

COUNTRY GENDER ANALYSIS

NAMIBIA



Prepared for the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA)
Windhoek, Namibia
by
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PREAMBLE

The newly independent Namibia is facing a number of challenges. One of them is to see to it that women, who constitute more than 50% of the population, are integrated into the mainstream of development and considered when development programmes and policy are being planned. In order to meet this challenge, reports, statistics and figures are needed to present a complete picture of the present situation with regard to women and men in the country.

As part of the efforts to integrate women into all sector programmes and to develop a relevant strategy within the country, the Development Cooperation Office of the Swedish Embassy has prepared a Country Gender Analysis for Namibia.

The Gender Analysis is a summary document of the situation of women and men in the country, seen in context of interrelated factors, as well as trends and forces under way which are bringing about a process of change. The Gender Analysis is not a static document but will be updated as the situation at all levels undergoes changes, as more data is being gender disaggregated, and as more knowledge is being acquired in this field.

1.0 Introduction

In March of 1990 Namibia became the last colony in Africa to formally attain its independence. The country's transition from colonial rule to independence has been hailed as perhaps the most successful intervention yet by a United Nations task force. The Namibian constitution, forged through inter-party negotiation, has likewise been heralded as a model of democracy for the rest of Africa, while the policy of national reconciliation has been lauded as a mark of political maturity. Yet, despite international plaudits for its constitution and policy of national reconciliation, Namibia still bears the scars of its recent and distant past. The tasks of transforming an ethnically fragmented and gender biased society, of redressing extreme imbalances in access to resources and of building a more advanced and equitable economy, as a consequence, remain formidable.

For the majority of Namibians the history of colonial rule was characterised by dispossession, national oppression and poverty. The hardships experienced by the indigenous population under apartheid rule and in the protracted war of liberation were especially severe. The policies of this era, moreover, served to reify racial and ethnic divisions within the society, to the extent that different communities remain segregated geographically, economically and socially. Namibian society, in the process, has inherited forms of structured inequality which manifest themselves in severe income distribution skews (the top 5% of the population are estimated to control 71% of the GDP while the bottom 55% control just 3%) and unequal access to productive assets and basic social services.

However, while all sectors of the indigenous population suffered under colonial rule, the adverse impact of apartheid administration was most keenly felt by the women of Namibia. Not only did they experience the negative effects of racial discrimination, administrative neglect and economic underdevelopment, but as women they also suffered from cultural and traditional subordination on the basis of their gender. While data is limited for most sectors of the social economy in Namibia, gender based statistics are few and far between. This state of affairs reflects the colonial administration's general lack of concern with issues of gender, but such statistics as do exist clearly reflect widespread patterns of gender (and ethnic) discrimination. Thus, despite numerical parity with men, the women of Namibia today still occupy a position that is disadvantaged in terms of access to employment and to positions of influence in society.

The end of colonialism and the advent of independence witnessed the abolition of institutionalised discrimination and the introduction of democratic rule in Namibia. The new Constitution entrenched the rule of law and enshrined the fundamental human rights and freedoms of its citizens and, in so doing, raised optimism that gender discrimination might be eliminated through affirmative action. In pursuing this goal, however, Namibian society will need to address a broad range of social practices and attitudes, embedded in beliefs, culture and tradition, which

individually and collectively reinforce the subordinate status of women.

Whilst the Constitution and the new government have stressed the importance of gender equality, such equality is far from being a concrete reality. What is needed instead is nothing less than a fundamental reorientation of society's attitudes towards gender. This is likely to be a lengthy process, but one which should be pursued through the educational system, through the media and, as provided for in the Constitution, through programmes of affirmative action. The political, economic and social factors which will have bearing on programmes of affirmative action are discussed below.

2.0 The Political Context

The political context in which issues of gender equity are addressed will inevitably have direct bearing on the outcome of policy and, ultimately, on popular perceptions and attitudes. In that respect, it is still too soon to make any profound pronouncements on emerging trends within the political economy of Namibia. There is, nevertheless, evidence of a growing class stratification which transcends previous racial and ethnic boundaries. This observation relates primarily to the emergence of a new elite (comprising much of the existing white settler elite together with a new class of senior black administrators, politicians and business people), who inhabit an economic and social world largely divorced from that of the majority of the urban and rural poor. With the limited resources available to the country, it could be argued, sustaining the lifestyles of this elite, must inevitably be at the expense of development projects for the poor.

Defenders of the new order, however, point to the fact that the status quo (retention of the privileges of the colonial administration, in particular) was entrenched by the Constitution, formulated through multi-party consensus. Article 141 (1) of the Constitution, in particular, has been interpreted to imply that individuals employed by the colonial government would lose none of their existing employment benefits including generous housing, pension, medical aid and car allowances. The provision, in essence, presented the new government with something of a dilemma : whether to implement a differential system of benefits for existing and in-coming civil servants (many of whom were SWAPO members) or whether to equalise all employment packages. For both practical and political reasons the decision was taken to maintain the existing system of benefits. Namibia is now reputed to have one of the highest (if not the highest) civil service salary structure in sub-Saharan Africa.

