove her 'fertility' by getting pregnant before marriage. This in itself poses a challenge to young girls who sometimes give birth to prove they are fertile and then experience rejection by the father of the baby. Such practises result in children born out of wedlock and widespread single motherhood.<sup>125</sup>

It is important to note that the degree to which cultures have formal, highly elaborate notions of gender and sexuality in itself varies. Traditionally, among the Owambo, premarital sexuality was encouraged in the form of 'bundling' through nightly social gatherings; however, actual sexual intercourse was not allowed. If a girl became pregnant before marriage, she was killed, while nothing was done to the male. Although this traditional practice was abolished, its legacy still lingers on. The sexual control of women means that a high value is placed on virginity. Among the Owambo, a girl had to prove her virginity in the traditional marriage ceremony and she achieved high status by doing so. For men, being a virgin had no status. Among the Herero, it appears that premarital sex was allowed and only the lineage of a child born out of wedlock was in question.<sup>126</sup>

Although concepts of sexuality vary from Namibian society to society, for many women, "sexuality is mainly about pain, about violence, rape, abuse, unwanted pregnancies, exploitation, STDs and AIDS".<sup>127</sup> Sexuality for women is still strongly linked to a woman's duty to her husband and child-bearing, which means that sex for many women simply means more problems. On the other hand, men who have several children by several different women is common in Namibia and carries with it little personal or social consequences. Many men still believe that to have many children is a sign of manhood and an expression of sexuality, while women bear the consequences.

### Image of Women

Traditionally women are treated as inferior to men. During the colonial era, the prevailing laws classified women as minors. For example, women married under community of property law had no legal right to enter into any legal contract without their husband's consent. Although women in most traditional African societies were subject to male dominance, the superimposition of colonialism, including apartheid, further disempowered them.<sup>128</sup> Women under colonialism held a lower legal and social status than under any other socio-political environment which exists or has existed in Namibia. Both white and black women were discriminated against, based on their gender, but black women were further discriminated against based on their race. The apartheid system totally eroded self-esteem among women, especially black women. This perception of women is still prevalent in some cultures and it contributes to the low self-esteem that many women (especially in the rural areas) have about themselves.

Even with modest advances in some sectors, most Namibian women are still perceived of primarily as mothers and housewives. Much of a woman's status is derived from who she is married to, who she is related to and who she knows. Women are frequently told by men that they are the, 'mothers of Namibia' while men say they are the 'builders of Namibia'. The gender bias implications are clear. Women's contributions are based on their biological capacity while men's are derived from performance.

In addition, traditional values and norms, along with traditional practices, remain strong in most parts of Namibia and reinforce these gender biases. Women may theoretically have more rights but they are still largely perceived of in terms of gender stereotypes.



The labelling of all women as mothers makes it difficult for women to choose other paths in life, and also confines them to the reproductive sphere. At a workshop on gender and reproductive health, it was reiterated that women have no power to control their reproductive system, nor the power to decide on the number of children they would like to have.

In general, the media in Namibia helps to reinforce gender stereotypes. The portrayal of women is greatly influenced by western movies and television. The NBC routinely purchases American, British and Australian programmes which reflect typical western ideologies of women as 'superwomen' who have careers, are homemakers and wives. Even this portrayal does not break women out of the gender-stereotyped roles of mothers and housewives. Western ideologies concerning advertisements also reflect gender bias whereby women's bodies and sexuality are used to market products. In addition, the NBC has locally-produced programmes such as talk shows but panel members are more often men than women. The NBC and other local media do give women's conferences and gender issues news-time, but as Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Netumbo Ndwandwe stated, "women's issues are sidelined by not getting appropriate coverage or when coverage is given, it is in the most negative form".<sup>129</sup>

One of the best media sources for women's issues, as well as a gender forum, is the magazine *Sister Namibia*. The magazine provides women activists with a forum for reporting on the status of women's issues and informing the general public of events pertaining to women. *Sister Namibia* was instrumental in drafting this Profile.

One media event which caused considerable controversy in Namibia was the staging of the

'Miss Universe' pageant in 1995. Although the event could be justified as promoting international awareness of Namibia, some members of the public saw it as reinforcing negative stereotypes about women.<sup>130</sup>

### Culture and Language

Namibia is a country with a rich heritage of cultures and traditions. It is home to over a dozen ethnic and language groups, who exhibit diverse economic-adaptations, socio-political structures and cultural traditions. Its diverse ethnic groups include Afrikaners, Basters, Caprivians, 'Coloureds', Damara, German, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Owambo, Himba and Bushman.

The Constitution of Namibia recognised the importance of culture and guarantees the right of every person to practice, maintain and promote any culture, as long as the customary laws do not infringe on the individual rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Both Bantu and non-Bantu click languages are spoken in the country as well as Afrikaans, German, Portuguese and English.<sup>131</sup>

The most common languages are Oshiwambo (51 percent), Nama-Damara (13 percent), the Kavango languages (nine percent), Afrikaans (nine percent) and Otjiherero (eight percent).<sup>132</sup> Although there are many ethnic groups and languages spoken in Namibia, the most geographically widespread groups are the Nama-Damara, Herero, and Owambo making up about 90 percent of Katutura, Windhoek.<sup>133</sup> This section will focus on describing these traditional ethnic groups.

The Owambo are the largest ethnic group making up 51 percent of the population; however, there are eight sub-ethnic groups of the Owambo, each with a different dialect: Kwanyama, Ndonga, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalantu, Eunda and Nkolonkadhi.<sup>134</sup> The language spoken by the Owambo is

### Flowers of Namibia Box 12

An example which demonstrates male gender biases and stereotypes happened to one of the authors who was the only woman sitting on a ministerial committee as research advisor. The first time the committee sat, one of the male members gave a long speech about how wonderful it was to have a 'flower' on the committee since this demonstrated 'mothers' commitment to their children'. In this case, that particular author was the 'flower' and the 'mother', while the 'children' were Namibians.

SOURCE: Author communication, 1997



**Matrilineal descent**

Box 13

The Owambo have a matrilineal descent system whereby kinship is passed through the mother's line. The mother's brothers are responsible for the well-being of her children. In Owambo societies women are, and have always been, subordinate to men in all spheres of public and private life. Women in rural Owambo society are responsible for all domestic and agricultural labour, while men are involved in animal husbandry and political decision-making. In the urban areas, women are still subordinate to men. However, a modern lifestyle gives women more choices about marriage and relationships than in the rural areas where women are subject to their male relatives' wishes.

SOURCE: Becker, H., 1993:63; Hishongwa, N., 1992: 38

Oshiwambo. Traditionally, the Owambo mostly live in the Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto regions in north-central Namibia; however, about one-third of the Owambo live in southern Angola. Today, many Owambo men migrate to towns and mining areas in search of employment and large populations of Owambo people can be found living throughout Namibia. The Owambo practice subsistence agriculture based on a mixed system of livestock production (cattle, donkeys and goats) and crop production (millet and sorghum), with food sources supplemented by *veld* food collection.<sup>135</sup> The area traditionally occupied by the Owambo is a flat stoneless plain with the Cuvelai River flood plains approximately in the middle of the area where the greatest concentration of people live.<sup>136</sup>

The Nama-Damara language is classified as the second largest language group in Namibia, accounting for 13 percent of the population. Nama-Damara is a non-bantu click language. However, the classification is deceiving because there are two ethnic groups; the Nama and the Damara which actually speak variants of the same language. The Nama appear to be physically related to Bushmen, are about 4.5 percent of the Namibian population and presently consist of 14 sub-groups. Some of the more well known Nama groups are the Topnaars, Bondelswarts, Swartboois, Bethaniers, Bersebaers and Witboois.<sup>137</sup>

The Nama are traditionally found living in the Karas region in the south of the country. This area of the country is very dry and rocky, most Nama settlements are small and scattered through habitable portions of the region. Their subsistence is primarily based on goat and sheep farming (a few cattle) and *veld* foods collection, with very little crop production. Old-age pensions are a primary source of income for

many Nama families. Descent is reckoned patrilineally. Although the Bondelswarts have had a female chieftain since 1977, most Nama groups today are patriarchal. Traditionally, the Nama had a political organisation based on a council of elders, all of which were men.<sup>138</sup> However, there seems to be an indication that traditionally women in Nama society held much more private power than today, since traditionally the women owned the houses and their contents.<sup>139</sup>

The Damara also speak a slight variant of Nama-Damara, but do not appear to be physically related to the Bushmen. The Damara comprise about 8.5 percent of Namibia's population and there are approximately 11 sub-divisions. Some of the better known groups are the: Khomas Hochland, Swakop, Kuiseb and Brandberg Damara. The Damara traditionally live in the Erongo and part of the Kunene regions in a very arid, rocky and mountainous region. Traditionally the Damara were hunter-gatherers. However, today their subsistence activities are based on goat and sheep husbandry, some reliance on *veld* food collection and some crop production. It appears that traditionally the Damara had a very loose band political organisation. However, today they now have a King inaugurated in 1993, Justus Garoeb. The Damara appear to have a bilateral system of descent. As with other ethnic groups in Namibia, women's position in society is that of subordination to men.

The Herero speak the Otjiherero language and account for about eight percent of the total Namibian population. Traditionally the Herero live in the Omaheke and western Otjozondjupa regions which topographically form part of the Kalahari zone. The area is flat and sandy with only a few wide shallow water courses.<sup>140</sup> Cattle are the Herero's primary livestock pro-



duction, with some crop-growing and some *veld* food collection. The Herero have a double descent system; thus individuals are a member of two different clans, the father's *oruzo* and the mother's *eanda*.<sup>141</sup> In pre-colonial Herero society the gender distinction between men and women was weak. However, in contemporary Herero society men are considered *omuhona* (lord or master) a term once reserved for chiefs.<sup>142</sup>

### Women and Religion

It is estimated that 90 percent of Namibia's population are Christian. The main denominations are: Lutheran, 48 percent; Roman Catholic, 32 percent; Dutch Reformed Church, 10 percent; Anglican, 8 percent; and Methodist 1.6 percent.<sup>143</sup> There are also numerous small independent African churches, such as the Zionist Christian Church and the Herero Orwano church. Seventy percent (70 percent) of the Christian population attend church services regularly. Religion is a sensitive topic for most Namibians who are strong believers and some have used their belief system to justify the oppression of others.

Under apartheid, religion was used as a justification for racial dominance. Today, religion has been used by some people in the country to justify sexual dominance, as was previously pointed out concerning the debate over the Married Persons Equality Act.

In the past, women were completely absent from senior church leadership. However, since 1992 there has been a shift in favour of women, with 18 ordained in the Lutheran church and two in the Anglican church. The religious leaders in Namibia, although they do not always agree on women's issues, do practice and believe in biblical teaching and use it as examples of what is supposed to be women's position in the society. Sometimes

religious movements will oppose political reforms in favour of women on the basis of moral theology. For example, some religious leaders have taken a public stand against the proposed Abortion Bill. Religious groups have also used their doctrines as reasons for the opposition to education on AIDS and liberalisation of family planning.

In response to the continued assault on women's equality by religious organisations, the DWA organised a group called the Ecumenical Women of Namibia (EWON). EWON and DWA held a conference in 1992 to address issues such as equal access to employment, as well as problems of divorce, child abuse and violence against women. Noteworthy for this event was the fact that the President of Namibia took the opportunity to sign the CEDAW.

### Marriage and Access to Children

The government recognises the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society which should be protected by the state. Men and women of legal age are free to marry and establish a family.<sup>144</sup> Although getting married is an ideal in most societies, more than half of women interviewed in the Namibia Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) were not married. The survey reports that only 42 percent of women between 15 and 49 years were married at the time of the survey in 1992. Of this number, 27 percent were formally married while 15 percent were living with a partner. Marriage rates among women of child-bearing age are generally low. It is not uncommon for women to be unmarried in Namibia. The NDHS found that 26 percent of women aged 30-34 years old had never been married and even some older women had never been married.

The small number of women who have been married is due, in part, to



**Marriage of kinship groups**

Box 14

Traditionally, marriage is considered an arrangement between the man's and woman's kinship groups. The man's kin group pays bride price (called *otjitunya* by the Herero, *!gu\gab* by the Nama/Damara and *iigonda* by the Owambo) to the woman's kin group. This payment establishes a social relationship between the groups and gives the man and his kin group certain rights of control over the woman including, but not limited to, the right to her domestic service, sexual access and productive labour. Furthermore, the husband as head of the house and custodian of the kin group and household property, makes decisions about livestock and property disposal and acquisition. The woman's place is to do as the man says and not to ask questions concerning the disposition of property, even if his actions have adverse consequences for the entire household. In many traditional societies, there is rarely a time in a woman's life when she is not under the direct control of a man.

SOURCE: Pendleton, W. C., 1994:82-90; Lua in Becker, H., 1993: 65

the practice of *lobola*; it is not uncommon to find women in rural and urban areas with one or more children from the same partner who are living together because *lobola* has not yet been paid. On the other hand, many women choose to live without a conjugal partner either out of circumstance or choice.<sup>182</sup> Some indication of this can be seen in the high percentage of female-headed households found in Katutura where reports indicate that about a quarter of all households are made up of women, their children, and other people but without a conjugal partner.<sup>146</sup>

The NDHS also found that one in eight currently married women are in polygamous unions which are more common in rural than in urban areas, and are traditional to some Namibian ethnic groups. Women typically go from their father's house, to their husband's, and after his death or divorce back to their father's house or to their adult male children's house. In Owambo society, the husband is always the homestead head. There are certain instances where a woman can become head of the house, but this is rare. Divorced or widowed women usually go back to their father's house.<sup>147</sup> It is more common in Herero than in Owambo society for women to have their own households; however, in marriage husbands are still regarded as head of the household.<sup>148</sup>

Access to children in case of divorce or death is also linked to the kinship system. In matrilineal societies the children belong to the mother's lineage and clan. In these societies, the father's control over children may cease with his divorce or death, but situations differ from culture to culture and prevailing conditions at the time. The rights of children are fully protected in the Namibian constitution. In all cultures, children's access to both the mother's and father's kin groups is

paramount for the children's ancestral claims and economic survival. Even in matrilineal societies, it is the father who names the children and they carry their father's family name.

There are several family types that exist in Namibia, but the most common are nuclear, extended, female-headed and male-headed households. Nuclear families are most common in the urban areas and among the white population where the cost for large extended families is too great. Typically in the African population, young children and the elderly reside in the rural areas. It is not uncommon for young children to be sent to grandparents in the rural areas until they are old enough to go to school. Extended families are most common for the African population. This family type, although found in the urban areas, functions best in the rural areas where the extended family can share the burden of household chores. Female-headed households are prevalent in both urban and rural areas and are to a large extent a result of the history of colonialism. Male-headed households typically consist of several, related males living together in the urban areas. This household type originated due to the high rates of male migrant to the urban areas in search of employment.

Within marriage women are still subordinate to men. Although women may have some degree of autonomy in decision-making, they are usually subject to the control of husbands or male members of the extended family or kinship group.

**The Disabled**

The word 'disabled' is an emotionally charged term, but is used in this Profile to identify those persons who are not able to make full use of some parts of their physical body due to birth defects, illness, accident or as a result of the liberation war.

**Okagumbo**

Box 15

For example, 'Okagumbo' is an Oshiwambo word that means that small or little house. If a man lives in a house, it is called 'gumbo' which means house. The normal prefix 'oka-' denotes a diminutive. Any home in which the woman is the head, in which no man lives is called 'oka-' (small) 'gumbo' (house). The differentiation does not imply size, but rather status of the household.

SOURCE: Iliping, E.M., 1989:34-37



Approximately, 46 percent of Namibia's 43,823 disabled persons are women. Disabled persons account for 3.11 percent of Namibia's total population. About 80 percent of all disabled persons live in the rural areas, mostly in the northern regions of Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto. Many persons acquired disability as a result of the war for independence.<sup>149</sup> The operational area of the war was primarily in the north-central part of the country and many people received injuries from land mines, gun shots, and other war related wounds.<sup>150</sup> However, the main causes of disabilities are due to poor overall health and living conditions within the majority of Namibia's population. Disabilities are caused by infectious diseases, many of which are preventable through early immunisations. Thus, poor rates of immunisation and inadequate health care provision in the former 'homelands' during apartheid contributed greatly to the number of disabled persons in Namibia.<sup>151</sup>

The 1991 Population and Housing Census found that 57 percent of the disabled population between the ages of 15 and 65 are unemployed, with the remainder being self-employed (mostly in subsistence agriculture). Many disabled persons are also unpaid family workers, some are employed in the private sector and a few in government. The 1991 Census also found that 52 percent of disabled children above the age of six years have never attended school compared to only 22 percent of the general population. There are three schools for disabled children in Namibia: one for visual and hearing-impaired in the Oshana region, and two in Windhoek for children with severe learning disabilities.<sup>152</sup>

The major types of disabilities found in Namibia are: those with impaired limbs (38.1 percent), visu-

ally impaired (32.4 percent), mentally disabled (16.8 percent), hearing impaired (12.7 percent) and speech impaired (7.7 percent) For visually disabled and hearing impaired persons, women outnumber men; however, for all other categories men significantly outnumber women (Table 7). For example, 58.8 percent of speech-impaired, 57.7 percent of limb-impaired and 54.1 percent of mentally-disabled are men. Women with disabilities are also less likely to be employed than men with similar disabilities. Disabled men outnumber disabled women in all employment sectors except unpaid family work.<sup>153</sup>

Discrimination against disabled persons is a problem in Namibia which often goes unnoticed because much of it is subtle and unregulated by statute. Some families hide their disabled children due to shame and the belief that such children are a curse on the family. Disabled persons often have a very difficult time finding employment since people without disabilities tend to be unaware that many disabled persons are able to reach high educational levels and perform the same skills as anyone else, even though this may take greater effort and determination. Disabled women, especially in the African context, have a double handicap. Women in many of Namibia's communities (in fact in Africa as a whole) are still defined by their roles as child bearers and their domestic and agricultural activities. Therefore, a disabled woman who cannot fulfil these roles may face a lonely existence. Women with disabilities say it is much easier to be a man with the same disability in society and often men have an easier time getting around.<sup>154</sup>

### Conclusions

Namibia's social structures still bear the scars of German colonial and apartheid rule. Women's lives are still affected by discrimination based on old colonial thinking and

**Disabled Persons by Type and Gender** Table 7

Type of impairment	Women	Men
Visually Impaired	7,370	6,842
Hearing Impaired	2,876	2,674
Impaired Speech	1,403	2,001
Impaired Limbs	7,057	9,619
Mentally Impaired	3,380	3,982
Other	163	268

SOURCE: Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, 1995:12



cultural attitudes. Women are more likely than men to live in the rural areas where there is less access to social services. Namibia's regions show a marked gender bias where-by regions in the north have more women than men due to male migration patterns. Almost half of Namibian's people traditionally trace their kinship through matrilineage, but even in these systems women are subordinate to men. This subordination can manifest itself in male sexual exploitation of women and a low self-image by women. There are many different cultural groups in Namibia, the most numerous and widespread are the Owambo, Herero, Nama and Damara. Namibia is very much a Christian nation, which can also lead to discrimination against women on a moral-religious basis. Marriage rates for young women in Namibia are low. One possible explanation is that women are discriminated against in marriage and see more freedom in staying single.

#### ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Like many former colonies, Namibia inherited critical human resource problems at independence, including illiteracy and shortage of skilled workers. These problems persist and affect ordinary Namibians as well as the whole process of development. The system of 'bantu education' was designed to minimally educate Africans as workers for white production. Children of whites were the most advantaged and children of blacks were the most disadvantaged. The educational marginalisation was broad-based and included such areas as school facilities and equipment, teacher-training, language proficiency, educational materials, and available budget for education. The disadvantaged position of black and coloured people was entrenched in the apartheid system implemented in Namibia by the South African authorities. During the 1980's, the Department

of National Education or education departments under the various second-tier administrations were responsible for the education of their respective 'population groups'. The disadvantaged position of black Namibians did not change under this system.<sup>155</sup>

Although the apartheid system is now gone, many sectors of the population still experience educational marginalisation. This in-turn leads to economic and social marginalisation as only individuals with education have any prospects for obtaining well paid positions within the formal employment structure. Women, especially African women, were educationally disadvantaged under the apartheid system.<sup>156</sup> The educational system resulting from racially oriented administrations was heavily skewed in terms of the quantity and quality of educational resources.

Since most employment opportunities were for men, the education of women was viewed as unnecessary. Thus, women were not encouraged to further their education. Women were caught in a vicious circle. Because of limited employment opportunities women received poor education, which further limited their employment opportunities.

The following section evaluates women's access to basic formal education, tertiary education and other forms of non-traditional education such as special schools for the learning-disabled, adult literacy programmes and informal education. This section further considers women's education in the form of the socialisation process which teaches males and females how to be men and women.

#### Formal Basic Education

Currently, Namibia spends 10 percent of its GNP on education. The overall 1994 budget for education shows an average allocation per pupil was N\$1,772.<sup>197</sup> However, this

figure is misleading since there are sharp variations between educational regions (Table 8). Government acknowledges these gaps in expenditure and urgent steps are being taken to address these inequities.<sup>158</sup>

The number of pupils in government schools has increased since independence, precipitating an increase in the number of schools and teachers. For example, enrolment in the formal education programme grew from 372,572 in 1989 to 450,639 in 1993, an increase of almost 21 percent. This rapid growth has obviously placed a strain on government's ability to provide effective educational services. Since independence, government has greatly increased its capacity for collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data, making it possible to compare the relative positions of female and male learners in respect to a number of fundamental indicators of educational development.<sup>159</sup>

There are no marked gender stratification patterns in pre-primary and special education, as the lack of adequate pre-school and special educational facilities impacts both

Allocation per School Learner by Education Region

Table 8

Region	1993/94 (N\$)	1994/95 (N\$)	Increase/(Decrease) %
Katima Mulilo	1,480	1,348	(8.92)
Rundu	1,138	1,102	(3.16)
Ondangwa East	824	808	(1.94)
Ondangwa West	-	925	100
Khorixas	2,165	2,540	17.32
Windhoek	2,289	2,420	5.72
Keetmanshoop	2,345	2,376	1.32

SOURCE: MEC, Annual Report (1994), p5 as reported in DWA, 1995a:69

males and females,<sup>160</sup> (Table 9). In general there was a slightly lower percentage of female learners than male learners when comparing 1989 to 1993 enrolment figures. In Grades 1-12, overall female enrolment shows a small rise between the primary and secondary grades. For example, female enrolment in 1993 was between 48 percent and 50 percent in the lower primary grades compared to between 55 percent and 57 percent in senior secondary schools. However, these national totals conceal some regional differences.