Whilst on one level this decision is understandable, at other levels it does little to redress one of the most glaring inequities of the colonial system : that of the disproportionate spending of public funds on a largely urban elite (roughly 20%

of Namibia is urbanised). Unless the Government is able to curtail public sector spending and at the same time encourage both high levels of donor aid and foreign investment (neither of which seem likely on a sustained level), this pattern of development is likely to persist for an indefinite period.

The decision to opt for a "mixed economy", although in large part dictated by circumstance, (Namibia's dependent economic status, and the collapse of support from socialist countries in particular), has also limited the policy options open to the new Government. While the SWAPO government controls the political arena, it does not control the economy which continues to be dominated by forces which vary in their support from indifference to open hostility. Consequently, in its efforts to promote the confidence of the business sector (which retains the ultimate sanction of disinvestment from Namibia), the Government has moved extremely cautiously on issues of affirmative action, minimum wages and the question of land redistribution. The question of the appallingly low wages in the commercial farming sector, for example, has been one which the Government has thus far been reluctant to tackle.

The Government's caution in effecting extensive changes within the political-economy, has led to charges that national reconciliation is a one-sided process that is benefitting the settler community far more than the poor majority. This bitterness is perhaps most strongly felt by the thousands of repatriated exiles who are struggling to re-enter the labour market and to fully reintegrate themselves into Namibian society. Although there are no serious signs of desertion from SWAPO at present, there is unquestionably growing disillusionment amongst "returnees" and others in the populous Ovambo region (the party heartland) with the pace and form of economic and administrative reconstruction.

The "land question", in particular, remains a vexed issue. Unequal access to productive land and to water is a central feature of Namibia's colonial inheritance. In attempting to redress these imbalances, however, the Government once again confronts the paradox of matching increased production (or at least maintaining existing levels of production) with greater social equity, since much of Namibia is unsuitable for agriculture. Whilst a measure of consensus was reached during the Land Conference held in June 1991, the land question remains far from resolved.

Notwithstanding the many difficulties now confronting Namibia, there does seem to be a serious commitment to the process of democracy within the ruling party. Although the tradition of open debate within SWAPO, as a party, still remains weak (the issue of SWAPO "detainees", for example, has yet to be openly addressed) the Government has resisted the temptation to react to the vitriol (and frequent unprofessionalism) of the opposition press or to silence the voices of its opponents, however unpleasant these might some times be. Upholding of the Constitution and maintenance of the rule of law, similarly, have

been seriously adhered to even if such steps have not always met with mass approval.

The Government has also displayed skill in its attempts to forge a government of national unity. A number of opposition leaders have been brought into the Cabinet and white Namibians (not all of whom are SWAPO members) occupy key portfolios in the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Justice and Transport. The Government has also taken steps to shore up support amongst a number of its most important constituencies by appointing key individuals to the Cabinet, to parliament or to senior positions in the civil service.

While the development of a strong democracy is not in itself a sufficient condition for the emergence of greater gender equity, it is generally acknowledged that this process is likely to be facilitated by the existence of a democratic platform for the promotion of greater gender sensitivity. At present, however, significant gender imbalances exist in positions of influence at the national level, and just 6 of the 72 voting members of the National Assembly are women. Nevertheless, despite their numbers, there is evidence that these women MPs are exploring ways for working across party-political lines to ensure that legislation of particular relevance to women receives a higher priority in the National Assembly.

3.0 The Legal Context

Although the Namibian Constitution clearly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex (Article 10), more than one year after independence the legal position of men and women continues to be unequal. Under the terms of the Constitution, all laws in force at independence remain operative until amended, repealed or declared unconstitutional by a competent court. The Ministry of Justice recently identified 13 statutes and regulations which distinguish between men and women; however, to date, only one of these - the Income Tax Act - has been addressed by Parliament. It appears that women in Namibia have not yet learned how to mobilise effectively to ensure that gender issues are high on the government's agenda.

The most serious site of gender inequality is in the current common law and customary law on marriage. Despite the Constitutional guarantee that all "men and women of full age" shall be entitled to equal rights "as to marriage, during marriage, and at its dissolution" (Article 14), women are severely socially and economically disadvantaged by the existing laws.

In the absence of an ante-nuptial contract which states otherwise, all civil marriages are in community of property, with the wife being subject to the "marital power" of the husband. This means that all of the couple's joint property is under the control of the husband, who has sole decision-making power. With a few exceptions, a wife who is subject to marital power cannot enter into contracts without her husband's consent. Thus, she

cannot buy or sell property without his consent, or pledge any of the couple's joint property as security for credit.

Although there is no comprehensive research available on the position of women who are married under customary law, it can be said that, as with civil marriage, the wife is often in a legal position similar to that of a minor; she cannot usually enter into contracts on her own, or sell any household property without her husband's consent. The distribution of the couple's property during marriage, upon divorce and upon the death of either spouse depend upon the traditions of the community, which are in many cases prejudicial to women.

The relative position of men and women in the workplace will be governed by the forthcoming Labour Code. As drafted, this Code will prohibit gender discrimination in all aspects of employment, including training and promotion. The Code will also require equal terms of employment for men and women doing work of equal value, unless the employer can prove that variation is necessary, or that it is motivated by some factor other than gender. Although the draft Code is silent on the issue of paternity leave, it incorporates various forms of maternity protection, including four weeks of maternity leave at half pay for all female employees without prejudice to their job positions.

Both the Constitution and the draft Labour Code authorise affirmative action programmes for women, without requiring that any programmes be implemented; however, to date "affirmative action" for women does not appear to have gone much farther than rhetorical commitments to the inclusion of women in various forums.

4.0 The Administrative Context

In attempting to reorient the economy and improve the delivery of social services, the new government has had to confront the dead hand of the colonial past. The need to maintain services and meet at least some of the expectations of the poor majority has, of necessity, meant retention of the administrative status quo. This has implied a heavy reliance on existing officialdom and the existing institutions of an ethnically oriented past, since, as might be expected, there is now a lead time before qualified repatriated exiles and others sympathetic to the new order, are able to orientate themselves to the existing administrative environment and adapt their diverse training to conform to the new needs of the public sector.

The performance of the post-colonial administration is being further constrained by the fact that there is little co-ordination of inter-ministerial activity and, as yet, limited planning at a regional or national level. This is a situation which lends itself to ad hoc interventions by both the government and donor agencies and, in certain instances, to duplication of effort. Such shortcomings inevitable limit the government's

capacity both to process donor aid and to implement new development programmes.

The administrative transition is being most painfully felt in the former communal areas where the second tier ethnic administrations have been disbanded by the government in its efforts to forge a more ethnically integrated society. In the process, the white officials who ran these administrations have either been transferred or, in most instances, have resigned from the service. The local officials who remain, through no fault of their own, tend to be junior staff with little or no training or administrative acumen. At the same time, the new officials appointed (many of whom are "returnees") frequently have no experience and no knowledge of the areas to which they have been sent. As a consequence, there is administrative confusion in most of the regional offices at a time when popular demands for government action are extremely high. In this context too, programmes of gender affirmative action tend to be subordinated to more immediate demands of employment creation and service provision. This, as will be seen in a subsequent section, is also a problem at other levels of the administrative hierarchy, where women are under-represented in positions of influence.

5.0 Violence Against Women

The relative position and decision-making power of men and women must be seen in the context of widespread violence against women. There were 352 reported rapes in Namibia in 1988, 384 in 1989, and 419 in 1990; since experts believe that only one-twentieth of all rapes that occur are reported to the police, this means that it is likely that one woman in Namibia is raped almost every hour, every day of the year. (Hubbard 1991)

Although there are no comparable statistics for the occurrence of domestic violence, this is believed to be an even more extensive problem. There is also evidence that physical and sexual abuse of children is common; almost one third of the rapes reported to the police in the first half of 1991 involved rape survivors under the age of 16, and in a recent survey of street children in Rundu, Windhoek and Keetmanshoop, 44.2% (223) of the children surveyed reported physical or psychological abuse, mostly from family or peers. (Tacon 1991)

In many communities, women are reluctant to talk about violence in the home, particularly sexual violence, making this issue a difficult one to address. Improvements in the social and economic independence of Namibian women, which are likely to bring concomitant improvements in their assertiveness and self-confidence, will probably help to combat the problem of violence.

6.0 The Social Service Sector

6.1 Health Care

As a legacy of the colonial era, health services in Namibia are heavily skewed in favour of the urban areas. Prior to Independence, the bulk of national resources allocated to health were expended in providing relatively expensive curative services for a small number, rather than on preventive services for the majority. Primary health care, in particular, was given little attention as illustrated by the frequent lack of antenatal care, centralised delivery services, health education and community outreach services. Largely as a consequence of this, health services have until now failed to control diseases, such as tuberculosis and measles, which are being controlled in most parts of the world. The provision of drinking water and sanitation in Namibia, similarly, consists of a high level of service to a high-income minority, and inadequate, frequently unsafe facilities for the majority.

Unequal access to social services profoundly affects the life chances and quality of life of the vast majority of Namibians. While no comprehensive figures of child mortality rates exist, the Infant Mortality Rate, according to one estimate in 1990, ranged from an average of 160 per thousand live births in the Ovambo region to roughly 30 per thousand in the rest of the country. (UNICEF/NISER, 1991) Although data are inconclusive, there is evidence of both wasting (low weight for height) (20% in Hereroland) and stunting (52% in the Kaoko and Caprivi regions) among children in many rural areas. Evidence also suggests wide-spread malnutrition among young children, both moderate and severe in nature. (UNICEF, 1990)

Inadequate access to social services affects the women and children of Namibia most directly, not least in that they tend to predominate in the rural areas where service provision is poorest. The high proportion of female headed households serves further to aggravate the overall status of health in rural areas. Evidence from a UNICEF survey conducted in 1990 indicated that children in households headed by women were more likely to be stunted. Similarly, the survey found a strong positive association between higher levels of maternal education and child nutritional status.

6.2 Child Care Facilities

The available information on Namibian families indicates that women tend to marry and have children at an early age. The use of contraception is limited, and fertility patterns are influenced by widespread preferences for large families - particularly as the socialisation of women still emphasises their identity as child-bearers and mothers. High fertility rates are reinforced by the lack of family planning services. A 1990 UNICEF household health and nutrition survey estimated an overall fertility rate of 5.9, ranging from 5.2 to as high as 7.3 in some areas in northern Namibia. (UNICEF/NISER, 1991)

The availability of reliable and affordable child care options is essential to the full participation of women in Namibian

society. While this factor is obviously relevant to employment and participation in educational programmes, it is also crucial to the ability of women to play an active role in women's groups, trade unions and community development activities.