At the primary level (excluding special schools), regional female enrolment in 1994 ranges from 48.7 percent to 51.1 percent. At the sec-

Learners by Grade, Year and Percent Females, 1989-93

Table 9

Grade	1989		1990		1991		1992		1993	
	Total	%F	Total	%F	Total	%F	Total	%F	Total	%F
Pre-primary	5,099	51	5,649	53	5,780	50	5,482	50	4,900	51
Grade 1	69,009	50	75,056	50	88,693	49	86,226	49	80,442	48
Grade 2	49,939	49	50,157	49	56,773	49	61,779	49	63,933	49
Grade 3	44,407	59	44,040	50	46,503	50	49,444	50	53,690	50
Grade 4	44,580	52	43,333	52	44,091	51	44,309	51	47,481	50
Grade 5	37,882	54	38,038	54	39,608	53	39,380	52	39,954	52
Grade 6	35,758	56	34,903	57	36,383	55	34,335	54	33,725	53
Grade 7	25,832	57	27,801	57	28,933	56	32,916	55	32,875	54
Grade 8	21,359	57	21,621	57	24,373	56	25,454	55	28,345	55
Grade 9	16,819	58	17,864	58	22,129	58	23,567	58	21,820	55
Grade 10	12,803	58	14,510	56	15,696	56	22,113	56	22,717	57
Grade 11	4,502	48	4,438	49	6,421	49	7,279	53	12,415	53
Grade 12	3,249	51	3,305	47	3,875	47	5,406	47	6,805	51
Other Grades	1,334	31	1,527	33	1,722	27	1,613	31	1,537	32
Total	372,572	53	382,445	53	420,980	52	439,925	51	450,639	51

SOURCE: MEC, Annual Report (1994), p5 as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:70



ondary level, the regional variations are more pronounced. In the educational region of Rundu, fewer than 40 percent of secondary school pupils are female. Furthermore, as shown in Table 12, although there is a female majority (52.8 percent) in the total national enrolments for Grade 12, the educational regions of Katima Mulilo, Rundu, Windhoek, Keetmanshoop and Head Office (the latter referring to schools for special education) all

have a minority of females at the Grade 12 level.<sup>161</sup> These figures indicate that not as many females as males are entering and completing the formal basic educational system.

For all Namibian schools, at all levels of learning, more female than male learners are promoted every year (62.7 percent as compared to 57.5 percent); however, there is a lower promotion rate for females in

Promotion Percentages of Learners in Grades 1-11, 1993-94

Table 10

Region		Grd 1 Grd 2	Grd 2 Grd 3	Grd 3 Grd 4	Grd 4 Grd 5	Grd 5 Grd 6	Grd 6 Grd 7	Grd 7 Grd 8	Grd 8 Grd 9	Grd 9 Grd 10	Grd 10 Grd 11	Grd 11 Grd 12
Namibia Total	T	60.1	71.4	76.5	71.0	71.6	80.1	71.7	70.2	77.7	49.0	94.2
	M	57.7	69.3	74.3	68.3	70.1	79.6	72.5	71.2	76.6	58.5	95.9
	F	62.7	73.7	78.7	73.6	73.0	80.7	71.1	69.4	76.1	41.8	92.8
Katima Mulilo	T	72.9	81.9	80.3	77.5	78.9	82.1	79.9	74.2	81.3	46.5	100.3
	M	70.1	83.1	79.3	76.7	79.6	81.5	79.4	77.5	81.0	50.2	100.1
	F	75.7	80.7	81.4	78.3	78.1	82.7	80.5	70.9	81.6	42.4	100.7
Rundu	T	53.3	73.0	73.4	70.3	69.9	79.7	59.5	42.8	59.9	77.1	94.9
	M	52.6	73.1	72.9	72.4	73.9	82.2	65.3	47.2	64.9	83.6	95.1
	F	54.0	72.9	73.9	68.2	65.9	77.0	52.7	36.9	51.5	65.7	94.2
Ondangwa East	T	52.7	64.8	73.1	66.7	69.3	78.3	71.8	74.7	76.6	29.9	99.0
	M	50.2	62.5	70.2	64.0	68.3	78.0	72.5	76.4	81.8	34.2	100.8
	F	55.3	67.2	75.7	69.1	70.2	78.5	71.3	73.7	73.6	27.4	97.6
Ondangwa West	T	55.2	65.1	72.9	64.8	67.3	76.7	69.9	72.1	79.6	32.2	92.5
	M	52.8	61.8	70.2	60.0	63.0	75.0	70.1	72.4	80.6	42.7	94.9
	F	57.9	68.9	75.6	69.7	70.4	78.2	69.7	71.9	78.9	26.5	91.1
Khorixas	T	73.3	82.2	82.7	75.3	75.4	85.0	72.8	73.3	82.9	89.6	91.7
	M	71.6	80.7	80.5	74.4	75.4	85.9	72.8	74.7	84.4	97.7	93.8
	F	75.0	83.9	84.8	76.1	75.3	84.1	72.8	72.1	81.6	82.2	89.8
Windhoek	T	80.4	85.6	84.1	79.2	73.8	82.9	76.3	70.7	77.0	79.4	92.7
	M	77.2	84.0	81.6	76.4	70.9	80.7	77.5	72.5	79.9	84.2	94.1
	F	83.9	87.4	86.7	81.8	76.6	85.0	75.2	69.2	74.5	74.7	91.3
Keetmanshoop	T	80.4	84.5	84.4	85.0	79.7	85.4	69.1	67.7	75.3	73.3	90.7
	M	77.5	81.3	82.2	82.3	77.2	86.1	67.7	69.0	76.5	76.9	91.7
	F	83.4	87.8	86.9	87.7	82.1	84.6	70.4	66.6	74.2	69.8	89.5
Head Office	T	51.3	80.8	88.4	42.9	50.0	64.0	192.3	73.6	106.7	40.9	82.1
	M	45.8	87.9	83.3	32.0	44.8	57.9	170.6	66.3	95.0	36.2	85.0
	F	60.0	68.4	100.0	70.0	61.5	83.3	233.3	94.6	119.2	50.0	75.0

T: Total

M: Male

F: Female

Note: Promotion rates are the percentages of learners in a grade in 1993 who were promoted into the next grade in 1994. Information for Walvis Bay is excluded because statistics for those schools are not available for 1993. Rates above 100% are due to migration or learners returning to school after having previously left.

SOURCE: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994:136 as reprinted in DWA, 1995a:76



the higher grades (Table 10). When looking at the 'Namibia Total' for this table an interesting trend may be seen. In every grade, starting with grade one to two, females are more likely to be promoted than males, at about grade six to seven the promotion rate is approximately equal and thereafter, male learners are more likely to be promoted than female learners. The difference in promotion rates by gender is substantial in many educational

regions. For example, in Rundu Grade 10-11 promotion rate for males is 83.6 percent while for females it is 65.7 percent, and for Khorixas for the same grade 97.7 percent of males are promoted compared to 82.2 percent of females.<sup>162</sup> The MEC figures for promotion rates in 1995 show that more females than males are promoted up through grade five when the rates even out at grade six and from grade seven on, more males

Changes in Female Learners by Phase and Region, 1990-94

Table 11

Region	Phase	1990 Total	%F	1991 Total	%F	1992 Total	%F	1993 Total	%F	1994 Total	%F	Annual Growth Rate
Katima Mulilo	Primary	21 453	48.7	22 310	48.3	22 715	48.6	22 525	48.7	23 068	48.7	1.8%
	Secondary	6 644	44.6	7 744	45.6	8 978	45.6	9 842	45.8	10 767	47.2	12.8%
	Other	228	53.1	172	51.7	115	51.3	126	55.6	61	59.0	-28.1%
	Total	8 325	47.7	30 226	47.6	31 808	47.8	32 493	47.8	33 896	48.3	4.6%
Keetmanshoop	Primary	23 637	50.2	23 103	50.1	23 800	49.8	23 786	49.6	24 142	49.5	0.5%
	Secondary	7 100	52.2	7 533	50.2	7 488	51.4	7 493	51.9	8 131	51.9	3.4%
	Other	1 115	49.1	1 258	47.9	1 180	48.1	985	46.5	997	44.9	-2.8%
	Total	31 852	50.6	31 894	50.1	32 468	50.1	32 264	50.0	33 270	49.9	1.1%
Khorixas	Primary	20 357	51.0	20 988	51.1	20 961	50.4	21 132	50.0	24 718	50.3	5.0%
	Secondary	4 911	51.0	5 314	52.2	5 796	52.6	6 626	52.6	9 372	52.2	17.5%
	Other	543	50.3	566	48.1	423	45.9	438	47.7	603	45.4	2.7%
	Total	25 811	51.0	26 868	51.2	27 180	50.8	28 196	50.6	34 693	50.7	7.7%
Ondangwa East	Primary	73 370	55.4	87 812	52.5	91 906	51.9	92 715	51.6	96 999	51.1	7.2%
	Secondary	8 188	64.2	11 906	62.8	14 985	61.2	16 705	60.2	18 718	59.7	23.0%
	Other	160	48.1	135	49.6	115	44.3	111	42.3	169	43.2	1.4%
	Total	81 718	56.2	99 853	52.8	107 006	53.2	109 531	52.9	115 886	52.5	9.1%
Ondangwa West	Primary	97 720	52.1	106 834	50.5	106 178	50.1	105 699	49.8	107 382	49.4	2.4%
	Secondary	17 216	66.5	20 886	64.3	25 904	62.4	29 058	61.2	30 438	60.1	15.3%
	Other	398	36.2	381	16.0	2702	8.9	191	19.9	42	54.8	-43.0%
	Total	115 336	54.2	128 101	52.6	132 352	52.5	134 948	52.2	137 862	51.8	4.6%
Rundu	Primary	28 396	50.5	29 361	49.8	30 845	49.7	32 939	49.6	35 220	49.5	5.5%
	Secondary	2 712	35.0	3 456	37.4	4 106	37.8	4 667	37.3	5 270	37.5	18.1%
	Other	1 620	56.9	1 405	47.6	1 391	48.7	1 208	51.6	807	53.4	-16.0%
	Total	32 728	49.5	34 222	48.5	36 342	48.3	38 814	48.2	41 297	48.1	6.0%
Windhoek	Primary	48 595	50.6	50 576	50.5	52 006	50.4	53 304	50.1	55 137	50.1	3.2%
	Secondary	14 968	51.7	15 655	51.2	16 562	51.8	17 711	52.1	19 076	51.8	6.3%
	Other	3 112	45.5	3 585	43.9	3 601	44.2	3 378	45.2	3 228	47.9	0.9%
	Total	66 675	50.6	69 816	50.4	72 169	50.4	74 393	50.3	77 439	50.4	3.8%
Total	Primary	313 528	52.0	340 984	50.8	348 411	50.5	352 100	50.2	366 666	50.0	4.0%
	Secondary	61 741	56.0	72 494	55.6	83 819	55.4	92 102	55.0	101 772	54.5	13.3%
	Other	7 176	48.7	7 502	44.5	7 095	45.4	6 437	46.2	5 905	47.9	-4.8%
	Total	382 445	52.6	420 980	51.5	439 325	51.3	450 639	51.1	474 343	50.9	5.5%

SOURCE: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994:126 as reprinted from DWA, 1995A:72



Enrolments of Learners in Grades 1-12 for 1994												Table 12	
Regions	M/F & %F	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12
Total	Male	41 075	33 366	29 048	26 582	21 056	16 299	15 917	13 792	10 647	10 116	5 864	5 843
	Female	37 673	31 752	28 522	26 803	22 307	18 010	18 256	16 134	13 156	13 995	5 687	6 536
	% Female	47.8	48.8	49.5	50.2	51.4	52.5	53.4	53.9	55.3	58.0	49.2	52.8
Katima Mulilo	Male	2 076	1 796	1 795	1 799	1 558	1 396	1 403	1 362	1 209	1 445	732	939
	Female	2 012	1 882	1 675	1 674	1 435	1 269	1 298	1 295	1 146	1 451	581	607
	% Female	49.2	51.2	48.3	48.2	47.9	47.6	48.1	48.7	48.7	50.1	44.2	39.3
Rundu	Male	4 864	3 352	2 814	2 299	1 775	1 316	1 350	1 280	687	473	480	393
	Female	4 671	3 371	2 885	2 366	1 726	1 209	1 222	957	426	243	203	148
	% Female	49.0	50.1	50.6	50.7	49.3	47.9	47.5	42.8	38.3	33.9	30.6	27.4
Ondangwa E.	Male	12 898	9 687	7 639	6 448	4 560	3 246	2 946	2 405	1 830	1 873	573	869
	Female	11 905	9 455	7 936	7 154	5 257	4 012	3 856	3 302	2 852	3 094	749	1 171
	% Female	48.0	49.4	51.0	52.6	53.5	55.3	56.7	57.9	60.9	62.3	56.7	57.4
Ondangwa W.	Male	12 104	10 246	8 657	8 241	6 018	4 546	4 408	3 572	2 834	3 063	1 242	1 409
	Female	10 461	8 961	8 311	7 990	6 474	5 204	5 588	4 705	4 033	5 599	1 476	2 457
	% Female	46.4	46.7	49.0	49.2	51.8	53.4	55.9	56.8	58.7	64.6	54.3	63.6
Khorixas	Male	2 101	1 893	1 901	1 829	1 676	1 465	1 423	1 292	1 061	863	799	462
	Female	2 064	1 869	1 845	1 888	1 728	1 503	1 533	1 444	1 166	991	773	521
	% Female	49.6	49.7	49.3	50.8	50.8	50.6	51.9	52.8	52.4	53.5	49.2	53.0
Windhoek	Male	4 980	4 398	4 294	4 164	3 841	2 911	2 932	2 683	2 091	1 632	1 455	1 243
	Female	4 615	4 285	4 017	4 129	4 027	3 288	3 256	3 042	2 466	1 762	1 345	1 163
	% Female	48.1	49.3	48.3	49.8	51.2	53.0	52.6	53.1	54.1	51.9	48.0	48.3
Keetmanshoop	Male	2 031	1 975	1 915	1 772	1 614	1 399	1 444	1 159	906	745	581	511
	Female	1 930	1 917	1 839	1 588	1 650	1 517	1 498	1 360	1 030	822	545	463
	% Female	48.7	49.3	49.0	47.3	50.6	52.0	50.9	54.0	53.2	52.5	48.4	47.5
Head Office	Male	21	19	33	30	14	20	11	39	29	24	22	17
	Female	15	12	14	14	10	8	5	29	37	33	15	6
	% Female	41.7	38.7	29.8	31.8	41.7	28.6	31.3	42.6	56.1	57.9	40.5	26.1

Note: "Head Office" refers to the administrators of schools for the handicapped and other learners requiring special conditions. These schools are administered centrally.

SOURCE: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994:132 as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:73

than females are promoted.<sup>163</sup> The reasons for the high failure rate for females when they get to higher grades are not known. More research is required to determine the causes for females having lower promotion and higher repeat rates than males once they reach higher grades. Some speculation is that females are more likely to have significant household tasks which require their attention and keep them from their studies.

In grades one through four, male students are more likely than female students to drop out of

school; however, once the learners have reached grade five, the tide begins to turn and female students begin to drop-out more frequently than males (Table 14).

There is a significant drop-out rate for females once they reach puberty, as shown in Table 15. In grade eight, there are 1.1 percent more female than male drop-outs, in grade nine there are 3.4 percent more and in grade 11 there are 2.8 percent more female than male drop-outs. There are also regional differences in these drop-out rates. For example, in Ondangwa where girls are in the



Learners in Grade 12 by Gender and Subject Choice for 1993

Table 13

Subject	Girls		Boys		Percentage	
	#	%	#	%	Girls	Boys
All subjects	20,607	100.0	19,669	100.0	51.2	48.8
Economics and Social Studies	5,733	27.8	5,337	27.1	51.8	48.2
Accounting	572	2.8	443	2.3	56.4	43.6
Business Economics	2,117	10.3	1,799	9.1	54.1	45.9
Business Management	76	.4	73	0.4	51.0	49.0
Economics	1,058	5.1	1,129	5.7	48.4	51.6
Geography	357	1.7	649	3.3	35.5	64.5
History	1,553	7.5	1,244	6.3	55.5	44.5
Languages and Literature	7,014	34.0	6,642	33.8	51.4	48.6
Afrikaans	1,457	7.1	1,436	7.3	50.4	49.6
English	3,477	16.9	3,313	16.8	51.2	48.8
French	2	0.0	3	0.0	40.0	60.0
German	146	0.7	102	0.5	58.9	41.1
Kwangali	20	0.1	75	0.4	21.1	78.9
Oshikwanyama	333	1.6	286	1.5	53.8	46.2
Losi	388	1.9	627	3.2	38.2	61.8
Oshindonga	1,191	5.8	800	4.1	59.8	40.2
Mathematics and Science	6,432	31.2	6,805	34.6	48.6	51.4
Agricultural Science	1,739	8.4	1,961	10.0	47.0	53.0
Biology	3,248	15.8	2,953	15.0	52.4	47.6
Computer Studies	10	0.0	24	0.1	29.4	70.6
Mathematics	933	4.5	1,159	5.9	44.6	55.4
Physical Science	502	2.4	708	3.6	41.5	58.5
Technical Studies	3	0.0	264	1.3	1.1	98.9
Electrical Work	0	0.0	3	0.0	0.0	100.0
Electronics	0	0.0	4	0.0	0.0	100.0
Engineering Drawing	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Engineering Science	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fitting and Turning	0	0.0	5	0.0	0.0	100.0
Motor Body Repair	0	0.0	10	0.1	0.0	100.0
Motor Mechanic	0	0.0	22	0.1	0.0	100.0
Panelbeating and Spraying	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Plumbing and Sheetmetal Work	0	0.0	4	0.0	0.0	100.0
Technical Drawing	3	0.1	99	0.5	2.9	97.1
Welding and Metalwork	0	0.0	4	0.0	0.0	100.0
Woodwork	0	0.0	113	0.6	0.0	100.0
Vocational Studies	804	3.9	144	0.7	84.8	15.2
Agricultural Production & Farming	77	0.4	101	0.5	43.3	56.7
Domestic Science	259	1.3	5	0.0	98.1	1.9
Needlework and Clothing	44	0.2	0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Practical Agriculture	0	0.0	20	0.1	0.0	100.0
Shorthand and Typing	424	2.1	18	0.1	95.9	4.1
Other	622	3.0	477	2.4	56.6	43.4
Art	34	0.2	13	0.1	72.3	27.7
Biblical Studies	582	2.8	463	2.4	55.7	44.3
Music	5	0.1	1	0.0	83.3	16.7

SOURCE: MEC Annual Education Census for 1993 as reprinted from CSO, 1995:47-48



**Drop-out Rates per 100 Pupils by Grade 1-7 and Gender** Table 14

Grade	Females	Males
Grade 1	9.1	9.7
Grade 2	4.3	6.3
Grade 3	2.2	4.1
Grade 4	4.6	6.2
Grade 5	6.9	4.9
Grade 6	6.5	4.9
Grade 7	9.9	8.1

SOURCE: MEC Annual Education Census (1993) as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:78

**Drop-out Rates per 100 Pupils by Grade 8-11 and Gender** Table 15

Grade	Females	Males
Grade 8	10.7	9.6
Grade 9	10.2	6.8
Grade 10	22.3	20.5
Grade 11	8.6	5.8

SOURCE: MEC Annual Education Census (1993) as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:78

majority, there is a shortfall from grade 10 onwards. The situation in the Rundu region is serious where the drop-out rate for females from grade 8 onwards is increasing. In some districts in the Rundu region there are hardly any females in senior secondary education.<sup>164</sup> The MEC figures for 1995 show a similar trend to those already discussed for female drop-out rates. In the lower grades, males are more likely than females to drop-out, but in grades 10 and 11 females are more likely to drop-out than males.<sup>165</sup>

At a national workshop on marginalized children held in 1992, it was stated that children often drop-out of school to assist their mothers with child-raising, subsistence farming and household chores. The drop-out rate is linked not only to inadequate resources and poorly-trained teachers, but also to irregular school attendance and the physical and mental fatigue of children who are effectively workers and part-time students. Community pressure to start a family and work is also very strong, in part due to lack of food security.<sup>166</sup> As well as significant work responsibilities in the household, teenage pregnancy has frequently been mentioned as a major contributing factor to the high female school drop-out rate.<sup>167</sup> Currently schoolgirls who become pregnant are expelled from school for a period of one or two years. Thereafter the girl might be allowed by the principal of a different school to resume her education. If she is rejected, there is no recourse for re-admittance to school. She must join informal education classes. Unfortunately, the schoolboys or teachers who impregnate the girl seldom face any consequences, although a few schools do take action.