Although there are no comprehensive statistics on the availability of child care facilities, various women's organisations report that the need for such facilities has been cited as a high priority by women in every region in the country. There appears to be only one employer in Namibia which provides child care facilities at the workplace - the Ministry of Health and Social Services, which has creche space for 20 children. Child care is seldom if ever provided at meetings and workshops, even at those organised by women. All places of care for more than six children are currently required to register with the government, but few do so in fact because the regulatory scheme is still based on South African standards which are inappropriate for the Namibian situation.

Persons currently working in the area of child care have cited the following as the most pressing needs: state subsidies (possibly financed in part by employer contributions) to enable the provision of adequate facilities and food at affordable prices; appropriate training for child care workers; and more realistic government guidelines which focus on essentials such as basic health standards and the ratio of staff to children.

6.3 Education

While many factors contribute to the disadvantaged status of women, the most direct constraint to their entry to the labour market and to positions of influence in society remains their access to education. This state of affairs was aggravated by the general inadequacy of education in the country. In that regard, independent Namibia inherited an educational system which was highly fragmented and where allocation of resources was segregated on the basis of race and ethnicity. The educational system resulting from ethnically oriented administrations was heavily skewed in terms of the quantity and quality of regional educational resources.

The number of unqualified teachers, in particular, limited the quality of primary and secondary education received under the previous administration. According to 1989 statistics, only 32.5% of teachers were trained (that is, had Std 10 plus one or more years of teacher training). (Department of National Education, 1989) In addition, over-crowding, poor school facilities, lack of classrooms, and restricted access to books and other educational materials compounded the situation.

On the basis of existing data it is difficult to assess with any precision the proportion of school-aged children who actually obtain access to formal schooling. According to some estimates, between 50% and 70% of children in certain areas never gain access to primary school (UNIN 1989). This fundamental lack of

access to basic education is compounded by the constraints faced by children as they seek to move up through the system once admitted. Unfortunately, data of this nature has, thus far, not been disaggregated by gender and it is not possible to draw significant inferences about girls' access to primary or secondary education.

Contrary to expectations, there is a relatively high enrolment of girls at all levels of primary and secondary education, as illustrated by 1989 enrolment figures (see Appendix: Table 1). While these figures indicate that relatively more girls than boys are attending school, they should not be interpreted as evidence of a consistent bias towards females. Regional disaggregation of these statistics, for example, reveals variable patterns of gender inequity. Whilst the ratio of boys to girls in high school (standards 6 to 10) was 35 : 65 in Ovambo, it was 54 : 46 in Caprivi and 64 : 36 in Kavango.

A recent review of gender and the curriculum (Ilukweni 1991) highlighted the extent to which differentiated learning pervaded the curriculum, and its built-in assumption that practical subjects for girls should relate to their future roles as mothers and home-makers, whilst boys would be more likely to need preparation for entry into the world of formal employment. Linked to this, it is also likely that primary and secondary education, together with other factors, serve to promote gender stereotyping in respect to future employment. For example, while less than 1% of all formal education students were receiving vocational or technical tuition in 1989 (1 297 out of 372 572 students) less than 20% of these were girls and more than half of them were students from "white" schools. It is evident, therefore, that there is a need both for the preparation of more gender sensitive teaching material as well as improvements in teaching methods.

Whilst the problem of failing and dropping out is a serious one through out primary and secondary schooling in Namibia, it is not possible, on the basis of existing data, to infer any gender-related trends. The major problem in respect of poor educational attainment appears to lie in the inappropriateness and limited relevance of the curriculum and teaching methods. Drop-out rates, on the other hand, are strongly related to the demands placed on children to contribute to domestic and agricultural tasks in the rural household. For girls, the major impediment appears to occur at secondary level, particularly for girls in female-headed households, when they must assume responsibility for a range of domestic duties including the care of younger children. It is also evident, as a consequence of a number of factors (including the older age of girl students due to late starting and repeating and the lack of parental supervision), that a significant number of girls may also drop out of school due to pregnancy.

The inadequacy of basic formal education (with high repeat and drop-out levels) suggests a correspondingly high rate of illiteracy. Current estimates of the total rate of illiteracy

(which includes young children) vary between 65% and 70%, although the definition of literacy is inconsistent and estimates of illiteracy among women have tended to provide contradictory evidence. Some recent evidence suggests that, nationwide, on balance, women are marginally more literate than men (Ministry of Health/NISER 1991). Inconclusive as the evidence now is, several facts can be inferred with some certainty: that levels of literacy among women are generally low (in line with general levels of illiteracy), that older women are less literate than younger women (and are less literate than males in the same age cohort) and that rural women and girls are less literate than their counterparts in urban areas.

6.4 Tertiary Education

The primary institution for tertiary education in Namibia is the Academy, which comprises the University of Namibia, the Technikon and the College of Out-of-School Training (COST). The efficacy of the Academy model has, however, been the subject of a Commission of Enquiry into Tertiary Education, and although the findings of the Commission have yet to be published (or new legislation promulgated) it is widely speculated that the University of Namibia will be severed from the Academy and reconstituted as an autonomous institution.