Gender stereotyping is evident by examining the subjects which are most often taken by females and males. For example, 35.5 percent of geography students are females

compared to 64.5 percent who are males; 21.1 percent of RuKwangali (a language spoken in the Kavango region) students are females compared to 78.9 percent who are males; 84.8 percent of agricultural products and farming students are females compared to 15.2 percent who are males; 48.6 percent of mathematics and science students are females compared to 51.4 percent who are males; virtually all students of technical studies, welding and automotive related vocational training skills are boys; and 29.4 percent of computer science students are females compared to 70.6 percent who are males.<sup>168</sup> In the traditionally female domains of domestic science, needlework and shorthand typing, females are by far in the majority. It is interesting to note that many more females than males study art and music. This may be because these subjects are regarded as 'soft' options of no real economic value.

It is suggested that schools attempt to alter this pattern by introducing appropriate career guidance counselling for girls. In an age where mathematics, science, computer know-how and other technical skills are often a prerequisite for job eligibility, these are highly disturbing statistics for females. The Ministry of Basic Education has embarked on a nation-wide campaign to sensitise school principals about the need to eliminate gender stereotyping in course selection.

### Tertiary Education

At the tertiary levels of education gender stereotyped learning is still evident. For example, more women are enrolled in formal art courses although this may be due to a perception of art as a 'soft' subject. The student intake for the College of Arts was 70 percent women and 30 percent men. The college is subsidised by the MHEVTST, and offers low tuition. The University of Namibia has a more balanced gender enrolment in its

**Learners in Technical Institutions  
by Gender and Subject for 1993**

Table 16

Subjects	Women		Men		Percentages	
	#	%	#	%	Women	Men
All subjects	438	100	1,574	100	21.8	78.2
Languages						
Afrikaans	47	10.7	96	6.1	32.9	67.1
English	47	10.7	96	6.1	32.9	67.1
Business and Social Studies						
Accounting	23	5.3	5	0.3	82.1	17.9
Business Management	9	2.1	0	0	100	0
Office Administration	7	1.6	0	0	100	0
Communication and Department	55	12.6	49	3.1	52.9	47.1
Enviromental Studies	11	2.5	0	0	100	0
Mathematics and Science						
Mathematics	16	3.7	288	18.3	5.3	94.7
Functional Mathematics	0	0.0	11	0.7	0	100
Computer Studies	7	1.6	0	0	100	0
Biology	7	1.6	0	0	100	0
Ecology	0	0.0	10	0.6	0	100
General Science						
Art of Entertainment	22	5.0	0	0	100	0
Bricklaying and Plastering	5	1.1	46	2.9	9.8	90.2
Carpentry and Joinery						
Educare	7	1.6	0	0	100	0
Electricity	0	0.0	6	0.4	0	100
Engineering Science	16	3.7	275	17.5	5.5	94.5
Fashion and Fabric						
Fitting and Turning	0	0.0	3	0.2	0	100
Hairdressing	18	4.1	0	0	100	0
Metal Work	0	0.0	7	0.4	0	100
Motor Body Repair	0	0.0	3	0.2	0	100
Motor Mechanic	0	0.0	102	6.5	0	100
Needlework and clothing	18	4.1	0	0	100	0
Office Practice	42	9.6	0	0	100	0
Panelbeating and Spray Painting	0	0.0	3	0.2	0	100
Plumbing and Draining						
Plumbing and Sheetworking	0	0.0	50	3.2	0	100
Technical Drawing	16	3.7	299	19.0	5.1	94.9
Technical Theory Practice	16	3.7	152	9.7	9.5	90.5
Typing	49	11.2	0	0	100	0
Welding and Metal Work	0	0.0	40	2.5	0	100
Woodworking	0	0.0	33	2.1	0	100

SOURCE: MEC Annual Education Census for 1993 as reprinted from CSO, 1995:49-50



Full-time Enrolment by Gender  
and Course at UNAM for 1993

Table 17

Course	Women	Men	Women %	Men %
Total # of Enrolments	1, 556	1, 039	61.1	38.9
All Courses	100.0	100.0		
Arts	12.1	15.7	53.6	46.4
Bachelor of Arts	8.0	13.8	46.4	53.6
Bachelor of Arts (Social Work)	2.3	0.9	80.0	20.0
Diploma in Social Work	1.2	0.3	85.7	14.3
Bachelor of Arts (Hons.)	0.6	0.8	55.6	44.4
Economics & Management Science	7.6	21.2	34.9	65.1
Bachelor of Commerce	4.0	10.0	37.3	62.7
Bachelor of Economics	2.2	5.9	35.8	64.2
Bachelor of Administration	1.4	5.3	28.6	71.2
Education	39.1	44.9	59.9	40.1
Bachelor of Education	1.7	4.2	37.1	62.9
HED (Secondary)	6.1	12.4	42.4	57.6
HED (Primary)	0.8	0.8	60.0	40.0
HED (Postgraduate)	1.4	3.2	40.0	60.0
HED (Technical)	0.0	0.5	0.0	100.0
HED (Post Diploma)	0.2	0.1	75.0	25.0
ED (Primary)	2.1	0.7	110.0	-10.0
ED Primary (Academy)	3.4	2.8	64.6	35.4
HPEC	23.5	20.3	69.4	30.6
Health	38.2	8.1	87.6	12.4
University Diploma	28.8	5.5	33.7	11.3
Nursing Science Diploma	3.5	1.7	75.3	24.7
Nursing and Midwifery Science	0.6	0.1	90.0	10.0
Midwifery Science	0.3	0.4	50.0	50.0
National Diploma in Radiography				
Advanced Diploma in Nursing Science	0.4	0.0	100.0	0.0
and Critical Care	0.4	0.1	85.7	14.3
Nursing Education	0.6	0.0	100.0	0.0
Primary Health Care	3.0	0.2	95.9	4.1
Bachelor of Nursing Science	0.5	0.0	100.0	0.0
Bachelor of Nursing Science (Hons.)	0.2	0.0	100.0	0.0
Masters in Nursing Science	0.0	0.1	0.0	100.0
Doctor in Nursing Science				
Science	2.2	8.0	26.8	73.2
Bachelor of Science	2.2	8.0	26.8	73.2
School of Arts	0.8	2.1	35.3	64.7
Practical Certificate (Music)	0.8	2.1	35.3	64.7

ED = Education Diploma  
 HED = Higher Education Diploma  
 SEC = Secondary Education Diploma  
 HPEC = Higher Primary Education Certificate

SOURCE: University of Namibia as reprinted from CSO, 1995:51-52

Department of Visual and Performing Arts, but women still constitute the majority of students.

Only 21.8 percent of students at Technical Institutions are women compared to 78.2 percent who are men. The distribution by subject choice indicates that women do 'feminine' courses such as hairdressing and typing, whereas men are predisposed to courses like plumbing and bricklaying. In addition, more women are enrolled in clerical fields and office practice, whereas there are more men enrolled in maths and sciences courses. It is encouraging to note that more women (61.1 percent) than men (38.9 percent) are enrolled at the University of Namibia; however, gender stereotyping in course selection is also evident at this level. Women are concentrated in gender stereotyped degrees such as social work, primary teaching and nursing degrees, whereas men are enrolled in a wider variety of career degrees such as commerce and science degrees.<sup>169</sup>

### Non-Traditional Education

Table 18 reflects enrolment in all special schools, which includes schools for children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. No gender-related problems

have come to light with regard to special schools, although male enrolment is slightly higher than the female. There are a variety of special programmes which are gender-sensitive. For example, the division of diagnostic, advisory and training services within the directorate of special education programmes have been actively involved with therapy at the women and child protection units.<sup>170</sup>

Literacy rates for Namibia are difficult to come by since the previous administration left no figures but it is estimated at about 65 percent of the adult population, according to the 1991 census.<sup>171</sup> MEC has made a concerted effort to improve literacy in Namibia and it is encouraging to note that this is one of the most gender-sensitive areas of education in Namibia. Table 19 shows enrolment in the National Literacy Programme (NLP) as of July 1994

**Enrolment in Special Schools by Gender, 1993**

Table 18

Description	Females		Males		Total %	
		%		%	Females	Males
All Special School	354	100	560	100	38.7	61.3
Special School	138	39.0	198	35.4	41.1	58.9
Special Classes	163	46.0	301	53.8	35.1	64.9
Specialised Education	53	15.0	61	10.9	49.5	53.5

SOURCE: MEC, Annual Education Census (1993) as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:86

**Enrolment in National Literacy Programme by Gender and Region**

Table 19

Region	Participants							
	Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3		All Stages	
	#M	#F	#M	#F	#M	#F	#M	#F
Katima Mulilo	257	679	333	817	172	325	762	1,821
Keetmanshoop	184	319	76	181	117	197	377	697
Khorixas	205	243	218	303	198	207	621	753
Ondangwa East	1,324	5,846	436	1,786	174	947	1,934	8,579
Ondangwa West	599	5,050	226	2,651	254	1,467	1,079	9,168
Rundu	475	1,985	313	1,415	186	299	974	3,699
Windhoek	677	832	322	384	387	325	1,386	1,541
Total	3,721	14,954	1,924	7,537	1,488	3,767	7,133	26,258
Stage Total	18,675		9,461		5,255		33,391	

Stage 1 = Persons can read and write in their mother language

Stage 2 = Persons are fluent in their mother language and are able to get useful information from books

Stage 3 = Persons are introduced to basic English and this is equivalent to grade 4 in primary

SOURCE: Ministry of Education and Culture, Department of Adult Education, July 1994 as reported in CSO, 1995a:42



according to region and gender. Of a total of 33,391 persons enrolled in the programme, 26,258 (78.6 percent) were women. Voluntary testing in 1994 involving 69 percent of the total enrolment in the NLPN showed that of those who passed, 80 percent were women while only 20 percent were men (this figure was in proportion to the total enrolment figures).

According to figures from the NLPN, 80-90 percent of literacy learners in Ondangwa and Rundu are women, in Caprivi 71 percent are women, in Keetmanshoop 72 percent are women and in Windhoek 50 percent are women.<sup>172</sup> The high level of females attending adult literacy programmes may be due to the fact that girls were not dropping out of school until late in their basic education, so more women than men may be closer to finishing their secondary education. In addition, drop-out rates in this programme are higher among men than women.<sup>173</sup> Given women's previously educationally disadvantaged position, their success in the NLPN is a step forward for women looking to improve their education and possibly their economic situation. However, one area that has yet to be addressed is high incidents of illiterate persons living on commercial farms and the lack of literacy programmes to target commercial farm workers.

Limited access to educational and technical training is a major constraint for women, especially those who do not qualify for admission to formal post-secondary training. As was mentioned at the gender workshop organized by the DWA in February 1994,<sup>174</sup> women are not encouraged to enrol for 'hard' courses such as welding, plumbing and pipe fitting, carpentry and joinery since job opportunities for women in these areas are very limited. The reason given for the discouragement is that employers are not willing to employ women trained in these fields as they

believe the women do not have the stamina and cannot 'rough' it like men.<sup>175</sup> However, efforts have been made by some private sector organizations such as the Rossing Foundation and the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) to provide informal vocational training to women. According to the national priorities for women in development workshop held in 1992, it was pointed out that domestic violence against women makes them unproductive, since women's fear of their men keeps them out of participation in training programmes and income-generating activities. The workshop, however, recommended that men should be educated to accept women as equals.<sup>176</sup>

### Socialisation Processes

Socialisation processes take place in families, schools, churches and other social institutions. Through the process of socialisation, gender roles, stereotypes and ideologies are imparted to both the sexes. Society moulds new members into specific roles which are considered proper for that specific gender. The gender socialisation process starts almost as soon as a child is born and is reinforced and continues throughout the person's life. For example, in Owambo traditional society after a new-born baby is presented to the community, it is shown the cattle enclosure if it is a boy or shown the milk calabashes if it is a girl.<sup>177</sup> During early childhood a child may do a variety of tasks around the homestead, but as the child grows it is directed more and more towards gender-specific tasks, such as boys herding cattle and girls fetching water for cooking.

When children do not perform their appropriate gender roles they are sanctioned by the society. For example, if a girl performs a stereotyped male behaviour other children will laugh at her and she may be reprimanded by her family members to 'behave like a lady'. In addition to gender socialisation taking place

within the family and culture, gender differentiation is also taught in the schools. In the apartheid era, there were many hidden agendas within bantu education in Namibia, such as blacks only needed to be educated enough to be labourers and they should not question authority. Another such hidden agenda was to teach people their proper gender roles, such as girls should be quiet and boys should answer questions. There is a need for re-socialisation and re-orientation of the society on gender equity perspective.

### Conclusions

Women in most educational settings in Namibia are disadvantaged. The apartheid system of bantu education doubly discriminated against women; first on the basis of their race and secondly on the basis of their gender. Women were not encouraged to seek education since the purpose of bantu education was to produce labourers for white production. There are fewer females than males accessing and completing the basic formal education system in Namibia. Female learners in Namibia's formal educational system are less likely than males to drop-out during their primary grades, but this trend changes as females drop-out at the secondary levels, probably due to pregnancy and work demands placed on them by the family. Also at the secondary school levels males are more likely than females to be promoted to the next grade. The educational curriculum is still gender-biased at both the secondary and tertiary school levels where females are enrolling in stereotyped career courses such as needlework, nursing and other 'soft' subjects. Part of the reason for women's enrolment in stereotyped courses is the socialisation they have undergone through their families, schools and other social institutions. Females are taught almost from birth how to be girls and later women. However, women are taking advantage of adult literacy programmes to fur-

ther their education, which will hopefully improve their prospects for employment.

### WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

Namibia does not currently have a film industry and the only broadcasting is the parastatal, NBC. There are few local productions for television and radio. There are seven television channels available, all but one South African. NBC radio broadcasts services in nine local languages (Oshiwambo, Otjiherero, Damara/Nama, Afrikaans, German, Tswana, Lozi, RuKwangali and the National Service is in English). Recently, a community-based radio station, Katutura Community Radio, was opened. This station broadcasts mainly in English and orients its programming to teenagers. Namibia has three daily newspapers, *The Namibian*, *The Windhoek Advertiser* and *Die Republikein*; one weekly newspaper, *New Era* which is government-owned; and a weekend newspaper, *The Observer*. There are some occasional magazines produced in Namibia. Two of the most popular are the *Namibia Review* and *Sister Namibia*. The following section examines the portrayal of women by the media and women's positions and decision-making powers within the media.

### Portrayal of Women in Media

The portrayal of women in the media depends on the source, editor and journalists involved. For example, the weekend *The Observer* typically has 'sensational' stories of divorces, suicides and murders. The focus seems to be on shock value. But worst of all they always print pictures of nude or half-nude women on the back page, reinforcing the stereotype of women as nothing more than sex objects. In contrast, *Sister Namibia* is a women's publication dedicated to the advancement of women's causes. Women's access to media is also dependent on the source.



Although the portrayal of women by the Namibian media has not yet been studied, age-old gender stereotypes prevail. As previously mentioned the NBC purchases western-style television programmes which portray women as 'superwomen' but even this portrayal does not discard women stereotyped as mothers and housewives. The NBC also broadcasts a daily programme called 'Women's World', which focuses mainly on recipes and other household issues. TV advertisements typically show men promoting business concerns and women promoting household products. Many advertisements also use women and sexuality to sell products, while reinforcing the ideology of women as sex objects. Advertisements for 'do-it-yourself' household equipment and cars portray both men and women, but men still take centre stage when it comes to more complex equipment or machinery. The women promoting up-market cars are inevitably beautiful models posing as business executives or young wives with rich husbands. A great deal of advertising depicts the family situation with dad playing with the kids while mom performs household chores. This kind of media stereotyping is still a worldwide phenomenon (Namibia is no exception) and is partly biased by public taste and perception.

Women are generally represented in NBC television panel discussions and other current affairs programmes, except for those focusing on economic issues where women are entirely absent. The coverage of gender-related issues in both print and broadcast media has shown marked progress since independence, although there is still much room for improvement. The NBC has made an effort to deal with gender issues with a series of television and radio programmes which have examined such issues as maintenance, abortion, prostitution, land and law reforms aimed at

realising gender equality. The print media has given increased coverage to women's issues since independence, urgent issues such as violence against women have received prominent and consistent attention in all the local newspapers. As previously mentioned, *The Observer* consistently has scantily-clad women as a weekly feature, even though many women's and religious organisations have complained about the exhibition of such material as inappropriate for a newspaper. However, government is in the process of drafting a new legislation to regulate pornography, especially when it is available to children.<sup>178</sup>

The DWA sponsored a workshop on the issue of women and the media. Among other things, the workshop participants agreed to establish a monitoring mechanism to gather more detailed information on the portrayal of women by the media.

#### Access to and Control over Media

According to statistics recently published by the UN, Namibia employs a high percentage of women in its various media. In the print media, 46.6 percent of all employees are women, with 32 percent of senior management positions being held by women. These figures are among the highest in the world. Furthermore, 25 percent of all radio and television employees are women, with 11 percent of senior management positions held by women (Table 20).<sup>179</sup>

Although it is harder to determine the influence these women have, one national daily newspaper, *The Namibian*, is edited by a woman.<sup>180</sup> In radio and television there are basically no women in top management positions such as production executives, heads of departments and programme controllers.<sup>181</sup> The NBC, a government-funded parastatal, currently has four women on its 11-member board (36.36 per-

cent), less than the four out of nine member board (44.44 percent) appointed shortly after independence. No women hold top management positions with the NBC and in approximately 40 middle-level management posts, only five (12.5 percent) are women. However, the NANAWO has initiated a section at NBC to work on women's interests within the organization. The results of this effort are yet to be evaluated. It is possible that women will find more space for their issues to be heard in future through the efforts of NGOs.

As previously mentioned, the magazine *Sister Namibia* is published by a small group of women and covers issues of relevance to women in simple language and has a national circulation of about 1,500. In addition, post independence legislation now allows for private and community-based groups to apply for radio and television broadcast licences, although this avenue has not yet been attempted by women's organisations. Despite the absence of women in decision-making positions within the media, the coverage of gender-related issues in the print and broadcast media has shown progress since independence, although there is still room for improvement.

The DWA, in conjunction with its sectoral committee on women in media, sponsored a workshop arranged by the Namibia Media Women's Association. The purpose of the workshop was to empower media women by sharing information and strategies. This workshop, which took place in October 1995, examined both women employed in various positions within the media and the portrayal of women by media. Presentations at the workshop also addressed legal and social issues which are particularly relevant to women, such as the laws on marriage and the impact of AIDS in Namibia.

Women in Broadcasting and the Press, 1993

Table 20

Description	% in all positions	Production	Creative	Technical	Admin	Senior Management
Broadcast Media	25	28	17	3	61	11
Print Media	47	34	6	28	69	32

SOURCE: United Nations 1995:169-170 as reprinted in DWA, 1995a:58

### Conclusions

Although there are a fair number of women working in the media in Namibia, they are not typically in decision-making positions. This could be one explanation for gender stereotyping of women in the media. The NBC gives women time on talk shows and panel discussions, but not always in equal time to men. Many shows broadcast on the NBC reinforce gender stereotypes. Most Namibian newspapers give space to women's issues and make an effort to be gender sensitive, with the exception of the weekend newspaper, *The Observer*. On the other hand, *Sister Namibia*, and to a lesser extent *Namibia Review*, present important and useful articles in the advancement of women's issues.

### LIVING CONDITIONS

This section looks at the living conditions of women in Namibia. Poverty indicators are examined to determine women's poverty relative to men. Women's access to the basic necessities of life such as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and social services is also evaluated.

#### Women in Poverty

There are many measures of poverty, as well as absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty defines a cut-off point below which a household is defined as poor, while relative poverty defines an individual's level of wealth in relative terms to others.<sup>183</sup>

Food is the largest single item of consumption for Namibians. Overall, average per capita annual food consumption is N\$1,475 for female-headed households and



## Two patterns of female-headed households

Box 16

Two patterns of Female Households prevail in the rural areas:

*The Three-Generations Household:* In this pattern, a widowed or separated woman manages a household including unmarried adult children, usually daughters, who may have children of their own. Although there are adult members in the household, opportunities for work are limited. The widow/grandmother may have to support the family through her pension.

*The Missing Generation Household:* Here the head is a widowed or separated woman supporting her grandchildren whose parents have moved to the towns in search of employment or to further their education. Again, the widow/grandmother must support the household through a pension, but may also receive remittances from her children in the urban areas. This category may also grow as an effect of the AIDS epidemic.

SOURCE: NISER, *A Situational Analysis of Women and Children in Namibia*, UNICEF, 1992

N\$2,730 for male-headed households. According to international standards, households whose food consumption of 60 percent or more of income considered poor, and those with 80 percent are very poor. Using these indicators, 30 percent of Namibian households are poor, of whom 5.6 percent are extremely poor.

Based on this poverty measurement, 32.7 percent of female-headed household are considered poor compared with only 28.2 percent of male-headed households. Of these female-headed households 6.1 percent are extremely poor, compared with 5.2 percent of male-headed households. From these figures, it seems clear that gender is an important indicator in measuring the well-being of a household and its poverty status.<sup>184</sup> The following economic indicators demonstrate the relative poverty of female- and male-headed households. Females have a lower standard of housing than male. Only 14 percent of females have access to, or own a motor vehicle, compared with 30 percent for males. Other indicators are: cooking without electricity 79 percent female, 69 percent male; and lighting without electricity is 80 percent female, 68 percent male. These examples demonstrate the need to target female-headed households for development projects.<sup>185</sup>

### Access to Water

Access to safe drinking water should be a basic human right. It is essential for a reasonable quality of life and to plan for the future. However, for a drought-stricken country such as Namibia, many families do not have access to a safe, reliable source of drinking water. The water supply in rural Namibia is unpredictable, and often polluted. Some households must fetch water from long distances, and a variety of other water sources must be utilized to meet demands. The various sources include boreholes, communal taps, dams,

*oshanas*, hand-dug wells, and pipelines. It is estimated that about half (47 percent) the Namibian population does not have safe drinking water available (30 percent for rural areas).<sup>186</sup>

A 1993-1994 survey found that 45 percent of Namibians do not have piped water or a well within a five-minute walk from the house. Female-headed households are 54 percent more likely than male (39 percent) to have no water within five minutes of the house. This disparity is even worse according to location. In the rural areas, 75 percent of female-headed households do not have piped or well water close by compared with 59 percent for males. In addition, Kavango and Oshiwambo people had the least access to piped or well water (72 and 64 percent). Less than half the Caprivi and Bushmen people have easy access to these water sources.<sup>187</sup> The NDHS found that in urban areas most households use piped drinking water (82 percent), although an additional 15 percent get their water from a public tap. In the rural areas most households get their water from a public tap and only 35 percent of households have access to piped water.<sup>188</sup> Although the NDHS did not analyse water sources by gender, from the above figures it can be assumed that female-headed households have less access to reliable drinking water sources.

### Access to Sanitation

Access to sanitation is similarly important to the well-being of the household. Only 23 percent of Namibians have adequate sanitation facilities and only 10 percent in the rural areas.<sup>189</sup> The 1993/1994 survey found that 57 percent of Namibians use the bush or a bucket toilet. About 65 percent of female-headed households use this type of sanitation, while only 51 percent of male households do. In the rural areas, 88 percent of female households use bush or bucket toilets, compared to only 77 percent for



males. Some 87 percent of Caprivi and Kavango people this primitive type of sanitation, the highest in Namibia. However, the Bushmen and Oshiwambo also have very high use rates for bush and bucket toilets (79 percent and 70 percent).<sup>190</sup> The NDHS found that in the urban areas only 11 percent of households have no sanitation facilities or use the bush, while the bush is the most common type of facility in the rural areas.<sup>191</sup> From the above figures, it can be determined that female-headed households have less access to clean sanitation than male households counterparts.

#### Access to Social Services

As might be expected, households in rural areas have less access to social services than households in urban areas. Rural dwellers have greater difficulty gaining access to educational, health care, water supply and government benefits. Access not only means that the services are available, but that there are no barriers to the utilisation of the services. A study of community perceptions of social services found that distance to the nearest health facility and transportation are the main barriers to access. Other problems mentioned are lack of equipment, long queues, dilapidated buildings and poor quality staff.

Community members were also asked about their perceptions of access to educational facilities in their areas. Overwhelmingly, the most common barrier was too expensive school fees. Other problems mentioned are a lack of schools and teaching materials.<sup>192</sup> As with health and education, community members were asked what problems they have experienced with water supply. The four main issues given concerning water are distance, poor facilities, poor quality and lack of repairs by government services.<sup>193</sup>

Although data are not gender disaggregated, it is known that women

and children are the primary users of these three social services and that rural women have more difficulty accessing these social services than those living in urban areas.

#### Conclusions

Based on data from a variety of sources, it can be determined that the majority of women and people living in female-headed households have a lower standard of living than that of their male counterparts or people living in male-headed households. Female-headed households are less likely to own durable goods such as motor vehicles, and are more likely to be cooking and lighting their homes without electricity than male-headed households. Women and female-headed households also have far less access to health, water and sanitation facilities than men or persons living in male-headed households. Furthermore, access to social services is hampered by a lack of transportation and of money.

#### HEALTH CARE

Prior to Independence, health care in Namibia was characterised by disproportionate provision of resources for the white population with the emphasis on curative at the expense of preventive services. In addition, health services in rural areas from 1980-90 were overseen by ethnic-based 'representative authorities'. Therefore, the pre-independence health system was curative, highly fragmented and inequitable. Since Independence, the government has been reconstructing the Namibian health system to make it compatible with new international objectives and goals. The government has restructured the health care system by unifying the various 'homeland' based sectors under one central authority and has established Primary Health Care (PHC) programmes as the basis of health care in Namibia.<sup>194</sup> The government's main objective is to, "...improve the health of the Namibian populations through the



provision of relevant preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health services, which are affordable and accessible to all Namibians".<sup>195</sup>

The Namibian health care system is pluralistic and has both public and private sectors. The public sector consists of nine directorates based at the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) in Windhoek. Its management structure is composed of four regional health directorates and 13 regional health operations offices, one for each administrative region of the country. Health co-ordinating committees are to be established at the district level.<sup>196</sup> The MoHSS's expenditure as a percentage of GDP has increased from 4.9 percent at Independence to six percent in 1992/93. Of the total health expenditure, the proportion of the community health services division increased from 46.4 percent to 49.8 percent for the same period.<sup>197</sup>

The following section examines women's access to health care facilities, as well as some basic health indicators such as nutritional status, STDs and HIV/AIDS infection among women, contraceptive use, teenage pregnancies, ageing in women and female genital mutilation.

#### Access to Health Services

In a survey conducted by NDHS, there were 47 hospitals, 215 clinics, 19 PHC clinics and 19 health centres in Namibia. There was one hospital for every 17,000 people in the south and central regions, one for every 39,000 in the northwest, and one for every 71,000 in the northwest. While the number of hospitals has decreased since Independence (due to the closure of ethnic-based institutions), the number of clinics and health centres has been steadily increasing. Health centres are more common in the northwest regions. In relation to its size, the northwestern region has very few health care

facilities since it only has one hospital for every 71,000 people.<sup>198</sup>

The NDHS reports data from women about distance and time to the nearest health care facility. A PHC clinic is likely to be the closest facility (60 percent), followed by a hospital (30 percent), and clinic or health centre (nine percent). Hospitals are more prevalent in urban areas, where a hospital is the nearest facility for about 42 percent of women. In the central region, hospitals are the closest for about 52.6 percent of females, while in the northeast and northwest, PHC clinics are nearest for about 60 percent of the female population. On average, women take about 40 minutes to travel to a health facility in Namibia. However, the northwest it takes more than an hour to reach the nearest facility.<sup>199</sup> In general, women in the urban areas have far better access to health care facilities than their rural counterparts. About 56 percent of women have access to antenatal care services, 48 percent to maternity services, 72 percent to immunisation services, and 49 percent to family planning services within 10 km from their home.<sup>200</sup> In contrast to other services, maternity services and family planning are less frequently available to women. The relative inaccessibility of maternity services could mean a greater risk during childbirth for both the baby and the mother, and inaccessibility to family planning services is definitely a barrier to women obtaining and using contraceptives.

Utilisation of antenatal and delivery services is high in Namibia. The 1992 NDHS found that approximately 90 percent of women had access to antenatal services, 15 percent of whom were attended by a medical doctor. In addition, approximately 61 percent of pregnant women received at least one tetanus toxoid injection before giving birth. About two-thirds of babies were delivered in health facilities and nurses or midwives are the most



common source of delivery assistance for 54 percent of all births. Doctors and traditional birth attendants assisted in the delivery of 14 percent and six percent of births, respectively.<sup>201</sup>

The distance women have to travel to obtain particular services influences their use. As previously mentioned, a 1993/1994 survey of community perceptions found that access to health services was identified as a common complaint. Respondents suggested that more health facilities should be located in their communities and that existing facilities should be open for longer hours. More frequent visits to homesteads by mobile health clinics were also recommended.<sup>202</sup> Cost is also a factor in the utilisation and access to health care. In Namibia, health care is not completely free, there is a nominal charge for each time the patient goes to a hospital or clinic. In addition, women travelling to health facilities must take into consideration travel costs such as taxi fares. Another consideration is the cost, in terms of time taken from an already busy work schedule, for travel, queuing and returning home.

### Nutrition

As a result of food insecurity, there is widespread malnutrition among children. Households unable to produce food often ration basic foods and forego essential sources of protein such as meat and fish. Female-headed households have more dependants, but less means to obtain food, so they face the greatest risk of poor nutrition among children, nursing mothers and the elderly. Female households tend to have more children and extended kin group children in the house but their ability to feed all of the people in the household is limited by the fact that there are usually fewer adults who can generate income for the household.

In the southern communal areas, female-headed households feed

**Health Facility by Region and Population Served** Table 21

Region	Hospitals	Health Centres	Clinics	PHC Clinics	Total Population	Population per Hospital
North-West	9	1	66	17	642,600	71,400
North-East	5	10	61	15	194,100	38,820
Central	10	2	32	11	169,251	16,925
South	23	6	56	17	383,940	16,693
Total	47	19	215	60	1,389,891	143,838

SOURCE: Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1993:129 as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:104

**Nearest Health Facility by Residence and Region** Table 22

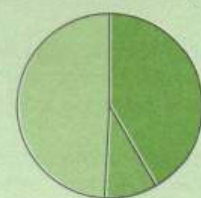
Residence/Region	Hospital %	Health Centre %	PHC Clinic %	Total %
Residence				
Urban	41.8	9.2	48.9	100
Rural	23.4	9.4	67.4	100
Region				
North-West	25.0	11.8	63.2	100
North-East	18.1	4.7	77.1	100
Central	52.6	1.2	46.0	100
South	35.0	11.8	53.1	100
Total	30.3	9.3	60.3	100

SOURCE: Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1993:130 as reprinted from DWA, 1995a:104

more people but obtain less food including essential components such as meat and milk. Of all households surveyed, 28 percent ate only mealie pap, with no sauce, milk or meat.<sup>203</sup>

Many households are unable to produce enough food for the whole year. Storage problems, including the loss of crops or dried food to pests, affect food availability and nutrition value. Employment and casual labour opportunities often do not parallel periods of food shortage. Lack of cash income and food shortages are further compounded by high prices for maize meal and basic foods in the shops. In the south and east, where food is purchased, cash-flow determines the abundance of food; as a result, the number of meals typically declines over the course of a month, or for pensioners, over a two-month period. In crop-producing regions, the hungry season before harvest is a period of intense

**Nearest Health Facility** Fig. 2



Urban  
 Hospital 41.8%  
 Health Centre 9.2%  
 Clinic 48.9%



Rural  
 Hospital 23.4%  
 Health Centre 9.4%  
 Clinic 67.4%

SOURCE: Table 22



labour, which strains the health of nursing mothers.

Thus, nutrition levels in Namibia are particularly prone to seasonal and drought-related food shortages. The 1992 NDHS found that Namibian children have high levels of wasting as a result of acute food shortages. Table 23 shows levels of malnutrition in children under five in urban, rural and other areas in Namibia. It is clear that malnutrition levels are considerably higher in rural areas.

Area	Stunting (Height-for-age) %	Wasting (Weight-for-age) %	Undernourished (Weight-for-age) %
Urban	21.8%	6.6%	17.8%
Rural	31.3%	9.5%	29.8%
Northwest	27.1%	9.8%	30.0%
Northeast	42.1%	7.9%	31.1%
Central	19.6%	13.2%	20.5%
South	24.7%	5.2%	18.4%

SOURCE: Ministry of Health and Social Services, 1993:124

Government has recognised this problem and taken a number of steps to address the factors causing it. For example, its Household Food Security Programme has attempted to address a range of needs including reducing the labour burden of women.

#### Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS

AIDS has become the largest health threat to humanity in this century and it a disease of hidden dimensions. AIDS in Namibia was first recorded in 1986 when four people were diagnosed HIV positive. The figures increased dramatically from 1,261 in 1991 to 21,737 as of April 1996.

In a recent newspaper article, the programme manager of the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) was quoted as saying that as of April 1996, "...there were 21,737 HIV positive people in

Namibia...it is predicted that by the end of 1996, nearly 10,000 new HIV infections would have taken place, (and) these figures are only the tip of the iceberg".<sup>204</sup> HIV/AIDS strikes the economically-productive age groups in the labour force. Some 86.3 percent of HIV/AIDS infected people are between 15 and 44, irrespective of sex. Contrary to the situation in many other developing countries, there are more men (54.5 percent) than women (45.5 percent) infected with HIV/AIDS in Namibia. This demographic imbalance may be due to male promiscuity. Only about 7.8 percent of all cases involve children under 15. Almost half of all women infected (48 percent) are in the 25-34 age group and almost one-third (27.8 percent) are in the 15-24 age group. About 13.4 percent are 35-44 and 2.3 percent in the 45 and over age group. In 1995, about 56 percent of all AIDS-related deaths occurred in men and 44 percent in women. The average age of men who die is 38 and the average age for women is 36.

HIV tests taken in the Katima Mulilo hospital showed that out of 100 pregnant women, 24 were HIV positive. A similar country-wide test of pregnant women at the end of 1994 indicated that nine of 100 pregnant Namibian women were infected with the HIV virus. In all developing countries women are poorer and less powerful than men economically and socially, and many women lack basic information about AIDS. A study conducted by UNICEF on contraceptive usage in the Owambo region in 1990 showed that of 2,500 women interviewed not one mentioned the use of condoms.<sup>205</sup>

Because of religious and cultural taboos about the open discussion of sex and related issues, parents and teachers are often afraid to provide youth with general and useful information about sex. A survey conducted at the Dawid Bezuidenhout High School in Windhoek shows



that the only school authorities who had ever talked about sexual issues and teenage pregnancy were science teachers, but this was usually done in presentations of biological issues without discussing social and cultural factors. Students felt that the school could play a bigger role in preventing teenage pregnancy. School curricula materials and methods of teaching about AIDS are being developed. There is a crucial need for both. Early sexual activity has contributed to the widespread presence of STDs and 63 percent of reported HIV-positive cases in the age range 15-24 are female.<sup>206</sup> The high incidence of teenage pregnancies also contributes to high fertility rates and encourages the spread of STDs including HIV/AIDS. This high incidence is mainly due to lack of knowledge and uninformed attitudes among youth.

HIV/AIDS infection is a serious health problem for Namibian women. Although there are equal numbers of men and women infected, women's inability to enforce condom use puts many women at risk of contracting the disease from men who tend to have far more multiple partners. There is no cure for AIDS, therefore most countries concentrate on preventive strategies rather than curative. The Namibian government is in full support of the campaigns that are launched all over the country to raise public awareness on AIDS. These campaigns can only be successful if the public undergoes behavioural change towards this killer disease. Although HIV/AIDS was a confidential issue in Namibia in the past, a few Namibians have decided to come out and show uninfected people that AIDS is a reality.

### Reproductive Health

According to the 1991 Population and Housing Census, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) or average number of children born live per woman during her reproductive life

(15-49 years) is 6.1. The TFR is lower in urban areas (4.7) than rural (6.8). This is due to easier access to family planning methods, more availability of information about contraceptive alternatives and the high cost of having children in the urban areas. There are regional differences in TFRs, ranging from 3.8 in Karas to 7.7 in Ohangwena region. Generally there is a marked fall in fertility rates from north to south which corresponds to the decline in population density and availability of water. Fertility rates are higher for married women (7.4) than for women who have never been married (4.7).<sup>207</sup> The average age of a woman when she first gives birth is 21. Many women in Namibia give birth to their first child before they marry.

Fertility falls with an increase in education. For example, the TFR for women with no schooling is about 8.8 while for those who have completed Grade 12 it is 3.1. Own account workers (8.4) and unpaid family workers (7.3) have the highest rates of fertility. Government employees (3.4) and private sector employees (5.7) have the lowest. The overall level of fertility in Namibia is one of the highest in the world (5.4 percent in 1992).<sup>208</sup> However, for sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia's fertility rates compare favourably to Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Tanzania.<sup>209</sup> While fertility rates are high, infant mortality rates have declined from 118 per 1,000 live birth in 1970 to 57 per 1,000 live birth in 1992.<sup>210</sup> The under-five mortality rate in 1992 was 32 per 1,000 live births for females and 43 per 1,000 live births for males. Infant mortality is one explanation for Namibia's fertility being so high. Another explanation is family size. Most women indicate an ideal family size of five children, which is only slightly lower than the current fertility rate. Reducing the population growth rate through lower fertility will be a major government policy focus in the next five years.

### Male and female attitudes about contraception

Box 17

Men's comments centred around religious and moral arguments:

"It is not good for wives to use contraceptives. As God did say, provide children to fill the world";

"People need more children to increase the tribe in order to dominate the other tribes democratically";

"Prolonged breast-feeding and post partum abstinence are the only contraceptives acceptable";

"Men are proud that they are fertile when they make women pregnant".

Some women's comments are:

"Women who use the pill or injections have no period and if they stop the contraception they bleed to death";

"Choices are still for traditional methods of contraception because of health risks";

"Women are afraid of husbands and illness";

"Men are never interested in talking about contraception and do not want to learn about it".

SOURCE: Ahrenson-Pandikow, H., 1992:13-16



Contraceptive use in Namibia is also low, although knowledge about contraception is high. More than half (52 percent) of currently married women or 41 percent of all women have ever used contraception of any kind, while 90 percent of all women know at least one modern method. Only 29 percent of married women or 23 percent of all women are currently using some form of contraception. Urban women are four times more likely to use contraception than women who live in the rural areas (47 percent to 13 percent). Women who are better educated and living closer to family planning services are more likely to use contraception than women who are less educated or live further from such centres. Of those using contraception, the most commonly used methods are the pill (29 percent), injection (27 percent) and female sterilisation (26 percent).<sup>211</sup>

One reason for the high TFR are female and male attitudes about fertility and contraceptive use. A study on contraceptive attitudes reveals that men and women have very different views.

Although most women say they want smaller families than men, they also have reservations about the use of contraceptives. Many of their complaints come from inadequate knowledge and disapproval of their partners.

Other reasons given for not using contraceptives are lack of affordability (although they are given free at most clinics), lack of information, counselling and education, negative attitudes about birth control, perceived side-effects, religious and moral reasons and 'rumours' about contraceptive problems in the community. In general the study found that most men and women know little about contraceptives, some women want to use contraceptives but are afraid of their husbands, some prefer injections

because if the men find the pills they throw them out and client compliance is a problem with pills.<sup>212</sup>

### Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancies have frequently been discussed in Namibia as a growing social problem. Currently, a high percentage of girls 14-18 are likely to be expelled from school due to pregnancy.<sup>213</sup> Teenage pregnancy, although prevalent, is socially unacceptable and the girls are blamed for their predicament. However, most males who get schoolgirls pregnant are not school boys, but older men and teachers.

In many cases, the pregnant school girl drops out of school without making her pregnancy known or naming the father of the child which is why there are no reliable statistics on the number of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy.<sup>214</sup> Girls who do not voluntarily drop out of school are expelled since pregnant girls are not allowed to attend school.<sup>215</sup> A draft study on teenage pregnancy prepared by UNAM's Human Rights and Documentation Centre reports that the rationale behind such discriminatory practices is that schools cannot provide facilities suitable for child care and a belief that pregnant students exert a bad influence on the morality of other pupils because their condition implies that sex before marriage is an acceptable practice.<sup>216</sup>

Most parents have a negative attitude when it comes to discussing or giving advice to the children on sexually related topics. Traditionally parents believe that a child must be at least 25 to discuss such things. This attitude discourages teenagers from getting advice, so they take matters into their own hands and, as a result, pregnancy occurs. Some educators argue that if sex education were implemented in schools, fewer teenagers would become pregnant because women

### When children have children: teenage pregnancy

Box 18

With the Convention on the Rights of the Children an individual is classified as a child until 18 years of age. In Namibia, where over 45% of girls have their first pregnancy by their 19th birthday, it can truly be said that children are giving birth to children. Early pregnancy has a dramatic effect on young mothers who face expulsion from school and sudden onset of child-care responsibilities. Their babies have lower birth weights and lower quality care.

SOURCE: DHS, 1992



and young girls would realise they are useful Namibians and not just baby machines. Schools play an important role in the lives of teenagers and can therefore be used to convey the message of teenage pregnancy prevention. Although many parents believe that sex education encourages children to be more sexually active, in today's modern society, children need all of the information and knowledge they can get in order to make informed choices.

The high incidence of illegal abortion and infanticide are also linked to teenage pregnancy. Many young girls, unable to face expulsion from school, social disgrace and possible disownment by their parents, seek illegal abortions or commit infanticide when the child is born. As previously discussed, legal abortions are not an option for most women in Namibia. Pregnant young girls seek the help of 'backstreet' abortionists, which puts the girl's health and possible life at risk.

In one case study reported in *Sister Namibia* a 17-year-old-girl, Sarah, desperate to end an unwanted pregnancy, had an illegal abortion performed by inserting a hook into her uterus. The girl took pain pills and then went into septic shock and haemorrhaging caused by the abortion and died.<sup>217</sup>

The other alternative many girls try is to hide their pregnancy and discard the baby at birth, infanticide. Most of these discarded babies die from exposure and the young girl may be charged with murder. Infanticide is increasingly more common among young girls. "In 1991, a 19-year-old told a court that she tried to kill her one-year-old son so she could go back to school" [and] "In June 1995, a 17-year-old was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment (seven of which were suspended) for stabbing her newborn child to death".<sup>218</sup> Hardly a day passes without a report in the news-

papers of abandoned babies, very few of which are found alive. For example, it was reported in one of the daily newspapers that a grade 10 student from Ongha Secondary School was arrested by the police after the body of a newborn baby boy was found dumped in the bushes. The baby had apparently died after sand was forced into his mouth. The young mother explained to the police that she abandoned the baby because she was afraid that she would be removed from school.<sup>219</sup> People in Namibia are taking infanticide very seriously and the draft abortion and sterilisation bill receives considerable debate, in public.

### Ageing

There is little information and research on the elderly in Namibia. According to the 1991 population and Housing Census, life expectancy at birth is 59.1 years for men and 62.8 years for women. Life expectancy is lowest in the Caprivi region, at 51.4 years for men and 54.8 years for women. In the Khomas region, it is higher at 65.5 years for men and 69.5 years for women.<sup>220</sup> According to the Health Information System (HIS) cumulative data for the period January to December 1994, the following were the main causes of death in adult hospital wards: pulmonary tuberculosis (13.9 percent), circulatory system disease (9.4 percent), neoplasm, abnormal tissue growths such as tumours, (6.4 percent), acute respiratory infections (6.3 percent), malaria (5.8 percent) and hypertension or high blood pressure (4.7 percent).<sup>221</sup>

Namibia's age-sex ratio is slightly skewed in that 43 percent of all male and 41 percent of all females are under 15. However, by the time Namibians are over 65 there are four percent males and five percent females.<sup>222</sup> This is because men tend to die more than women in the 20-35 age groups. Men most frequently die due to accidents and violence.