Academy enrolment figures for 1991 suggest that there are specific areas of study in which gender proportions are skewed (see Appendix : Table 2). Despite the fact that women out-number men by more than two to one, the data point to significant gender imbalances in a number of key fields of study. Within the sciences and economic sciences women are under-represented while in other fields of study, such as in the health sciences and education they predominate. The latter being fields of study which prepare women for stereotypical careers in nursing and education.

It is not possible, in the absence of gender disaggregated statistics at the secondary school level, to ascertain with any certainty why women choose specific fields of study to the exclusion of others. Certainly the answer is not to be found in the subject ability of women, since those women who do choose to study in fields dominated by men tend to fare as well as or better than their male counterparts, as statistics from 1990 illustrate (see Appendix : Tables 3 and 4). It is evident that female students (who are mostly young single women) tend to be strongly influenced by parents in their course of study while male students appear to exercise far greater personal choice.

Whether the choices of courses to study (and particular the parents choice) represent preconditioned gender biases, or whether they represent a rational response to existing markets demands, is not clear. There is evidence that many employers prefer to recruit men rather than women, and in the knowledge of such gender discrimination, many women may opt for the soft option of nursing and teaching since they are virtually assured

of employment in those fields, whatever the limits these professions might set for their careers.

7.0 The Economy and the Employment Market

In attempting to redress the inequalities of the past the government confronts the difficult task of balancing improved production with greater social equity. Its endeavours in this regard will be being constrained by the country's dependent and narrowly based economy. Despite its size, Namibia is not a richly endowed land. A significant proportion of the countryside is classified as desert or semi-desert, and ecological conditions in general are harsh. With the exception of certain regions, neither the climate, nor the disposition of the soil is favourable for arable agriculture on any scale and this factor alone sets limits on the production frontiers of the country.

There has been little diversification of the economy in recent decades, and Namibia remains heavily dependent on South Africa both as a source of imports (75%) and as market for its exports (25%). The GDP, for instance, is largely accounted for by four major sectors: mining and quarrying (32% in 1989), general government (18%), wholesale and retail (13%) and agriculture and fishing (11%).

Constraints on the economy are inevitably limiting the options for mass employment generation - the new government's most daunting task. At present less than fifty percent (43%) of the labour force is in paid employment in the formal sector, with open unemployment between 25% and 30%. (ILO 1990) The prospects for rapid employment generation in this sector, nevertheless, remain limited at present. This in part stems from high or increasing capital intensity in mining (which employs just 5% of the work force) and commercial agriculture, and from the fact that continued expansion of the public sector, hitherto the largest single employer of wage labour (in excess of 30%), is fiscally unsustainable at present salary levels.

On this evidence, it is clear that Namibia faces a serious problem of employment generation. Based on current estimates, the potentially economically active population is growing at a rate of 3% per annum. The task of reducing the backlog of those currently unemployed, while creating opportunities for the significant numbers of new work seekers entering the market annually, as a consequence, remains formidable. (UNICEF/NISER 1991)

For the women of Namibia a constricted labour market presents an additional constraint to their entry to formal employment. Job shortages are likely to increase competition for employment, and without significant changes in employer attitudes (and, concomitantly, greater diversification of female training), there is a considerable risk of continued (or even greater) marginalisation of women within the work force.

Figures from the 1988 "Manpower Survey" demonstrate the limited extent of women's participation in formal sector employment (see Appendix : Table 5). Females accounted for only 33% of employees and, of these, 46% were classified as service (domestic) workers. Recent data indicates that there were 25 296 women (36.5% of the work force) employed in the public service as opposed to 43 963 men (63.5% of the work force). (Bentil 1991) Whilst it is likely that there are more men in open unemployment than women, it is also likely that there are more women involved in informal sector activities (where they are frequently underemployed) and in the subsistence agricultural sector.

In a recent survey of Katutura, there were proportionally more women than men unemployed (44% versus 33%), despite the fact that women were generally better educated (33% of women had a standard 7 education or more, compared with 26% of men, and 12% of women had post-matric qualifications, compared with 8% of men). (NISER, 1991) The survey also found that 25% of all households were female centred, that is, without a male conjugal partner in the family. Families which depend on women's incomes as a primary cash source tend to be more disadvantaged, and in the Katutura survey, female-centred households were, on average, earning incomes 30% lower than those of male-centred (32%) and nuclear households (31%).

A further characteristic of the labour market in Namibia at present is the marked gender bias in most spheres of employment. Following on from trends within the tertiary education sector, women employees tend to be grouped into a narrow range of gender stereotyped professions (see Appendix : Table 5). Furthermore, while no hard data is available on differential wage payments between women and men ("equal pay for equal work"), women's generally subordinate ranking in the labour market ensures that, on average, they earn considerably less than men.