### "Isn't this a shame?" Box 19

During one research session one of the authors was present when a family learned that their teenage relative had become pregnant by a teacher. The family was angry at the girl, not only for being pregnant, but for having named the teacher as the father. The family discussed the fact that the teacher could lose his job since this was the second schoolgirl he had impregnated. "Isn't this a shame, this man has a wife and children to feed and now what will they do?" (spoken by the schoolgirl's aunt).

Although this incident should not be misunderstood as representing a norm in Namibia, it gives insight into prevailing attitudes about teenage pregnancy. In some cases the girl will refuse to mention the father's name, especially if he is a teacher or a schoolboy, because they fear it will cause the schoolboy to be expelled or the teacher to be fired. Other times, teenagers regard pregnancy as an excuse to leave school, especially teenagers from poor families. For example, if parents cannot pay the school fees and the girl has a boyfriend who is working, she may get pregnant with the hope that the boyfriend will support her and the baby. However, in most cases the boyfriend leaves the girl, the child remains fatherless and the girl's parents must then help to support the girl and the child.

SOURCE: LeBeau, D.



### Old people were also young once (or young people will be old one day)

Box 20

It was on a hot day when a very old woman called Naayole ('Let them laugh') decide to go and get her clay from the *onzimbogo*, a traditional place underground where pottery is made. The woman who had never worn shoes in her life, not even traditional shoes made from cattle leather (sometimes called 'Come to Jesus'), was barefooted and the heat from the sand burnt her soles of her feet.

Her dress was a traditional leather garment which only covered the back and front but not the sides, so that she was half naked. She had on a lot of beads, the traditional ones, strung around her neck. When she was young, the woman who was to be considered worthy of running a kraal, or becoming a wife even, had to have strings of beads around her neck.

This old woman feared to wash herself. So wherever she went out, like now, she took with her a piece of porridge and cleaned herself with it. This she considered an expensive lotion.

On her way, Grandma Naayole came across two girls who had just arrived from the city. Ndilipo and Ndataala were born in the city and had come to the rural areas for the first time in their lives. Because it was their first time, they had never seen a woman dressed like Naayole. She looked funny to them and they laughed at her. They ran to tell their mother, Nduuvuko, herself a middle-aged woman. She told them that what they had done, laughing at Naayole, was wrong. Naayole, she said, was wearing traditional Ovambo dress.

To Naayole, this was nothing. She kept on going to her pottery mine, where she pushed aside the torn palm branch which served as a door to her *onzimbogo* and which looked quite fashionable to her. She lowered herself inside and began mixing clay for pottery.

The strange thing about Grandma Naayole was that whenever you followed her footprints, you would find little lines for tracks. You would have trouble saying whether the footprints on the sand were made by a living person or by someone who had died long ago.

As it should be, all things come to an end. This happened also to Ndilipo and Ndataala, the girls who thought that Grandma Naayole was primitive. They did not understand civilization.

The problem with these two ladies was in fact that they had no education. While their peers were in school, learning to read and write, the two went to the school of brewing and drinking tombo. When Ndilipo and Ndataala become drunk, they talked too much, sounding as if they knew everything. Later, they broke the shebeen news to their neighbours who could not make it to the *cuca* shops or shebeens.

And so, as it should be, Ndilipo and Ndataala, too, came to an end.

SOURCE: Ainima Loide Shishani, *The Moon People and Other Namibian Stories*, New Namibia Books, Windhoek, 1996.

Namibia is one of only two countries in Africa (the other is South Africa) which pays a pension to citizens over 62. The pensions are small, averaging only a few hundred Namibian dollars a month, but most elderly people and their family

members are dependent on these pensions.<sup>223</sup> The living conditions for Namibia's elderly are not good. Older people tend to be more likely to live in rural areas and have large numbers of children dependent on their pension. Households who subsist on pensions (i.e. the elderly) are more likely than any other demographic group to live in a traditional hut (59 percent). The elderly are more likely than other Namibians to cook their food without electricity or gas (88 percent), light their homes without electricity (85 percent), use a bush or bucket as a toilet (70 percent) and have no piped water within five minutes of their home (54 percent). Women over 65 comprise six percent of all rural dwellers and five percent are males over 65. In the urban areas, three percent of urban women are more than 65 while only two percent of all urban men are 65 and over. In addition, there are more female than male headed households that report a pension (15 percent to nine percent) as their household's main source of income.<sup>224</sup> In general, elderly men and women in Namibia have a poor standard of living, but the burden falls disproportionately on elderly women who are more likely to live in poor, rural conditions and still have many dependent children.

### Female Genital Mutilation

Although Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among ethnic groups in Namibia is not practiced to the extent it is in West and East Africa (especially among Muslims), some ethnic groups perform minor cutting around the vaginal lips. However, radical FGM, the removal of young girls clitoris and labia is not practised in Namibia. The Gender Training and Research Programme at UNAM is currently researching the initiation practices in Okavango and Caprivi (for both sexes) to determine if any form of mutilation takes place during these rituals. This study will also be conducted among the other ethnic groups in the country at a later stage.



### Conclusions

Although Namibia inherited a 'racially' fragmented health care system, the Government has made health care for all Namibians a priority. Many rural women still have trouble accessing health care services due to distance, travel time and money problems. Food insecurity is a chronic problem in Namibia. Female-headed households tend to have more children and the least ability to feed members of their households. Nutrition levels in Namibia are particularly prone to seasonal and crisis-related food shortages. There were 21,737 confirmed AIDS cases in Namibia as of April 1996. Although there are more men than women infected, HIV/AIDS infection is a serious health problem for Namibian women.

Women's inability to enforce condom use puts many women at risk of contracting the disease. The average age of a woman when she first gives birth is 21. Many women in Namibia give birth to their first child before they marry. Contraceptive use in Namibia is also low, although knowledge about contraception is high. Men do not want women to use contraceptives; women would like to use contraceptives but cite health concerns and men's attitudes as deterrents. Teenage pregnancy is a problem in Namibia. Young girls who find themselves pregnant are forced to leave school, contributing to their already marginalised status. Elderly women have no easier time of it than their younger counterparts. Pensioners live in some of the worst conditions in Namibia and many elderly women continue to care for and support young children. On the positive side, Namibian women are not subject to FGM as are their counterparts in other parts of Africa.

### VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

Women in many parts of the world find themselves in the midst of vio-

lence and conflict and women in Namibia are no exception. During the protracted struggle for independence, many Namibian women were in situations of violent conflict. However, even in times of peace, women are the targets of personal violence, domestic violence, rape, femicide and as refugees.

### Personal Violence

Violence against women has been the topic of many public meetings, workshops and demonstrations since Independence. Regional hearings on violence against women (rape and domestic violence), organised by the Women and Law Committee, were held throughout the country in November of 1996 in an effort to consult with people. A national conference is planned where a plan of action will be drawn up.

A number of factors contribute to the abuse of women. During the liberation struggle, rape and sexual assault were used to exert power and control over the local population by the South Africa Defence Force. Unresolved stress stemming from the liberation war and apartheid years also play a part. Today, the problem is largely the result of poverty, unemployment and related social problems (i.e. alcoholism and drug abuse). Most disturbing is the fact that in some Namibian communities violence is viewed (at least by men) as an acceptable way of exerting control over women.

Another factor that plays an important part in violence against women is their unequal social status in the society. Widespread violence against women must be seen in the context of legal change and its effect on the relative position and decision-making powers of men and women within society.<sup>25</sup> While women's legal status has changed substantially since independence, their social status remains relatively unchanged for



many segments of the population. It is this divergence between legal status and social status which is a co-contributing factor to violence against women. Without a change in norms and values, change in women's social status cannot be achieved. As male dominance is threatened by the elevation in the legal status of women, men become insecure and may resort to violence in an attempt to reassert their position.<sup>226</sup> Many under-educated and poor women, who have a lower social status than men, are frequently the targets of this violence. In addition, men's traditional roles as family providers are undermined by poverty and unemployment. All these threats to male social status, exacerbated by poverty, unemployment and high rates of alcoholism, contribute to violence against women. Thus, it is not surprising that since Independence Namibia has experienced a dramatic increase in violence against women.<sup>227</sup>

There many types of personal violence against women and children: physical abuse ranging from beating, punching and burning to murder; psychological abuse such as yelling and threatening; sexual abuse ranging from sexual assault to rape; and financial abuse where men refuse to support their wives and children. A study for the Women and Law Committee, yet to be published, documented the various types of violence with data collected from case studies, surveys, relevant literature and interviews. On the basis of these data sources, it was concluded that violence against women and children (especially girls) is widespread. One case study quoted a woman as saying, "[A woman] is not safe anywhere; not in the streets, not in a taxi, not even in their houses."<sup>228</sup>

#### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is separate from, but related to, other forms of violence where the victim does not

have an emotional or kin relationship to the perpetrator. Most, but not all, violence against women and children occurs in the home, by a family member or loved one, in which case it is classified as domestic violence. The distinction between domestic and interpersonal violence is necessary since being hurt by someone you know, love and live with has deeper emotional consequences — except for rape — than when the perpetrator is not as well known to the victim. It is because of this complex and highly emotional relationship that violence in the family is the result of an escalating process and victims are likely to face recurring abuse.

Domestic violence in Namibia takes the form of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. The research indicates that there are many more ways to abuse your loved ones than there are to respect them. The scope of types of abuse range from yelling and 'tongue-lashings' to rape and sodomy to severe physical injury and death.

There are no comprehensive statistics on the incidence of violence within the family in Namibia because it is so seldom reported to the police. The extent of domestic violence in Namibia is also hard to measure since many people believe it is a private matter, not to be discussed with outsiders. One study concluded that, "based on all available data, it can be expected that at least 50 percent of Namibia's women and children have been, or will be, victims of domestic violence".<sup>229</sup>

In addition to the prevailing attitude that domestic violence is a family problem, there are other reasons why women do not report incidents of domestic violence. Police are often unwilling to intervene, partly because of a lack of acceptable legal remedies. In situations where police do take action, the charge is simple



assault, which makes it difficult to segregate domestic violence data from other forms of interpersonal violence. The current legal approach to domestic violence is inadequate, and police are frequently ineffectual. A woman who lays a charge of assault is likely to find the batterer home on bail within 48 hours. Even if the batterer is ultimately convicted, the penalty is unlikely to be severe.<sup>230</sup> One major theme in the regional hearings was dissatisfaction with the way police, investigators and courts deal with cases due to prevailing gender beliefs.

There is clearly a relationship in Namibia between domestic violence and other social problems. Unemployment, poverty and alcoholism are frequent contributors. Of the perceived causes of domestic violence, none is mentioned more frequently or comes through more clearly, than the influence of alcohol on domestic violence. Women report that their husbands come home drunk and beat or batter them to get money for more drinking. Medical personnel report treating women whose injuries were sustained during beatings when the husband was drunk. Community activists identify alcohol abuse as a primary factor in domestic violence. There can be no doubt that alcohol abuse is a primary factor in domestic violence.<sup>231</sup>

Economic factors and male unemployment are other repeated themes relating to domestic violence.

Cultural beliefs also influence incidents of domestic violence in Namibia. Various groups in Namibia have differing beliefs about what is domestic violence and what are normal cultural practices. Some groups believe the man is head of the house and has rights of control over family members. However, most information sources indicate that with this power must also come compassion, love and tolerance.<sup>281</sup> There seems to be a fine

line between family control and family abuse. Once a man steps over the line, his behaviour is no longer acceptable in any Namibian society. In some traditional African societies any form of physical, psychological or sexual imposition of one's will on another is seen as deviant behaviour.<sup>282</sup> In other traditional African societies, 'wife-beating' is considered an appropriate method of correcting a woman's behaviour. However, the act of 'wife-beating' is limited so that the woman does not to have clear visible signs of the incident. The use of fists and dangerous weapons such as guns and knives is not acceptable.<sup>232</sup>

In the following case study, Venezia is an Owambo woman who was married to her husband in the traditional Owambo style. Her husband beat her so badly that she lost the use of an eye and has only has partial use of one of her hands. Venezia explains why she was beaten so badly, "Sometimes when he came home he used to ask me, 'oh, my clothes are they washed? As they are here?' If I said, 'yes, I washed them'. He used to say, 'No, they are not washed like this'. If I hung them, he took them out and put them again in the water and put powder in. He used to say, 'these things must be washed again, they are not clean'. He said, 'I beat you because the women are to be beaten, because marriage is to be beaten'." [*Women in marriage are to be beaten*].<sup>233</sup>

### Rape

Rape, as with other forms of interpersonal violence is not about sex but is about violence and subjugation of the victim by the perpetrator. Under the current law, rape is defined as "unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent". There are some key elements of this definition which may lead rape cases to go unprosecuted because they do not meet the legal definition. One problem with this definition is the term 'unlawful sexual intercourse'. Since it is seen as a

### "Hold that good communication between us at home..."

Box 21

In one case study, collected for the Women and Law Committee, Saara is a 40-year-old Xhosa-speaking woman married to a 43-year-old, Oshiwambo-speaking Namibian. She lives in a small house with her husband and children plus 12 of his relatives. Saara has a standard seven education while her husband has no education. Saara and her family are very poor. She currently works as a housekeeper in Windhoek, but her husband is unemployed and has been mostly since they were together. Saara's husband forces her to shoplift and beats her when she does not obey him.

Saara is asked, "Do you think that this problem which you have with your husband forced you to go and steal, for example his drinking problems or unemployment of both of you? Do you think this gave him a reason to take his frustration out on you and the children?"

Saara replies, "Yes, because he even hit me with an electric pipe and he asked me what do I think the kids are going to eat. I asked him what does he think the kids are gonna eat. He said I had to go and make a plan. He actually forced me to steal or he would beat me for not having food for him. So, I had to steal many times just to satisfy him, while I said to myself I don't want to do it again and just to hold that good communication between us at home..."

SOURCE: LeBeau, D., 1996:94-95



husband's lawful right to have sexual access to his wife, marital rape is not classified as a crime in Namibia. This exemption reinforces the notion that a wife is the property of her husband. One study estimates that one in every eight wives experience marital rape, many of whom are also victims of domestic violence. Another problem with the current rape law in Namibia is its definition of rape as being, 'sexual intercourse with a woman'. This poses two basic problems:

- ◆ this excludes all forms of sexual assault except for penis to vagina contact; and
- ◆ this excludes the rape of young boys or men.<sup>234</sup>

The Women and Law Committee and the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) are in the process of drafting a new sexual assault bill. If the Bill passes, marital rape, several forms of indecent assault including assault against individuals other than women, would be classified as rape.

The number of reported rapes in Namibia has increased steadily over the last few years. This could either be that more rapes are being committed, or more cases are being reported to the police. There were 352 reported rapes in Namibia in 1988, growing steadily to 445 in 1990. However, in 1991 there were 564 rape and attempted rape cases reported and in 1992 there were 583. The rate rose dramatically in 1993 (611) and in 1994 there were 740 such cases.<sup>235</sup> (Table 24). Police statistics indicate that every day at least two people in Namibia are at risk of being sexually assaulted. However, these figures do not reflect the severity of the problem since many experts believe that less than half of all rapes are reported to the police.<sup>236</sup> Others suggest that only about one of every 20 rapes committed is reported.<sup>237</sup>

As with domestic violence, there are traditional cultural beliefs

which influence incidents of rape, especially marital rape.

Other commonly held beliefs that lead to rapists going free is the idea that the woman 'asked' to be raped.<sup>238</sup> There are various situations with which some men may identify as being wrong so that if the woman is raped, then it is her fault. For example, many people feel that a woman can contribute to rape if she is dressed incorrectly and one male respondent even stated that a woman who wears earrings is asking to be raped, because earrings are meant to sexually excite men. Other cases where a woman may be 'blamed' for the rape is if she is walking home at night in the dark, if she takes a ride in a car with someone she does not know or if she allows a man to buy alcohol for her. Other informants say that it is not the men's fault because they cannot control themselves sexually. One author was present in one household when a family learned that their 15-year-old daughter had been gang-raped by two boys in her classroom. The girl had not told anyone except her best friend, who teased her about it so much that the teacher learned of it. The father's first reaction was to want to 'beat the child' since he felt it was her fault. After lengthy discussions, the father realised that it was not the girl's fault, but no action was ever taken against the boys.

### Femicide

Namibian women are victims of other types of violence which are referred to by as 'femicide'. As in the case of domestic violence, women are the targets of other types of violent behaviour stemming from frustrations, often intensified by alcohol and drug abuse. An increasing incidence of men killing their spouses, girlfriends or even strangers has been observed. This issue has attracted increasing public attention recently, leading to demands for stricter bail conditions and heavier prison sentences for

### Rightfully his

Box 22

The following case study, collected for the Women and Law Committee, exemplifies how men in traditional courts can reinforce domestic violence and marital rape:

"During an interview with a Herero community leader, who also presides over dispute resolution hearings in Gobabis area, we learned that violence repeatedly inflicted to a woman does not serve as a good enough reason to ask for a divorce. This is because the woman is subordinate to her husband and the husband has a right to use any means he feels is appropriate to discipline or keep her in line. On the issue of marital rape he laughingly answered that the woman who refuses to have intercourse with her husband then deserves to be hurt as she is withholding what is rightfully the husbands".

SOURCE: Lebeau, D., 1996: 85



men who murder women.<sup>239</sup> Women who are killed by their spouses or boyfriends have usually experienced domestic violence repeatedly and many of these women may have even tried to get help, knowing that their lives are at risk.

Physical abuse episodes are frightening for the victims and could result in the death of the victim, or in extreme circumstances, the perpetrator. Saara (described earlier) was stabbed in the head by her husband with a knife and had to get stitches at the hospital. She explained to a policeman who thought she was being too hard on her husband, "My question to him [the policeman] was if I died that night would they still come back and say to me that I'm married to that man or if one of my children were killed, what would they do?" The escalation of the violence, which has the very real possibility of resulting in death, is not only common to Namibia, but occurs elsewhere in the world. Both women and men die frequently as a result of years of escalation in violent episodes.<sup>240</sup>

As with other forms of violence against women, better female empowerment and gender equality will help to reduce the incidents of women being murdered by their loved ones.

### Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

The effects of the Namibian struggle for Independence have been dealt with in the introductory section. However, there are women living in Namibia who are the victims of war from other parts of Africa. Prior to Independence, there existed no legislation or mechanism to deal with refugees entering Namibian territory. Under the South African government, refugees from other African countries were regarded as illegal immigrants. However, the Namibian Constitution provides protection for the rights of illegal immigrants. Individuals arrested

**Reported Rape and Attempted Rape Cases by Police District** Table 24

Police District	1992		1993		1994	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
All district	583	100.0	611	100.0	741	100.0
Windhoek	199	34.1	212	34.7	259	35.0
Gobabis	55	9.4	52	8.5	64	8.6
Swakopmund	32	5.5	47	7.7	0	0.0
Otjiwarongo	40	6.9	31	5.1	51	6.9
Tsumeb	61	10.5	61	10.0	57	7.7
Rundu	28	4.8	30	4.9	25	3.4
Oshakati	85	14.6	86	14.1	109	14.7
Keetmanshoop	55	9.4	60	9.8	55	7.4
Mariental	28	4.8	32	5.2	39	5.3
Walvis Bay	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	82	11.1

SOURCE: Namibian Police as reprinted from CSO, 1995:88

and held in custody have the right to confidentially consult with a legal practitioner of their choice (subject to such restrictions as are imposed in accordance with the law). The Constitution also says that no illegal immigrant may be deported from Namibia unless the deportation is authorised by a tribunal empowered to authorise deportation.

Persons who want to apply for refugee status in Namibia must register with both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the UNHCR. At present, Angolans, who are the majority of refugee applicants, are automatically accorded refugee status. Relatively few applicants of any nationality have been rejected in recent years. In 1993, almost all applicants (863 out of 873 or 98.9 percent) were accepted for residence and 532 out of 587 (90.6 percent) applicants were accepted in 1994. No gender-disaggregated statistics are available.<sup>241</sup>

Refugees are accommodated at Osire Refugee Camp, located about 225 km northeast of Windhoek. In February 1995, the population was 1,009 (557 males and 452 females) including 450 children under 18 (243 males and 207 females). These figures suggest that fewer women than men are able to escape war-torn areas in search of a better life.



This lack of mobility may be due to women's need to continue to care for their families. In fact, war time is when the family needs the women the most, since many male members will be gone from the household.

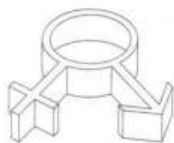
### Conclusions

Poverty, unemployment and high rates of alcoholism contribute to violence against women. Other factors that play an important role are women's general unequal social status and misunderstood cultural norms. The types of violence against women and children are many, including physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse. Violence against women is widespread throughout Namibia. Domestic violence may occur in as many as 50 percent of households.

As with other forms of violence against women, poverty, alcoholism, low status of women and cultural norms contribute to domestic violence. Rape is an increasing problem in Namibia. The current laws are inadequate and contribute to marital rape, indecent sexual assault and rape of individuals other than women. Femicide is also on the increase in Namibia and usually involves a spouse or partner killing a woman, following years of abuse. Femicide represents a chronic problem of female abuse in Namibia. Namibia, since independence, has allowed refugees to come from other African countries, especially Angola. However, the fact that more men than women apply for refugee status means that more women are left behind in war-torn countries.

## PART II

## POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES



This section considers policies on women formulated by the government and its programme of action for implementing these policies with NGOs, CBOs, donors and foreign governments working with different interest groups.

INTRODUCTION<sup>242</sup>

Shortly after independence, the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN), recognising the consequences of Namibia's historical legacy of the liberation war and its long period of colonisation on the social neglect of the majority of the Namibian population, took two important steps to address Namibia's past inequalities: it set priority areas for immediate intervention and it established the DWA.