In positions of influence in the employment market, women are under-represented in virtually every instance. Thus, in the 1988 human resource survey there were more than four times more men than women in the general category "manager". While recent data are not available for the private sector, statistics from the public sector are indicative of the generally subordinate position of women within the national work force. Of the 446 top posts in government in January 1991, only 32 (7%) were women, and of the 18 permanent secretaries (the most senior administrative post) just one was a women (see Appendix : Table 7). Despite the relative under-representation of women in the public service, the present situation represents a marked improvement on the pre-independence position, where just two women occupied positions of seniority within the government administration.

Further imbalances in the labour market exist in the regional distribution of employment. Windhoek, with less than 10% of the total population, in 1988 provided 41% of formal sector jobs; the Ovambo region with roughly 45% of the total population, in contrast, had just 6% of formal jobs. For women still in the rural areas, and particularly those with family responsibility,

this implies that there are few opportunities for off-farm employment in proximity to their homes. This state of affairs not only increases the burden on women to increase or at least maintain levels of domestic agricultural production, but it increases their dependence on male members of the household for cash income through remittances and transfers.

A further feature of the labour market which has direct bearing on the life chances of women, is the system of migrant labour. This system, which was initially established to supply cheap labour to the country's mines, was rigidly enforced by a range of influx control laws which ensured that workers' families remained in the rural "reserves". Although these laws were scrapped more than a decade ago, the structure of the Namibian economy continues to reinforce the pattern of migrant labour.

As a consequence of extensive migration (both seasonal and permanent), the structure of rural households has been seriously distorted in recent decades. Characteristically rural households have a predominance of old people, of women and of children. This has led to a progressive erosion of the productive capacity of the rural labour force and a growing trend towards female headed households. A UNICEF survey in three rural areas in northern Namibia found that the percentage of female-headed households ranged from 40% to 49%. Emphasising this trend, the ratio of adult males to females was 1:1 in the peri-urban areas and 1:2 in the rural areas. (UNICEF 1990) This pattern implies additional burdens on rural women who must not only raise families, but must also assume responsibility for virtually all farming activities in the so-called "traditional" sector.

Trends within the "traditional" agricultural sector are disquieting. Much of the small scale agricultural sector appears to be in secular decline and pressure to move off the land is increasing. The returns to labour in this sector are extremely unattractive to anyone who is economically mobile, and the drift to the urban areas (to Windhoek in particular) has accelerated in the post-independence era. In view of the shortage of formal wage opportunities, it is likely that a sizeable proportion of the burgeoning urban work force will in future be compelled to seek employment in the informal sector, which is at present limited in extent.

The departure of increasing numbers of men has led to labour shortages which have increased the burden of agricultural labour for women. Women, as a consequence, are required to assume such physically demanding and time-consuming activities as land clearance, ploughing and animal husbandry, hitherto the tasks of men. The basic survival needs of rural households in Namibia are thus supported for the most part by the domestic and productive activities of their female members.

Women's ability to carry out these tasks is defined not only by the relative availability of resources, but also by the extent of control which they exercise over the resource base. For rural and urban women an increase in access to resources and the means

of production is a pre-condition for the improvement of their situation, but it is not in itself sufficient to guarantee changes in their economic status. Improvements in women's economic standing will, to a large extent, be determined by the decision-making role afforded to women, whether they are acting as heads of households or not, particularly in respect of agricultural production. Where decision-making is limited by traditional gender roles, women's utilisation of improved services such as credit facilities, extension training, input supply and marketing facilities will be similarly limited, and the real impact of benefits reduced. (UNICEF/NISER 1990)

For rural women, control over land and livestock remains a major constraint to their advancement. The Lands Conference held in June 1991, amongst other issues, highlighted the disadvantaged position of women with respect to access to productive communal land. While new legislation on the disposal of land is scheduled, it is not certain how this might directly benefit rural women. A review of traditional laws of inheritance and divorce would help to secure the livelihood of some women, but the absolute shortage of arable land continues to be a problem for women wishing to start out on their own. Control over livestock (cattle) remains a vexed issue and one which is unlikely to be resolved by legislation. Rather, change is likely to come about through a reorientation of social practices, through education and through the general elevation of women's role in society.

7.1 Repatriated Exiles

During the course of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435, more than 45 000 exiles were repatriated to Namibia; the process has been of mixed success. Many of the these so-named "returnees" (perhaps the majority) have experienced difficulty in finding employment and in effectively reintegrating themselves into Namibian society.

Despite the fact that a significant number of "returnees" received some form of training while in exile, this was of variable quality. In addition, few exiles had the opportunity to apply their skills on a sustained basis following the completion of their training, and a decay in knowledge and levels of skill was an inevitable outcome. As a consequence, there has been an antipathy among many employers towards recruiting "returnees", although it is also certain that political (and racial) discrimination has played a significant part in their rejection. To date, with a few exceptions, there have been no serious efforts to upgrade the skills of "returnees" or to match them to existing work opportunities. The latent skills potential of the majority of "returnees", as a consequence, appears at present to be untapped. (Tapscott and Mulongeni, 1990)

Amongst repatriated exiles were a considerable number of women, with a relatively broad range of qualifications. Although there is some evidence of gender stereotyping in the data available,

(see Appendix : Table 6) it is not certain to what extent this might have been influenced by the dictates of the war for independence, which compelled large numbers of men to become involved in combat roles. It is of interest, nevertheless, that more than twice as many men (59) had received degrees than women (23) by 1988.