The following areas were identified for immediate intervention:

- ◆ Agriculture and Rural Development: since about 70 percent of the Namibian population live in the rural areas and depend on subsistence farming for their livelihood;
- ◆ Education and Training: to give opportunities to Namibians to participate fully in the development process;
- ◆ Health Care Services: as mentioned earlier the majority of Namibians were denied basic health facilities during the apartheid period;
- ◆ Affordable Housing: many Namibians do not have access to adequate and affordable housing due to the previous political dispensation in Namibia.

These sectoral priorities were subsequently translated into broad national goals with the formulation of the Transitional Development

Plan 1990/91 and 1992/1993. The DWA was established in the Office of the President to facilitate liaison between women and government and to help identify priority issues affecting women for immediate intervention.

In preparing NDP I, the GRN took advantage of the opportunity to consult and validate the broad national objectives mentioned earlier, with a broad spectrum of the Namibian population, which included grassroots organisations, NGOs, church organisations, private sector organisations, the donor community, women's organisations, line ministries and offices within the government. NDP I identified the following national development objectives:

- ◆ Reviving and sustaining the economic growth;
- ◆ Creating employment;
- ◆ Reducing inequalities in income distribution; and
- ◆ Eradicating poverty.

In support of these objectives, and conscious of its gender obligations, the government singled out affirmative action in the promotion of equity in government services, a participatory development approach, rural development, investing in people, food and nutrition, land reform and the provision of social safety nets as part of its priority programmes for the next five years.

In addition, a sectoral chapter on Gender and Development (GAD) is included in NDP I to highlight gender-specific sectoral objectives and strategies.<sup>243</sup>

- ◆ Integration of Women in Development (WID) and decentralisation of gender issues;
- ◆ Increasing awareness about practical and strategic needs of women;





- ◆ Reconcile existing customary laws and practices with the provision of the Constitution and CEDAW;
- ◆ Recognise, accept and appreciate the significance of women's role and contributions to food production and food security for the majority of the rural households and gear services not only to support improved productivity and marketing but also to alleviate women's farming and household burden;
- ◆ Increase women's physical accessibility to health facilities and strengthen their participation in decision-making in health education and nutrition within the family;
- ◆ Reduce female illiteracy by more than half its current level, with emphasis on rural women, displaced women and women with disabilities;
- ◆ Create more awareness among women of the significance of commercial undertakings, particularly those which maximise the use of local materials;
- ◆ Increase the number of women in wage employment;
- ◆ Create more awareness among policy makers, planners, implementers, women and the general public on issues relating to the environment.

Within its first five years DWA facilitated Namibia's signing of CEDAW. In addition, DWA simplified and translated CEDAW into the various Namibian languages to stimulate discussion at all levels.

#### POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In analysing changes since Independence, this Profile highlights measures which seek to redress political, legal, social and economic imbalances faced by women. Although some policies and programmes are still in their incipient stages, a range of government and NGO initiatives seek to involve women in leadership and decision-making and to improve their access to resources and services.

#### National Gender Policy

While no national gender policy has been formally adopted, DWA has prepared a draft policy which was completed in February 1997. It will help other gender advancements made since independence, including CEDAW. Among the important developments mentioned in the first report on the implementation of CEDAW are:<sup>244</sup>

- ◆ Ratification of CEDAW by Namibia in 1992 and submission of Namibia's first report to the UN;
- ◆ Establishment of various mechanisms to monitor compliance with CEDAW. Already in place is the Gender Sectoral Network which consists of nine gender sectoral committees. The network was established to implement and monitor compliance with CEDAW;
- ◆ The implementation of gender policy with the passage of the Married Persons Equality Bill;

"The 1997 Gender Policy Document sets out the rationale of the Namibian Government's Gender Policy".<sup>245</sup> It also outlines the policy framework and provides a brief history of its evolution. The objectives of the policy are to, "ensure equal opportunities between men and women, to empower women by recognising, accepting and valuing their contributions to the general good of society and to remove obstacles which hamper their development, or deny them their entitlement".<sup>246</sup> The document goes on to state that by empowering women, men will benefit from a sense of gender solidarity, which will also help in the economic empowerment of the country. The recommendations contained in the Gender Policy seek to recognise and address the priority needs of women, to identify targets and actions that will increase women's access to resources and facilities and to ensure a growth in participation of women in decision-making. The following areas have been identified in the National Gender Policy as priorities.

◆ *Rural development, environment and housing:* The recommendations aim at addressing the impact of the National Agricultural Plan on women, ensuring that it recognises the role of women in the processes which the policy aims to influence and ensures equal participation of women and men in development. The policy lays out strategies for increasing women's participation in decision-making concerning agricultural activities, promoting women's access to productive resources including support programmes, establishing accountable channels of trade in agricultural production to ensure that women producers have equal access and opportunities to markets, providing agricultural services that improve rural women's skills and knowledge in farming practices and promoting technology to lessen the work load of women.<sup>247</sup>

◆ *Education, training and co-ordination:* These recommendations aim at improving women's access to, and participation in, educational opportunities at all levels, eliminating sex-stereotyping of women in education and empowering the girl-child of today to be the women of tomorrow with the skills, ideas and energy to obtain the goals of equality and assist in the development of the country. The strategies and activities identified for this sector include gender-sensitive policies and programmes related to school, promotion of women's participation in adult education and adult literacy, encouragement of girls and women to take up technical and other male-dominated subjects and professions, increase the participation of women in all aspects and levels of public life and in higher level decision-making positions, creation of an enabling and safe educational environment for the girl-child, especially with regards to sexual harassment and provision of educational facilities for people with disabilities.<sup>248</sup>

◆ *Reproductive health and maternal protection:* These recommendations aim to improve the major health indicators for Namibia's women. Some of the specific health and reproductive issues to be addressed are improved accessibility and affordability of health care services, especially to women living in remote rural areas, increased emphasis on reproductive health care services including family planning and sexual education services, encouragement of media campaigns aimed at information and educational development of women's health care needs, eradication of child marriages, action against violence to women, deal with sexual and drug abuse and promote safe sex as a means of protecting women against HIV/AIDS. The national gender policy also states that all persons, especially women, have a right to information so that decisions concerning sexual and reproductive life are made with free, informed consent, about the risks and benefits of all fertility regulation methods, protection of reproductive health, safe motherhood and safe abortions, free choice of any method of protection against unwanted pregnancies and protection from the harmful effects of reproductive health care technology.<sup>249</sup>

◆ *Violence against women and children:* This is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty".<sup>250</sup> The recommendations are the review and amendment of laws and customs to provide for the dignity and rights of Namibian women, educate law enforcement officials to be able to recognise and understand the causes of violence against women and punish the perpetrator, review and amend legal issues relating to punishment of perpetrators, educate the public so the



'social stigma' is removed from the victims of violence and is placed on the perpetrator, involve government departments in victim-support, train personnel in women and child shelters to provide counselling to victims and make available funds to victims in an effort to help them rebuild their lives.<sup>251</sup>

◆ *Economic empowerment and employment:* A review of this sector demonstrates the disadvantaged position of women compared with men in the Namibian economic and employment sector. Recommendations focus on: economic policies which are gender-sensitive, an assessment of women's roles and positions in the national economy, gender-sensitive economic development, review of social and cultural practices which deny women their rights, women's income generating opportunities to be equal to men and legislative and affirmative action incentives which assist parents and encourage good parenting roles. The national gender policy also identifies development policies and programmes as the need for: gender impact assessments when implementing economic development projects, special training for trainers and facilitators to promote women entrepreneurs, economic development which provides assistance for organisations that provide career support for women, educating women concerning equality in the work place, the enforcement of labour laws concerning gender equality, ensuring women's education is not hampered by gender discrimination, encouraging public and private sector employment which favours women's career development, networking to determine the best way to implement gender equality in the workplace, trade unions and professional organisations to instruct their members to negotiate gender equality and monitoring of government and public funding agencies to ensure non-discriminatory practices.<sup>252</sup>

◆ *Women in decision-making:* A review of this sector identifies the need to promote women to decision-making positions. Due to women's under-representation in all levels of government and private sector management positions, there needs to be affirmative action provisions which will become quotas for women in decision-making levels of government, women's recruitment at decision-making levels of political parties, private sector and other organisations should be encouraged, career guidance information should be provided to young girls in the areas of maths and sciences, unity and solidarity of women across all classes, races, ethnicity and backgrounds can be supported by debate and discussion, support mechanisms and services in child-care should be provided in order to enable women to fully participate in employment, all organisations should be instructed to submit lists for review of nominations to boards and committees and these lists should have at least 50 percent women's names and a monitoring and evaluation system should be set up to monitor progress and identify constraints to implementing these recommendations.<sup>253</sup>

◆ *Legal affairs:* There is a gap between *de facto* and *de jure* equality in law which means a gap between rights granted under the law and enjoyment of them because of a lack of effective enforcement mechanisms. Legal literacy is an important prerequisite for the full realisation of the benefits of such laws. It becomes necessary to fund programmes which promote legal literacy. Recommendations include provision of information and education about legal rights in an easily accessible format, encouraging women to move into positions of influence within the legal system, improving women's general knowledge and trust in law enforcement, reviewing all discriminatory laws, customs and practices against

women. Legal remedies suggested include the circulation of gender laws so that they can be publicly evaluated, new laws relating to gender issues should receive widespread publicity, law reform on issues of special concern are urgently needed and should be addressed by the year 1999, maintenance, rape and sexual offence, customary and other such laws need urgent redress and government officials need to be trained in their handling of issues such as maintenance, rape and domestic violence. Legal practitioners should receive training on gender sensitisation and be made aware of new gender-related laws.<sup>254</sup>

◆ *Information, education and documentation:* Women do not have easy access to information through the public media and they also do not have access to participation in media outputs. There is a need to transmit news and women's views in a non-sexist manner and the image of women in the media should not portray women in a negative or degrading manner. There is a need for scholarships to encourage women in media careers, training of media managers and editors in gender sensitisation, government commitment to promoting positive and sensitive discussions of issues that concern women such as teenage pregnancy, violence against women and HIV/AIDS and STD issues. Portrayal of women by women should be done in a positive and appropriate manner and the participation of women should be encouraged in all forms of creative expression.<sup>255</sup>

◆ *Research, data collection and documentation:* Gender research is vital in the planning process and is a necessary tool in designing and implementing gender policies. There is a need for a research council to coordinate and evaluate research and data collection for its gender sensitivity. Data banks which can be gender disaggregated

should be established and maintained by government sectors, professional and commercial organisations. Young people should be encouraged and supported in learning research methods and develop the ability to apply them in a gender-sensitive manner. The school curriculum should also include gender-sensitive research and data collection as a topic of study so that young people learn these skills from an early age. Schools can also assist in disseminating gender-sensitive research findings. Traditional skills of women, such as basket-making and handicrafts, should be incorporated and valued in the national vision of a culture of Namibia.<sup>256</sup>

◆ *The girl-child:* Namibia is a signatory on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Namibia has a special obligation for protecting and promoting the rights of the girl-child. The implementation of this convention will improve the welfare of children in Namibia. Cabinet has adopted the National Early Childhood Development Policy (ECD) in an effort to address the needs of children ages up to eight-years-old. The objectives of the ECD will include the protection of the rights of the girl-child, elimination of discrimination, elimination of traditional practices, elimination of economic exploitation, promotion of girl-child awareness campaigns and measures to assist families to improve the status of the girl-child.<sup>257</sup>

#### Policy Planning and Research<sup>258</sup>

Programmes aimed at promoting awareness and sensitivity to gender issues in government and the general public are being addressed. An initiative, supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and UNIFEM, seeks to ensure that women's concerns and priorities are fully integrated into national planning processes. The programmes emphasizes training in gender-sensitive planning for civil



servants and networking among key ministries, including MAWRD, and the NPC which is responsible for development planning in the country.

The newly formed inter-ministerial gender network could prove an important medium for recommending to policy-makers the incorporation of gender-sensitisation in the national and sectoral planning processes. Similarly, the Namibia National Women's Organization (NANAWO) has been attempting to educate parliamentarians to address gender concerns.

Gender-sensitive planning must be supported by appropriate research and analysis, a process which has only recently begun in Namibia. The NPC's Central Statistics Office, in consultation with government departments, research centres and NGOs has formulated a strategy to generate, and disseminate gender-specific statistics. This process is an important step in overcoming the need for statistics for informed policy formulation. The MEC has also established a system of gender-based statistics to monitor differential enrolment and retention rates.<sup>259</sup>

Other important research initiatives include research by LAC, economic and legal studies of the northern regions conducted by the Namibia Development Trust (NDT) and studies carried out by the University's Law Faculty, and Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) and SSD. In addition, the GTRP which produced this report will also promote systematic research and policy discussions around gender issues.

Research findings are also being disseminated at the local level. Although this practice is not widespread, simplified versions of a socio-economic survey, as well as results from other research, have proven useful for promoting awareness of the obstacles faced by

women and for generating debate on development options. A survey of the north also formed the basis for designing workshops for rural men and women on the implications of customary law.

Despite these steps forward, women still remain under-represented in planning and research, even in sectoral initiatives that target the communal areas. However, there is a new programme supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and MAWRD to integrate women into agricultural and rural development programmes. An important component of this programme will be to develop gender-sensitive data collection and approaches to planning. The programme also aims to train extension staff in socio-economic and gender analysis so that regional experiences have an input into agricultural and rural development plans and policies.

#### Affirmative Action Policy<sup>260</sup>

Affirmative action policies have been implemented in Namibia in two ways: (i) "Provisions which ensure the presence of women on important government decision-making bodies; and (ii) general authorizations for affirmative action, which could be used as a basis for affirmative action for women". For example:

◆ An affirmative action provision is contained in The Local Authorities Act and requires that political parties must include a specified number of women on their candidate's list in the first local government elections held in 1992;

◆ The Traditional Authorities Act also makes reference to making leadership positions available to women by requiring that traditional authorities "promote affirmative action among the members of that community, in accordance with article 23 of the Constitution, in particular by promoting women in positions of leadership";<sup>261</sup>

◆ Representation of women from government, trade unions and employers' organisations is required on the Social Security Commission by the Social Security Act<sup>262</sup> and the Vocational Training Board.<sup>263</sup>

◆ The Council of the Polytechnic is required to include one person appointed by the minister to represent the interests of women;<sup>264</sup>

◆ At least three of the 14 members of the National Sports Commission must be women according to The Namibia Sports Act. The Sport Development Fund was established to promote sport in Namibia and is used to, "enhance the sports of persons within Namibia who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws or practices" - a provision making it possible for affirmative action for women in sports;<sup>265</sup>

◆ The Namibian Labour Act prohibits discrimination in employment practises and also makes reference to discrimination that was practised under apartheid by stating that, "prohibiting any employer or person from implementing any employment policies and practices aimed at the advancement of persons who have been disadvantaged in the labour field by discriminatory laws or practices which have been enacted or practised before the independence of Namibia".<sup>266</sup> There is no legal barrier to improving the employment opportunities of women;

◆ At least two of the 12 appointees to the Land Reform Advisory Commission must be women according to The Agricultural (commercial) Land Reform Act, which is designed to redistribute land more equitably. The stated purpose of the acquisition of commercial agricultural land by the state is, "to make such land available for agricultural purposes to Namibian citizens who do not own or otherwise have the use of agricultural land or adequate agricultural land, and foremost to those

Namibian citizens who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws or practices".<sup>267</sup> This is a provision to promote affirmative action;

◆ A communal land bill is still in draft form due to its many controversial provisions. The bill may recognize the position of women, who are the main agricultural producers in many communal areas, but are seldom allocated communal land in their own right;

◆ In a 1991 amendment, The Agricultural Bank Act was changed with the provision of loans on special terms "for the purpose of enabling any person who undertakes to carry on farming operations to acquire, with a view to such person's advancement contemplated in article 23(2) of the Constitution or otherwise, agricultural land".<sup>268</sup> It is possible that this provision could serve as a basis for affirmative action for women. However, it has been applied only with racial affirmative action in mind and used to assist communal farmers (male or female) to purchase commercial farming land.<sup>269</sup>

### Legal and Policy Reform<sup>270</sup>

The government has recognised the struggle for equality of women in comparison to men. Greater attention is being given to the role of women in the development of the country. The Constitution, together with ongoing legal reform, is helping to create an environment conducive to women's equality. Listed below are some moves by government which have been supported by women's organisations, to address gender inequality in Namibia. Most of these measures have been discussed in the situation analysis:

◆ Affirmative action as guaranteed in the Constitution

◆ The Married Persons Equality Act

◆ The draft abortion bill

◆ The draft maintenance bill

◆ The draft rape bill

◆ SME policy, with special



emphasis on women's access to support and other services

- ◆ Family Planning Policy
- ◆ National Youth Policy
- ◆ Credit Guarantee Policy, with specific chapter on special access for women
- ◆ Draft gender policy.

Progress in empowering women has in part been limited due to the slow and cumbersome conversion of policies into laws. However, new policies, such as plans to develop an agriculture bank for the communal areas or a policy to establish conservancies for community-based wildlife management, indicate greater concern for the need for a legal and policy framework on rural development. These policies demonstrate some gender sensitivity and will improve the access of rural women to basic resources. For example, the Co-operative Act, now under review by parliament, is a notable illustration of both participation in the policy process and of legislation which can create a favourable environment for community based organisation and control of resources. An advisory committee of government and NGOs produced the policy through broad consultation, and the committee will become a legally-recognized board once the act is passed. The policy encourages the development of autonomous co-operatives as methods for empowering women and specifies the participation of women in management structures.

#### Activities Leading to Gender Policy<sup>271</sup>

In developing and implementing gender policies, the DWA undertook the following activities:

- ◆ Immediately after its inception, the DWA organized consultation with the ministries to clarify its role and to identify a model for future co-operation; these consultations culminated in a national workshop aimed at defining and identifying priority programmes for WID. In the same year work began to sim-

plify and translate CEDAW;

- ◆ During 1992, the DWA also launched the National Communication Strategy, to approve CEDAW and began the Ecumenical Women of Namibia (EWON);

◆ The DWA organised the first Annual Programme Sharing Forum (APSF) for women to join together, share experiences and set a course of action based on their common experiences since Independence. The programme planning committee and eventually the gender network committee were established to oversee the activities of all participants and agencies across all sectors.

- ◆ In 1994 gender work became operationalised around the nine gender sectoral committees and the WID Fund. Consultation was also arranged with permanent secretaries to endorse and operationalise the first APSF recommendations. A second APSF was held at which the need and importance of formulating a Gender Policy was highlighted;

◆ By the end of 1995 the ground work had been laid for the formulation of a National Gender Policy. During this year, the CSO also published a statistical abstract entitled "Women and Men in Namibia" a compilation of gender disaggregated basic statistics, demonstrating its commitment to gender-sensitive statistical reporting.

All of these activities and programmes supported, or initiated by the DWA and the Gender Network have been at the forefront of Gender Policy preparation and have set the stage for the formulation of a national gender policy.

#### OTHER PROGRAMMES

Discussed below are other programme areas which have been implemented in an effort to ensure gender equality. Some of these are public awareness campaigns, attempts to improve women's access to resources, gender networking in government, NGOs and donor agencies, introduction of

local capacity building and self-help organisations and donor support in gender development.

#### Public Awareness<sup>272</sup>

There are also efforts being made towards public awareness of women's rights and of gender issues. Namibia is fortunate to have a supportive leadership. The president and prime minister have been two of the nation's most outspoken supporters of women, examples of which pose a small but significant challenge to the male-dominance commonplace in many rural areas. The electronic and print media ensure that debate and discussion of obstacles faced by women reach a wider audience. The government newspaper, *New Era*, is mandated to emphasise community and rural development issues and attempts to do so in both English and African languages.<sup>273</sup> These efforts are supplemented by information campaigns such as those prepared by the LAC to inform local groups of women's and children's rights enshrined in the Constitution.

In rural areas, efforts are under way to make school curricula more gender-sensitive and to give guidance and support to girls in overcoming gender-barriers when choosing careers. For example, the NANA-WO branch in the Okavango region is encouraging girls in secondary schools to consider non-traditional careers, including agriculture professions. Although not gender-specific, education and media campaigns have also been actively used to educate the public on issues of direct relevance to rural women. Government ministries and NGOs together have produced publications and radio programmes on topics such as AIDS, wise water use, and the causes of desertification.

#### Access to Productive Resources<sup>274</sup>

Programmes and interventions are also targeting women at the community level. The MAWRD is

implementing several measures aimed at enhancing agricultural extension capacity and outreach to communal farmers. The programme aims at enhancing household food security, particularly for female-headed households, by improving agricultural services and rural development support to women and by reducing the time and labour women spend on subsistence agriculture tasks. The programme trained rural development extension staff in communication skills, participatory development and, more importantly, on concepts of household food security and gender. In addition, the extension staff mobilizes local participation, in part through training and support to community-based rural development promoters, most of whom are women.

Through the FAO programme noted above, other agricultural extension workers will gain training and experience in participatory and gender-awareness approaches. An international NGO, ACCORD, is conducting similar training over a five-year period for field workers from farmer's associations, the national trade union, and government extension staff. In addition, a newly formed Home Economics Advisory Board is examining the possible role of home economists on extension staff. This involvement would aid women and men in income-generation and household resource management.

Finally, the ministry is seeking to move away from the administration of costly services to the provision of extension, research and other subsistence farmer support. Over a dozen Agricultural and Rural Development Centres are near completion. The decentralised Agricultural and Rural Development Centres will encourage contact between extension services and women farmers as well as enhance their access to agricultural services. In the Caprivi, a committee is con-



sidering how the involvement of a cooperative involved in selling seeds and inputs as well as providing other services can promote cooperation between itself and MAWRD. Although this process has not addressed women farmers, this cooperation will encourage local people's participation in the centres. These types of programmes are an important step towards reorienting agricultural services towards women farmers.

The HFS programme, as well as efforts by the Rural Development Centre, CCN and the Canada-Namibia Cooperation (CANAMCO), have led to a pilot project for the introduction of appropriate technologies in some villages. The aqua-roller was introduced to female-headed households through the HFS programme. In collaboration with NDT, the Rural Development Centre is designing new donkey carts for transporting water and crops. The experiences with these technologies, such as hammer mills for millet and agricultural tools, are leading to new designs, as well as management strategies more appropriate for Namibian women. To date, these projects have been ad hoc and have only led to a limited exchange of experiences. A recently started UNIFEM supported initiative will assess technologies of greatest value and importance to Namibian women on a broader scale.

As previously mentioned, a particularly successful area of NGO involvement has been in credit unions and savings schemes. Organizations such as the Rural People's Institute for Social Empowerment (RISE) and the Namibian Credit Union League (NACUL) have gained considerable experience in supporting local groups to administer savings and credit programmes. Many credit unions have helped women to invest their resources. Also valuable are lessons learned by the Private Sector

Foundation, the Institute for Management Leadership Training, Cooperation for Development and other NGOs furnishing credit and small loans as well as training to female entrepreneurs. Similarly, although not always profitable, income generation activities have strengthened the skills and knowledge of women in management, finance and communication.

### Networking<sup>275</sup>

Until recently, there was a lack of government and NGO coordination which resulted in duplication and inefficient use of resources. Linkages across sectors, between regions and between government and NGOs are enhancing service provision, improving policy-making, and stimulating the exchange of ideas and information.

For example, DWA has set up a structure to facilitate NGO, government and donor participation in the following nine priority areas under which gender concerns will be addressed:

- ◆ Economic activities;
- ◆ Rural community programmes.
- ◆ Legal affairs;
- ◆ Women in decision-making;
- ◆ Education and training;
- ◆ Communication;
- ◆ Reproductive health and maternal protection;
- ◆ Violence against women; and
- ◆ Research and data collection.

Each of these areas have specific tasks. For example, the tasks for the Rural Community Programmes are to instigate job creation, sensitise rural communities to gender issues, decrease the workload of women and institute projects to decrease malnutrition in rural areas. Several other ministries are also attempting to coordinate the use of volunteer promoters in literacy, rural development and community health programmes.

Regional rural development committees of ministry, donor, and

NGO staff exist in the northern and southern regions. Similar government-NGO coordination is also being fashioned around both vocational training and micro-enterprise activities, where there are diverse and ad hoc initiatives. In the NGO sector, rural organisations are represented in both of the umbrella organisations. NGO collaboration and consultation with CBOs led to the participatory Peoples' Land Conference held in 1994 where most delegates reaffirmed their need for more land in their rural areas.

### Local Capacity Building<sup>276</sup>

The success of policies and programmes for women will only become apparent over time and with careful assessment. Accomplishments must be evaluated while keeping in mind the nation's recent independence and relatively brief exposure to democracy. In this sense, it is the advancement of grassroots organisations which represent a significant step towards advancing women's issues. A number of programmes seek to strengthen CBOs to empower local residents to identify and implement development processes in their areas.

Developing local capacity takes time, and many communities continue to rely on external funds and technical assistance to activate programmes. However, rural women are being incorporated into decision-making and leadership processes through their involvement in local committees and organisations. Women are present at all decision-making levels in UNICEF's Integrated Area Based Programme, a regional, multi-sectoral development initiative. Pilot tested in the north, the programme has led to the establishment of active committees at the village, district and regional levels as well as sectoral committees in agriculture, water and sanitation and other concerns.

"Women are increasingly involved in the management of water through community-based Water Point Committees. Other initiatives which seek to involve women in community decision-making structures include CANAMCO's regional rural development programme, with pilot projects in six villages and small towns in the east and south".

While rural women's participation in CBOs important to promoting gender equality, they often lack the experience and confidence to assume decision-making roles. "For this reason, some NGOs are supporting the establishment of women-only organisations or women-only branches. An affiliated association to the Eastern Epukiro Farmer's Association gives Herero women farmers the confidence and autonomy to speak and participate apart from their dominant male counterparts."

Due to a lack of training and support in organisational management, some CBOs have dissolved. However, women-only CBOs enable women to advance their knowledge and interest, and to gain experience in agriculture and rural development programmes.

### Donor Support<sup>277</sup>

With Independence came a multitude of financial and technical support projects from multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies, many of whom had little knowledge and experience of Namibia. These agencies emphasise gender issues in programming and assistance to the government. For example, donor aid has been helped to support the DWA as well as other women's organizations such as NANAWO and Sister Collective. They have placed a priority on women's rights and have supported initiatives aimed at legal education and reform.

Several donor agencies, such as UNIFEM, SIDA and NORAD,



have direct granting programmes for activities which specifically target women. "More commonly, donors expect applications for financial support to demonstrate gender-sensitivity in project design, management and evaluation". A number of international agencies request that proposals specifically show how women will benefit or be affected by a proposed project. Some donors also request applicant organisations to specify gender composition of staff and management of boards with a view to redressing imbalances in decision-making posts."

Donor requirements, combined with advocacy and networking, have caused government and NGOs to deal with gender issues in planning and implementation of their programmes. For Namibian NGOs and groups excluded from policy processes, international agencies also serve to influence policy. Many foreign donors help to promote the concerns of women's groups and other under-represented Namibian organisations to government.

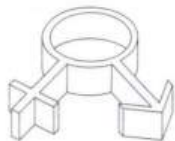
A donor co-ordination association called Women in Development is helping to reduce overlap in programming and to more appropriately allocate resources. Separate sub-committees focus on women in micro-enterprises, women and law, women NGOs, implementation of

Beijing, the DWA and women and training. Unfortunately, "few donors have translated the focus on gender to support the women farmers. Inversely, technical cooperation in the agricultural sector, even programmes targeting communal farmers, have taken little account of gender issues, and so too, have yielded few benefits to women farmers. Those with regional staff are often engaged in infrastructural programmes, such as rural water supply, or micro-enterprise and have limited contact with rural women. Agricultural projects for women are often confined to horticulture and forestry and preclude crop and livestock production."

In addition to the support described above, a notable exception had been the collaboration of the Danish Aid Agency (DANIDA) with CCN to train women extension officers and to improve services for women. Finally, government officials, NGOs and CBOs have already raised concerns which include concern over stress on project-based funding as opposed to core-funding, a bias towards specific regions, paternalism towards institutions, and compromise over who controls Namibia's development agenda. A frequent concern voiced is the idea that donor support perpetuates dependency, and in the absence of financial support and local capacity building, many initiatives will crumble.

## PART III

## THE WAY FORWARD



This Part integrates the issues presented in Part I and Part II. It outlines achievements and constraints with particular emphasis on addressing concerns voiced in the Beijing Platform for Action. The section outlines the problems (based on the Situation Analysis) and what should be done (based on the Policies and Programmes).

## INTRODUCTION

As detailed in the previous two sections, it can be determined that there are still areas where gender equality programmes and policies can be improved upon.

Women's situation in Namibia, like anywhere else, is precarious and demands clearer targeting and urgent action rather than outlining well-intentioned ideas. This new approach calls for an objective analysis of women's situation in Namibia and will require the development of explicit strategies in response to the different needs of the genders. The lack of such analysis and therefore the absence of a gender perspective is apparent within the overall NDP I macro-economic framework as well as many government, NGO and donor sectoral goals and programmes.

## SHORTCOMINGS OF THE LAW

Despite the existence of some laws which give attention to affirmative action, it must be noted that the experience of some parliamentarians when debating the Married Persons Equality Act showed a lack of gender-awareness and sensitivity, and as such passing gender-sensitive laws is difficult since most lawmakers are still men while most gender advocates are women.

Some gender-sensitive laws are also inconsistent. For example, although women are explicitly represented on the Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia, there is no legislative requirement that women be represented on the Council of the University of Namibia.<sup>278</sup> Similarly, although seats are reserved for women on the Social Security Commission, the Labour Act contains no provisions regulating the gender makeup of the Labour Advisor Council.<sup>279</sup> However, the Labour Advisory Council has shown sensitivity to the issue of affirmative action by requiring employers and trade unions to submit new nominations of persons to serve in the labour courts in an effort to achieve a better gender balance.<sup>280</sup> Also, financial laws do not adequately address gender issue. For example, the NDC Act, which includes among its objective the promotion of employment in the formal and informal sectors, does not require female representation on its board of directors nor does it make any mention of affirmative action.<sup>281</sup> The Namibian Housing Enterprise Act, which is aimed at providing financing to assist Namibians in their housing needs, makes no mention of women or affirmative action.<sup>282</sup>

It is hoped that inconsistencies in the legislative approach to affirmative action will be alleviated by the implementation of the National Gender Policy which will cut across all sectors and is now being discussed in parliament.

*There are still areas  
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BEIJING AND BEYOND<sup>283</sup>

Probably one of the single most important events for women's movements in Namibia was their participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Namibia sent a 56-person delegation to the conference headed by the then Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who is now Director General of the DWA. The major topics addressed by the Namibian delegation were violence against women, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, the girl-child, poverty among rural women and illiteracy. The primary goals of the delegation were to learn from other countries with similar problems and to adopt a Global Platform for Action.<sup>284</sup>

After attending the conference Namibian women's groups and organisations have begun with renewed efforts to address gender inequalities with both legal and policy reforms. Prior to Beijing, Namibia had been in the process of developing a National Gender policy on women and had a national programme aimed at improving the status of women by bringing about gender equality in all sectors of society. After the conference, a Gender Network Coordinating Committee (GNCC) which has representatives from Government, NGOs, churches and concerned individuals was strengthened and is evaluating the following areas related to gender empowerment:

- ◆ *Rural development, environment and housing.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development.
- ◆ *Education, training and coordination.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture.
- ◆ *Reproductive health and maternal protection.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Health and Social Services.
- ◆ *Violence against women and children.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ◆ *Economic empowerment and employment.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Trade and Industry.
- ◆ *Women in decision-making.*  
Lead agency: Department of Women's Affairs, Office of the President.
- ◆ *Legal affairs.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Justice.
- ◆ *Information education and communication.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- ◆ *Research, data collection and documentation.*  
Lead agency: University of Namibia.
- ◆ *The girl-child.*  
Lead agency: all sectors.
- ◆ *Proposed gender and development fund.*  
Lead agency: Ministry of Finance.

At Beijing, Namibia committed itself to the adoption of the Global Platform for Action and a National Gender Policy, while continuing the programmes started prior to the conference. Namibia's National Gender Policy will pay special attention to women in education, health, law and violence since these have been identified as priority areas for Namibia. Based on its renewed commitment, the following programmes have been developed and are beginning to be implemented:

*Women and Law*

The GNCC is involved in a project aimed at law reform and legal legitimacy for gender equality. The major role players are the Ministry of Justice, DWA, NGOs, CBOs and individuals. Through the activities in this project, it is hoped that women will be made aware of their rights, how to seek legal protection and that there is complete equality before the law. Current laws

will be brought in line with the Constitution and laws will also adhere to the principles of affirmative action. It is anticipated that these measures will ensure economic, social, political, civil and cultural equality in society.

The primary activities are:

- ◆ implementation of communication strategies;
- ◆ research and amendment or recommendation for the repeal of all laws that discriminate against women;
- ◆ translation of CEDAW in all languages in order to provide all people with an opportunity to understand the CEDAW (completed);
- ◆ convening of public hearings concerning the Married Persons Equality Act throughout the country (completed);
- ◆ redraft the laws on rape, maintenance and inheritance as well as undergo consultations with the public throughout the country.

### Women and Education

The GNCC is involved in education, training and empowerment of women. The primary role players are the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, MHEVTST, DWA, NGOs, churches, private sector and the community. Through the activities in this sector, it is expected that young women will be enabled to enter male-dominated fields, these activities will create a safe educational environment for the girl-child, educate boys and girls to see themselves as equal, and educational material will become gender-sensitive. In addition, it is expected that these changes will bring about self-confidence for women to take up positions in male-dominated fields, equip women for economic empowerment, reduce female illiteracy and change societies' attitudes towards gender-bias raising of children.

The primary activities are:

- ◆ screening of educational material for gender sensitivity;
- ◆ focus on recognition of attainment of the girl-child at all levels which provides incentives for girls to avail themselves of training in mathematics and science related fields;
- ◆ establish career and vocational guidance centres and units at tertiary level institutions;
- ◆ creation of awareness programmes concerning the importance of reading and writing by utilising radio and television in the different languages;
- ◆ training of specific members of the adult community in literacy skills at the basic educational levels, functional educational levels and in English proficiency;
- ◆ initiate gender sensitisation workshops for school principals;
- ◆ institute confidence-building workshops for the girl-child.

### Women and Health Care

The GNCC is also focusing on women and health, population and gender, and development. The primary role players are the Ministry of Health and Social Services, NPC, DWA, NGOs, churches and the community. Through their activities, it is expected that women will be better able to utilise available health facilities, the incidence of maternal and infant mortality will be reduced, under-five child mortality will be reduced, an increase in life expectancy at birth, a reduction in the vulnerability to HIV infection of women and children and general improvements in the health status of women and the community at large.

The primary activities are:

- ◆ to promote Primary Health Care;



- ◆ to promote reproductive health behaviours;
- ◆ to encourage safe motherhood programmes;
- ◆ counselling, training and dealing with STDs, HIV/AIDS infections;
- ◆ encourage preventative and educational programmes to promote women's health;
- ◆ the training and capacity building of community members in health care promotion.

#### Women and Violence

The GNCC is also focusing on violence against women and children. The primary role players in this project are Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Home Affairs, DWA, NGOs and CBOs. Through its activities, it is expected that communities will be made aware of the negative impact of violence against women and children, information will be used to develop educational material to inform the population on peace and peaceful conflict resolution and collect data that will be used to make suggestions for amendment and development of laws aimed at addressing violence against women and children.

The primary activities are:

- ◆ conduct research on violence against women and children;
- ◆ convene regional workshops on violence against women and children (in process);
- ◆ hold public hearings on violence against women and children in an effort to have community members testify about the issues (in process);
- ◆ convene anti-rape workshops;
- ◆ establish women and child abuse centres and shelter for battered women (partially completed);
- ◆ train and sensitise policewomen and men in dealing with victims of violence;
- ◆ convene self-defence classes;
- ◆ provide counselling services to victims of violence;
- ◆ hold panel discussions on television and radio on violence against women and children.

#### NATIONAL WID WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Workshop on Women in Development, Country Gender Profile held 25-26 October 1996 drafted recommendations to be considered in addition to the areas of concern and action pertaining to the formulation of policy and the implementation of gender equality in Namibia.

Participants recommended the following:

##### Women in the Economy

- ◆ Agricultural extension workers should be educated to increase rural women's knowledge to alleviate food insecurity. They should also be equipped to bring appropriate technology to rural women in an effort to reduce their workload. Until rural women's workloads are reduced they will not have time nor energy to participate in gender awareness activities.
- ◆ Credit information should be made available through information campaigns, especially targeting credit availability and credit information for rural women. This should include information about conditions and eligibility requirements, as well as include information about the agricultural bank.
- ◆ There should be clear policies on wage structures and specifically a minimum wage policy.
- ◆ More research is needed into the causes and consequences of commercial sex workers.

- ◆ Land must be made accessible to the landless, especially women.
- ◆ Vacant public service positions should give women priority to address previous gender imbalances.
- ◆ Private sector employers should be required to provide gender disaggregated data and national incentives should be awarded to companies with gender-sensitive hiring practices.
- ◆ Women in medium-size businesses should be helped to expand their businesses and enter traditionally male dominated sectors (mining and financing) and in areas that will create more employment (manufacturing and tourism).

#### Politics and Power

- ◆ Clear regulations for affirmative action including opportunities for women.
- ◆ Training and information campaigns to gender-sensitise policy-makers.
- ◆ Information campaigns aimed at informing rural women about their legal rights.
- ◆ Grassroots and local women's organisations should be more involved in the development of a National Gender Policy.
- ◆ Further policies and programmes should focus on women in political positions with clear quotas in regional and local authorities and affirmative action.
- ◆ Efforts are needed to include women on important committees and commissions. Some constraints noted are women's inexperience in serving in such positions.
- ◆ Each ministry should have a gender specialist review its policies and programmes.
- ◆ Donor activities should be more closely monitored to make sure they are in line with government gender policy.
- ◆ A gender and development fund should be established and an increased budget allocated for gender-training.
- ◆ The local authorities bill should be amended to enable a quota system to be enforced and to allow more women to participate in politics. In addition, political parties should encourage women candidates.

#### Social Structures

- ◆ There is a need (partly addressed by DWA) to focus on self-esteem, responsibility for health, independence in terms of sex, legal issues, violence and rural development.
- ◆ Women should be afforded secure community and multi-purpose meeting places.
- ◆ Customary laws should be reviewed and redressed to be brought in line with the Constitution.

#### Access to Education

- ◆ Teachers need to have course choices and encourage girls to not only study traditional female subjects.
- ◆ All gender-related recommendations need to be brought into NIED so that all new school books reflect new gender policies.
- ◆ Gender education should start at an early age and should empower the girl-child. It should focus on improving women's and girls' self-esteem.
- ◆ The University of Namibia should incorporate gender issues in all core courses.
- ◆ The University of Namibia should start a data bank of all Namibians, their skills, fields of study and have names of women who could be called upon to fill prospective positions.
- ◆ The University of Namibia should establish a College of Business with at least 50 percent female enrolment.



#### Women and the Media

- ◆ There is difficulty in disseminating women's information, partly due to the low priority of women's issues and a lack of women's access to radio and television. This problem may be solved when women are in decision-making positions.
- ◆ Information and communication should also be in local languages.

#### Living Conditions

No specific recommendation

#### Health Care

- ◆ There should be broader based health care provision so that reproductive and sexual health are included.

#### Violence and Conflict

- ◆ Drama has been a successful vehicle in disseminating information about domestic violence and should be used at the regional and local levels.
- ◆ Violence against women and children needs closer attention, as does the role of alcoholism and its impact on all facets of life, including violence.

### STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The preparation for the Fourth Women's Conference provided an opportunity for Namibia to contemplate the overall status of women and provided an arena in which Namibia could share its experiences and cooperate with other countries on gender and women's issues. It was due to hard work during the preparatory phase, and Namibia's commitment to gender issues, that showed Africa's commitment. In implementing the Global Platform for Action adopted in Beijing, government, NGOs and the private sector need to create programmes which ensure Namibia's implementation of the outcome of Beijing. The following section lists the different areas where the Global Platform for Action will be implemented, training needs, time-frame for implementation, implementing agencies, and evaluations required.

#### Local Strategy

Namibia is part of SADC and is participating in regional post-Beijing activities. In this context, the following local strategies will be undertaken:

- ◆ Based on the recommendations and information gathered during the preparatory phase for Beijing, the main strategy will complement the efforts of the nine gender sectoral committees in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action by government and NGO representatives.

- ◆ All ministries are required to study and implement the relevant chapters in the Platform for Action, especially:

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology

Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development

Ministry of Health and Social Services

Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Ministry of Youth and Sport

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Ministry of Trade and Industry

#### Time frame

Each ministry (beginning in 1996) should develop a programme of how it is going to implement the Global Platform for Action. Each ministry must prepare a progress report biannually from 1998 to 2004.

### *Monitoring*

The DWA will monitor the implementation of the Global Platform for Action from 1996 to 2004 so it is important that the DWA be strengthened to enable it to carry out its activities efficiently and effectively.

### *Mainstreaming of Gender Issues*

There is a need for every ministry to have a gender specialist who can ensure that all policies formulated are gender-sensitive. The gender specialist should be in a management position within each ministry. There is also a need for a coordinator of gender issues in each region of the country who can be a link between DWA and the various regions. The University of Namibia needs to incorporate gender issues into all its core courses.

### *Training*

Each Ministry will need to choose one or two persons to be trained in gender issues so they can effectively serve in the ministries.

### *Implementing agency*

DWA and the University of Namibia should facilitate the implementation.

### *Time frame*

Three to four years

### *Gender Balance in the Labour Force*

Efforts are needed in both government and private sector to create more gender balance in employment. In government, vacancies should be filled with qualified women, especially at levels where women are under-represented. The private sector should be encouraged to employ more women so that a gender balance is established in the labour force. The various ministries should be required to make annual reports on gender statistics within their ministries. The private sector should be required to include gender disaggregated statistics in their annual reports. One motivation for the private sector to hire more women could be a nationally recognised awareness for those companies which hire the most women, especially within management positions.

The University of Namibia needs to start a data bank on all Namibians with the different skills in the various fields to enable employers to obtain lists of women for prospective employment. In order to obtain this information a standard form will be developed for every graduate to complete. The data bank will then be updated annually after graduations.

### *Implementing agencies*

Government ministries, parastatals, University of Namibia, private companies and NGOs.

### *Time frame*

Starting in the 1996/97 financial year. The first report should come out in 1997 and annually thereafter. The process should be carried out until the labour force is gender-balanced.

### *Gender Issues Training Programme for Teachers*

Training programmes should incorporate gender issues in order to sensitise teachers.

### *Implementing agencies*

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology



#### *Time frame*

Starting in 1997 and continuing until all teachers have attended gender-training sessions.

#### *Representation*

Efforts should be made to include women in all official delegations in the areas of their operation and expertise. All commissions, boards and committees which are to be established, either permanent or temporary, at all government levels should include women.

#### *Implementing agencies*

Government ministries and agencies and the DWA will be the monitoring agency.

#### *Time frame*

This practice should start in the 1996/97 financial year. The first report by the DWA should be completed by 1997 and produced annually thereafter.

#### *Economic Empowerment*

Women should be assisted and encouraged to have access to credit and to buy shares in companies of all sizes. Women in medium-sized businesses should be assisted in expanding their businesses and in entering traditionally male-dominated areas such as mining and finance. An effort should be made in assisting women to expand their businesses in areas that will lead to job creation such as manufacturing, tourism, construction, agriculture and fishing. The University of Namibia should consider establishing a College of Business Studies with at least 50 percent enrolment of women.