To date no nationwide employment creation programmes have been introduced, but the Government has proposed the introduction of Development Brigades to embark on public works programmes. The Brigades, which are intended to accommodate ex-combatants (both male and female) as a means of short term job creation, are also intended to train participants in a variety of different skills, although the modalities of the scheme have yet to be made public.

8.0 Gender Issues in State Planning

Despite the declarations of the Constitution, there is at present no concerted programme of gender based affirmative action within the public sector. Thus far there have been no overriding directives from Cabinet in support of affirmative action, but there appears to be a slow and informal movement towards the enhancement of women's standing in the civil service. The reach and pace of affirmative action appears, however, to depend on the interest and enthusiasm of senior officials (ministers, permanent secretaries, directors etc.) within individual ministries.

In August 1990 a Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) was established within the President's Office to facilitate liaison between women and the Government and to help identify priorities for action. The DWA is still in the process of establishing itself and has yet to fully define its sphere and mode of operation. Although there may be an inherent contradiction in a government department lobbying other sectors of government on issues of gender, the DWA is potentially an important channel for communication between the government and the women of Namibia.

On the whole, however, the process of affirmative action appears to be an uneven one within the public service, and a lack of gender sensitivity is still evident in a number of spheres of government. Monitoring of progress in this respect, furthermore, is constrained by the shortage of gender-based statistics throughout the public sector. Improvements in the collection of gender-based statistics would thus appear to be a prerequisite to the introduction of any programmes of affirmative action.

9.0 The Role of Community-Based Organisations and NGOs

In many developing countries community-based organisations have played a significant role both in mobilising women and in elevating gender issues to platforms of public policy. In Namibia this practice has been constrained by the fact that relatively few community-based organisations currently exist. Within the major urban centres, and within Windhoek in

particular, community based organisations are well established, but there are few such organisations in the populous rural areas.

In the northern regions, this is in part due to the influence of the South African forces, who actively discouraged the establishment of community-based organisations in the belief that they could be mobilised towards resistance. The influence of traditional authority structures are also likely to have mitigated against the establishment of organisations which might conceivably challenge their hegemony. Rural churches likewise, despite the importance of their role in mobilising rural communities, were not known for their democratic or participatory base. Finally, the dictates of the war of independence implied that SWAPO, the dominant political force in much of the north, was, for much of past two decades, both military and hierarchical in orientation.

Not only was participatory action constrained by the fettering of community-based organisations, but the dominant social and political forces in the northern regions themselves tended to be patriarchal in nature. In this context, issues of gender tended either to be subverted to the interests of males, or were subordinated to the broader needs of the struggle for independence. The need for the establishment of a stronger base for the organisation of rural communities thus remains an issue of considerable importance, not least in that it could facilitate the greater empowerment of rural women.

There are at present few structured women's organisations in Namibia, although there is active participation of women in many NGOs and community-based organisations. Thus far, however, women's organisations in Namibia have experienced difficulty in co-operating across party political boundaries, and this has limited their capacity to speak with a united voice on gender related issues.

10.0 Donor Agency Support for Affirmative Action

While programmes of affirmative action within the public sector are in an early phase, positive encouragement for this process is coming from a number of bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor agencies. United Nations Agencies such as UNIFEM, the UNDP and UNICEF, the ILO and various bi-lateral donor agencies such as SIDA, FINNIDA and DANIDA have made gender issues a major focus of their work in Namibia.

The Development Cooperation Office (SIDA) at the Swedish Embassy in Namibia have established a Women-in-Development Office which is creating links with organisations which are fostering and strengthening the position of women in Namibian society. The Office is responsible for the administration of a Direct Support Programme Fund which is extended to organisations and state institutions working towards the empowerment of women. In support of this process, the Office request that applications for

project funding within the framework of Swedish bilateral aid, should demonstrate gender awareness, both in terms of the involvement of women and in terms of the impact that development programmes might have on the advancement of women's position in society. This implies that gender perspectives should be taken into consideration at all stages of the planning and implementation of projects.

While bi-lateral development programmes between Sweden and Namibia are mainly concentrated in the spheres of Transport and Communications and Education and Culture, the promotion of greater gender sensitivity is being advanced in all these sectors. Support for a recent community-based road construction programme in the Ovambo region, for example, thus, has been accompanied by research which is undertaking to evaluate the benefits (or disadvantages) which might accrue to women as a consequence of the project. Women in the project will be trained and will work alongside men throughout the construction phase, and will also be involved in the subsequent maintenance of the road.

SIDA's Women-in-Development Office also hosts training workshops in gender planning for various Government ministries. The workshops endeavour to sensitise state officials to issues of gender and, at the same time, encourage them to incorporate a gender perspective into the mainstream of their ministerial activities.

11.0 Strategy Options

The problem of gender stereotyping is a thread which runs through all layers of Namibian society. Narrowly-defined gender roles are transmitted through a range of social institutions, including the family, churches, schools and cultural groups. In order to overcome such stereotyping, there needs to be a fundamental reorientation of society's attitudes towards gender. While changes in legislation will facilitate changes in the status of women (particularly in respect to laws on marriage and inheritance), this will need to be accompanied by efforts to encourage the evolution of traditional practices. This process, will need to be effected at the level of individual households, in all levels of education and in the labour market. It will also, as importantly, need to be addressed in the media.