#### *Implementing agencies*

Ministry of Trade and Industry, University of Namibia, National Chamber of Commerce, DWA, women's organisations and Namibia Development Corporation.

#### *Evaluation*

A publication on women's business activities should be produced annually. Successful business women should be nationally recognised to motivate other. A report on successful women's projects should be published for each region and nationally and the most successful regions should be recognised.

#### *Time frame*

Starting immediately, the first report should be produced in 1998 and annual thereafter.

#### *Participation in Politics*

The Local Authorities Bill should be amended so that a quota system can be enforced to allow more women to participate in politics until it is no longer necessary to enforce such a policy. Political parties should ensure that women candidates are placed in top positions on party lists and consideration should be given to allocation of a number of seats to be contested among women candidates. The implementation of this recommendation would require a Constitutional amendment.

#### *Implementing agencies*

Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing, political parties, cabinet, electoral commission and parliament.

## IV

## PART IV

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## ENDNOTES

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- 3 DWA, 1995a:1
- 4 Katjavivi, 1988:13
- 5 The terms "African" and "black" are used interchangeably to refer to the indigenous people of Namibia. Although some Afrikaans speaking people refer to themselves as "Africans", their traditions are derived from a European or mixed ancestry. People of European ancestry will be called "whites" and people whose ancestry are mixed black and white will be called "coloureds". All of these terms are problematic due to the inequality these terms conveyed during the apartheid era (Pendleton 1994:2).
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- 7 This section is derived from: LeBeau, Debbie, "The Changing Status of Women in Namibia and its Impact on Violence against Women", in Ingolf Diener and Olivier Graefe, Gamsberg Macmillan, Windhoek, in press, 1997.
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- 16 LeBeau, op. cit. 7
- 17 Becker, 1993:80, 91-93
- 18 Tapscott and Hubbard, 1991:4
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- 33 Tjngaete, 1989:71
- 34 Bank of Namibia, 1994:1
- 35 Girvan, 1994:32; GRN, 1990: Articles 100 and 125 together with schedule 5
- 36 Girvan, 1994:3-4; DWA 1994:7
- 37 A new draft Communal Lands Bill is currently under review. If passed in its present form it may reduce the power of chiefs and headmen to allocate land and may have a significant impact on the ability of women to acquire rights to land.
- 38 Girvan, 1994:32
- 39 DWA, 1994:52-53
- 40 Cupido, 1995a:1-2
- 41 Girvan, 1994:2
- 42 Van Rhyn, 1995:4-5
- 43 NPC, 1995:319
- 44 DWA, 1995a:116
- 45 Girvan, 1994:35-37
- 46 Gabriel, 1995:8
- 47 DWA, 1995a:116-117
- 48 Girvan, 1994:35-37
- 49 Gabriel, 1995:8-9
- 50 DWA, 1994:36-37
- 51 DWA, 1995a:117
- 52 CSO, 1994:50-53
- 53 Cupido, 1995a:1-3
- 54 DWA, 1995a:90
- 55 CSO, 1995:25 and DWA, 1995a:91-92
- 56 Legal Assistance Centre, 1997:26-27, 38
- 57 Hermann, 1996:14-15
- 58 DWA, 1994:35 and Girvan, 1994:46-47
- 59 Frohlich, 1991:3,13
- 60 Mwarania, 1991:12 and DWA, 1994:35-36
- 61 Girvan, 1994:47-48
- 62 Combating of Immoral Practices Act, 1980:Act 21
- 63 DWA, 1995a:47-48
- 64 Lewis and van Rooy, 1991:5-6
- 65 *Sister Namibia*, 1997:52
- 66 As reported in DWA, 1995a:49
- 67 *Sister Namibia*, 1997:52
- 68 Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, 1994:57 and DWA, 1995a:93
- 69 Ibid, 1994:79 and 1995a:94
- 70 CSO, 1995:32 and DWA, 1995a:94
- 71 This section derived from: LeBeau, op. cit. 7
- 72 DWA, 1994:31
- 73 Becker, 1993:62-63
- 74 NDT, 1994:26
- 75 Food and Agricultural Organisation, 1995:5
- 76 World Bank, 1992:39
- 77 DWA, 1994:38-39 and Girvan, 1994:37-38
- 78 NPC, 1995:vol. 1, p. 197
- 79 Girvan, 1994:24-26
- 80 International Labour Organisation (ILO), 1991:49





- 81 Girvan, 1994:25
- 82 NPC, 1995:197
- 83 Section derived from: LeBeau, op. cit. 7
- 84 DWA, 1994:53-55
- 85 Becker, 1996a:7-8
- 86 LeBeau, 1996:134-135
- 87 Hubbard, 1991a:13
- 88 LeBeau, op. cit. 7
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 GRN, 1990: Article 66
- 91 Hinz and Joas, 1995:9
- 92 Hinz and Joas, 1995:16-17
- 93 DWA, 1994:52-53
- 94 LeBeau, op. cit. 7
- 95 Becker, 1993:193
- 96 Heike Becker personal communication
- 97 Clevear and Wallace, 1990:99-101
- 98 Cupido, 1995a:12
- 99 GRN, 1990: Chapter 20 p. 65 and Article 14 p. 69
- 100 DWA, 1995a:11-12
- 101 DWA, 1995a:9 and Girvan, 1995:13-14
- 102 DWA, 1994:44-46
- 103 GRN, 1990, Article 10 and Article 1 p. 17
- 104 DWA, 1995a:35
- 105 GRN, 1990, Article 1 p. 17
- 106 DWA, 1995a:35
- 107 DWA, 1993:9
- 108 DWA, 1995a:12
- 109 GRN, 1990: Chapter 2, Article 17, and Chapter 5 Article 28
- 110 National Democratic Institute, 1996:14
- 111 Pendleton, W.C. et al, 1993:20
- 112 Girvan, 1994:9
- 113 LeBeau, 1997, in press
- 114 Cupido, 1995a:1-3
- 115 DWA, 1994:41-42,9
- 116 The 1991 Population and Housing Census, as well as other census data, excludes Walvis Bay because it was still under South Africa rule at the time.
- 117 CSO, 1994:7,10
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 CSO, 1994:7-23
- 120 Becker and Hinz, 1995:39-47
- 121 Becker, 1993:83-87
- 122 Hishongwe, 1992:38
- 123 Becker and Hinz, 1995:108
- 124 Ibid. 39-47
- 125 DWA, 1995a:42
- 126 Becker, 1993:71
- 127 Khaxas, 1997:6
- 128 Becker 1993:115
- 129 DWA, 1995a:58
- 130 DWA, 1995:45-46
- 131 DWA, 1995a:119
- 132 CSO, 1994:10
- 133 Pendleton, 1994:46
- 134 Malan, 1995:16
- 135 Becker, 1993:59
- 136 Williams, 1994:37
- 137 Malan, 1995:114
- 138 Becker, 1963:61-67
- 139 Malan, 1995:122-132
- 140 Malan, 1995:67
- 141 Becker, 1993:64
- 142 Becker, 1993:86-87
- 143 DWA, 1995a:60-62
- 144 GRN, 1990:Article 14
- 145 LeBeau and Black, 1995:6
- 146 Pendleton, 1996:131
- 147 Williams, 1994:49-50
- 148 Becker, 1993:64-65
- 149 DWA, 1995a:122-123
- 150 Mwiya, 1994:2
- 151 Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, 1995a:9
- 152 DWA, 1995a:122-123
- 153 Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, 1995a:11-12, 27
- 154 Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, 1995a:9, and DWA, 1995a:123-124
- 155 LeBeau, 1993:5
- 156 DWA, 1994:15
- 157 This figure excludes subsidies to the University of Namibia, private schools and hostels; scholarships and aid to students in foreign countries; and subsidies to cultural organizations.
- 158 DWA, 1995a:69
- 159 DWA, 1995a:70
- 160 "Special education" refers to educational programmes for children with physical or other disabilities.
- 161 DWA, 1995a:70
- 162 DWA, 1995a:71
- 163 Government of the Republic of Namibia, A Profile of Education in Namibia, MEC, Windhoek, 1996:8
- 164 DWA, 1995a:78
- 165 MEC, 1996:8
- 166 MEC, 1992:2
- 167 NISER, 1991:95
- 168 DWA, 1995a:81
- 169 In the informal sector, artists whose work was once relegated to the realm of "craft" are now being trained and promoted through a joint nationwide effort on the part of government, educational institutions, NGOs, grassroots organizations, entrepreneurs and other concerned individuals such as established artists.
- 170 DWA, 1995a:86
- 171 1991 Census, quoted in Lind, Agneta, *Overall Evaluation of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia*, Windhoek, 1995
- 172 Mwiya, 1995b:14
- 173 DWA, 1995a:86-87
- 174 National Conference on the Incorporation of Gender in SADC Programme of Action and for the 1994 Dakar Preparatory Conference for the 1995 UN 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing.
- 175 Interview with Peter Stormer, former Project Manager, Windhoek Vocational Training Centre by Ngozi Awa.
- 176 DWA, 1992:10
- 177 Becker, 1993:62
- 178 DWA, 1995a:44-45
- 179 DWA 1995a:57
- 180 Gwen Lister is the editor of the daily newspaper, The Namibian
- 181 The Namibian, 19 May 1995
- 182 DAW, 1995a:58
- 183 Devereux, Stephen, et al, 1996:2
- 184 Devereux, 1996:16-17
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- 186 LeBeau and Pendleton, 1993:12
- 187 CSO, 1996:98-99
- 188 MoHSS, 1993:13-14
- 189 LeBeau and Pendleton, 1993:12
- 190 CSO, 1996:98-99
- 191 MoHSS, 1993:13-14
- 192 SSD, 1994:114-118
- 193 SSD, 1994:123
- 194 MoHSS, 1993:3-4
- 195 NPC, 1995:230
- 196 MoHSS, 1993:3-4
- 197 NPC, 1995:228
- 198 MoHSS, 1993:129
- 199 DWA, 1995a:104
- 200 MoHSS, 1993:136-139
- 201 DWA, 1995a:104
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- 203 Directorate of Rural Development (DRD), 1992:35
- 204 The Namibian, "Aids death escalates; 10,000 new cases expected this year", Tuesday June 1996, front page.
- 205 *Sister Namibia*, 1992:7-8
- 206 Zimba and Mostert, 1993:57
- 207 CSO, 1994:69-74
- 208 World Bank, 1993:20
- 209 MoHSS, 1993:20
- 210 World Bank, 1994:214
- 211 MoHSS, 1993:xvii
- 212 Ahrenson-Pandikow, 1992:13-16
- 213 Cupido, 1995b:3
- 214 Dieden, 1994:2 and Becker et al, 1995:12-13
- 215 Cross, 1996:13
- 216 Dieden, 1994:2-3
- 217 Rushwaya, 1996:31
- 218 The Windhoek Observer, 2 March 1991 and The Namibian, 31 May and 22 June 1995 as reported in DWA, 1995:23-24
- 219 The Namibian, 18 June 1996
- 220 CSO, 1994:10-23
- 221 MoHSS, HIS data
- 222 CSO, 1994:27
- 223 Iken, et al, 1994:17
- 224 CSO, 1994:94, 102, 39-40, 79
- 225 Tapscott and Hubbard, 1991:6
- 226 LeBeau, 1997, in press
- 227 DWA, 1994:26
- 228 LeBeau, 1996:22
- 229 LeBeau 1996:2
- 230 DWA, 1995a:32
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- 232 Ibid:4, 74
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- 235 Information from Nampol and CSO as reported in DWA, 1995a:27
- 236 Martin, 1995:4
- 237 *The Namibian*, 13 November 1990
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- 240 LeBeau, 1996:12-13
- 241 DWA, 1995a:67-68
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- 243 NPC, 1995, Chapter 31:495-503
- 244 DWA, 1995a, See pages S-1 to S-18 for a summary of findings.
- 245 DAW, 1997:1
- 246 Ibid:2
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- 250 Ibid:22
- 251 Ibid:22-23
- 252 Ibid:24-27
- 253 Ibid:28-32
- 254 Ibid:33-35
- 255 Ibid:36-37
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- 257 Ibid:40-41
- 258 This section comes from Girvan, 1994:49-50
- 259 DWA, 1995a:35-37
- 260 This section comes from DWA, 1995a:35-37
- 261 Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995, Section 10 (g)
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# LIST OF NATIONAL PARTNERS IN 12 SADC COUNTRIES

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## Appendix 3

## GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

A Declaration by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

## PREAMBLE

WE, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community,

## A. NOTING THAT:

- i) Member States undertook in the SADC Treaty and in the Declaration to the Treaty, and in the Protocol on Immunities and Privileges, SADC not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of gender, among others;
- ii) All SADC member states have signed and ratified or acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), or are in the final stages of doing so.

## B. CONVINCED THAT:

- i) Gender equality is a fundamental human right;
- ii) Gender is an area in which considerable agreement already exists and where there are substantial benefits to be gained from closer regional co-operation and collective action;
- iii) The integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative is key to the sustainable development of the SADC region.

## C. DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT:

- i) While some SADC member states have made some progress towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming, disparities between women and men still exist in the areas of legal rights, power-sharing and decision-making, access to and control over productive resources, education and health among others;
- ii) Women constitute the majority of the poor;
- iii) Efforts to integrate gender considerations in SADC sectoral programmes and projects have not sufficiently mainstreamed gender in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner.

## D. RECOGNISING THAT:

- i) The SADC Council of Ministers in 1990 mandated the SADC Secretariat to explore the best ways to incorporate gender issues in the SADC Programme of Work, and approved in 1996 gender issues at the regional level to be co-ordinated by the Secretariat;
- ii) In execution of this mandate, the SADC Secretariat has developed and maintained working relations with key stakeholders in the area of gender, which resulted in the approval and adoption of the SADC Gender Programme by the SADC Council of Ministers in February 1997.

## WE THEREFORE:

E. REAFFIRM our commitment to the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the Africa Platform of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

## F. ENDORSE the decision of Council on:

- i) The establishment of a policy framework for mainstreaming gender in all SADC activities, and in strengthening the efforts by member countries to achieve gender equality;

- ii) Putting into place an institutional framework for advancing gender equality consistent with that established for other areas of co-operation, but which ensures that gender is routinely taken into account in all sectors;
- iii) The establishment of a Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Gender Affairs in the region;
- iv) The adoption of the existing Advisory Committee consisting of one representative from Government and one member from the Non-Governmental Organisations in each member state whose task is to advise the Standing Committee of Ministers and other Sectoral Committees of Ministers on gender issues;
- v) The establishment of Gender Focal points whose task would be to ensure that gender is taken into account in all sectoral initiatives, and is placed on the agenda of all ministerial meetings;
- vi) The establishment of a Gender Unit in the SADC Secretariat consisting of at least two officers at a senior level.

## G. RESOLVE THAT:

As leaders, we should spearhead the implementation of these undertakings and ensure the eradication of all gender inequalities in the region;

## AND

H. COMMIT ourselves and our respective countries to, inter alia,

- i) Placing gender firmly on the agenda of the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative;
- ii) Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision-making of member states and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least 30 percent target of women in political and decision-making structures by year 2005;
- iii) Promoting women's full access to, and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, markets, credit, modern technology, formal employment, and a good quality of life in order to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- iv) Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination, and enacting empowering gender-sensitive laws;
- v) Enhancing access to quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and professions;
- vi) Making quality reproductive and other health services more accessible to women and men;
- vii) Protecting and promoting the human rights of women and children;
- viii) Recognising, protecting and promoting the reproductive and sexual rights of women and the girl child;
- ix) Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children;
- x) Encouraging the mass media to disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women and children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, We, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community, HAVE SIGNED THIS DECLARATION.

DONE at Blantyre on this 8th day of September 1997, in two original texts, in the English and Portuguese languages, both texts being equally authentic.

Republic of Angola  
 Republic of Botswana  
 Kingdom of Lesotho  
 Republic of Malawi  
 Republic of Mauritius  
 Republic of Mozambique  
 Republic of Namibia  
 Republic of South Africa  
 Kingdom of Swaziland  
 United Republic of Tanzania  
 Republic of Zambia  
 Republic of Zimbabwe



## Appendix 4

Fourth World Conference on Women  
Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995

### BEIJING DECLARATION

1. We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,
2. Gathered here in Beijing in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,
3. Determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,
4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honouring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,
5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,
6. Also recognise that this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains,
7. Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity, now and carry us forward into the next century.

### We reaffirm our commitment to:

8. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development;
9. Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
10. Build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits — on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace;
11. Achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;
12. The empowerment and advancement of

women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

### We are convinced that:

13. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;
14. Women's rights are human rights;
15. Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;
16. Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development;
17. The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;
18. Local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;
19. It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women;
20. The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action;
21. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognize the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women.

### We are determined to:

22. Intensify efforts and actions to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the end of this century;
23. Ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms;
24. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;
25. Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;
26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;
27. Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, lifelong education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;
28. Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;
29. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;
30. Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;
31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;
32. Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;
33. Ensure respect for interactional law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;
34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

### We are determined to:

35. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, *inter alia*, by means of international cooperation;
36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action, which will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organisations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognises empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, subregional, regional and international institutions, a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;
37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;
38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organisations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.

SOURCE: United Nations, *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, UN Department of Public Information, New York, 1996



## Appendix 5

Fourth World Conference on Women  
Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995

### PLATFORM FOR ACTION: MISSION STATEMENT

1. The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development. A sustained and long-term commitment is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

2. The Platform for Action reaffirms the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the Platform seeks to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle.

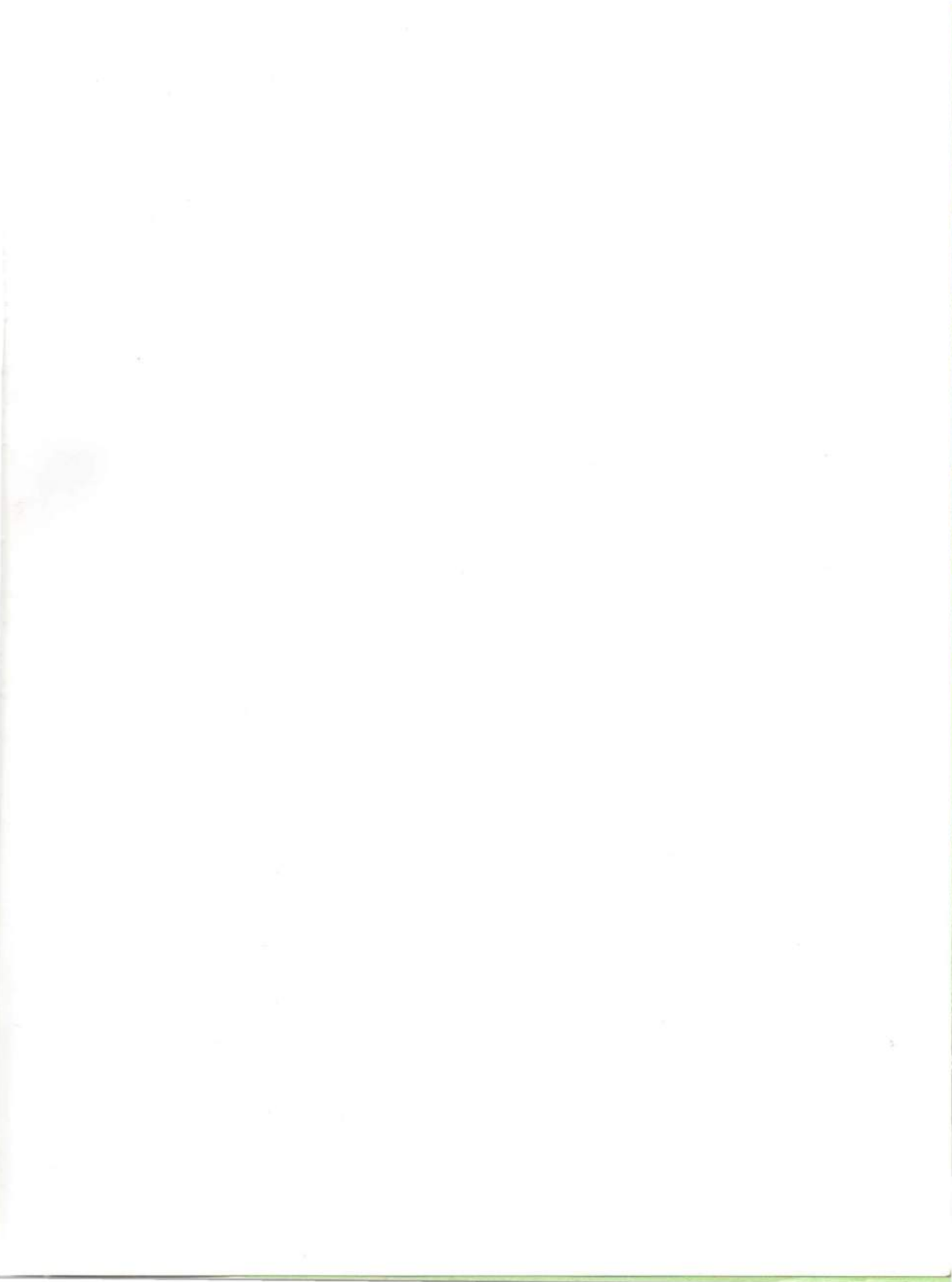
3. The Platform for Action emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be

addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world. It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognises that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment.

4. The Platform for Action requires immediate and concerted action by all to create a peaceful, just and humane world based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equality for all people of all ages and from all walks of life, and to this end, recognizes that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice.

5. The success of the Platform for Action will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organisations and institutions at all levels. It will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, sub-regional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels of accountability to the world's women.

SOURCE: United Nations, *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, UN Department of Public Information, New York, 1996







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