Women's opportunities in the employment market could be enhanced by skills upgrading and by proffering incentives to employers who adopt programmes of affirmative action. In recognition of the dual role of women as workers as well as social reproducers, greater provision will also need to be made for balancing work and family responsibilities, in particular the provision of child care facilities in proximity to the workplace.

The need for the empowerment of women through community-based organisations is of considerable importance. This can be addressed at many levels, but within individual households trends

towards greater control over the income derived from women's productive income would be an important first step, since, ultimately, greater economic independence will lead to greater social emancipation. In mobilising women at the community level, activities with a material base can be used as forums in which women can acquire self-confidence and develop leadership skills.

Finally, it is necessary that the strengthening of women's organisations occurs concomitantly with the greater democratisation of society. This is necessary if women's organisations are not to become the fiefdoms of a few powerful individuals who may discourage other women from developing their leadership capacities. At present, political divisions which have arisen among women represent a serious constraint to united strategies, and there is a need to encourage a greater awareness among women that their interests as women will best be advanced through a less competitive approach.

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APPENDIX**Selected Gender Based Statistics****Table 1 : GIRLS ENROLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL, 1989**

Primary School		Secondary School	
Standard	% of Total	Standard	% of Total
Sub A	50.0	Std 6	57.3
Sub B	49.2	Std 7	57.0
Std 1	50.4	Std 8	57.5
Std 2	52.2	Std 9	48.2
Std 3	54.3	Std 10	50.9
Std 4	56.4		
Std 5	56.8		
All Stds.		52.7	

Source: DNE Statistics of Schools, 1989

**Table 2 : ENROLMENT AT THE ACADEMY BY GENDER 1991
(All Years of Study)**

	Male	%	Female	%	Total
<u>University</u>					
Education	1 097	39%	1 705	61%	2 802
Science	185	68%	88	32%	273
Econ. & Manag. Sc.	534	60%	349	40%	883
Arts	562	47%	1 183	53%	1 183
Health Sciences	376	8%	4 249	91%	4 625
<u>Technikon</u>					
Business & Manag.	775	45%	957	55%	1 732
Agric. & Nat. Cons.	240	69%	108	31%	348
Distance Teaching	1 862	24%	5 774	76%	7 636
<u>COST</u>					
Hairdressing	-	-	69	100%	69
Arts	477	47%	536	53%	1 013
Science	181	72%	69	28%	250

Source : Academy Records, 1991

**Table 3 : ACADEMY FAILURE RATES BY SUBJECT AND GENDER 1990
(All Years of Study)**

Faculty	% Males Failed	% Females Failed
<u>University</u>		
Education	24%	14%
Science	46%	28%
Econ. & Manag. Sc.	36%	31%
Arts	29%	28%
Health Sciences	7%	8%
<u>Technikon</u>		
Business & Manag.	24%	24%
Agric. & Nat. Cons.	27%	19%
Distance Teaching	68%	55%
<u>COST</u>		
Hairdressing	14%	69%
Arts	-	-
Science	85%	92%

Source : Academy Records, 1991

**Table 4 : UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA FINAL YEAR PASS RATES IN
SCIENCES & ECONOMIC SCIENCES, BY GENDER 1990**

Subject	Male		Female	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
<u>Science</u>				
Physics	0	2	-	-
Computer Sc.	2	4	3	0
Psychology	0	1	-	-
Statistics	2	2	-	-
Geography	-	-	1	0
Mathematics	1	0	-	-
<u>Zoology</u>	-	-	3	0
TOTAL	5	9	7	0
<u>Econ. & Manag.</u>	18	13	20	4

Source : Academy Records 1991

Table 5 : PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES BY GENDER

Occupational Category	Total	Male	Female
Professional, technical and related workers	12,42% (22955)	46,74% (10729)	53,26% (12226)
Administrators and managers	1,14% (2102)	89,25% (1876)	10,75% (226)
Administrative, clerical and related workers	9% (16623)	38,59% (6414)	61,41% (10209)
Sales workers	5,44% (10049)	57,15% (5743)	42,85% (4306)
Service workers	20,12% (37186)	24,84% (9237)	75,16% (27949)
Farm and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	20,77% (38388)	95,09% (36503)	4,91% (1885)
Production and construction workers	10,07% (18604)	95,48% (17764)	4,52% (840)
Stationary engine, material handling and transport equipment operators	4,61% (8531)	91,35% (7793)	8,65% (738)
General - Labourers	16,43% (30355)	93,06% (28249)	6,94% (2107)
TOTAL :	100% (184793)	67% (124307)	33% (60486)

Source: Dept. of Economic Affairs: Manpower Survey, 1988

**Table 6 : EDUCATION OF REPATRIATED EXILES BY GENDER, 1988
(Incomplete data set)**

FIELD OF STUDY	TOTAL NO. OF QUALIFIED PEOPLE		DEGREES		DIPLOMAS		CERTIFICATES		VOCATIONAL		OTHER	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agriculture	83 31%	139 69%	7	2	6	12	14	50	52	68	4	7
Health Care	63 56%	50 44%	5	2	2	4	23	5	15	30	18	9
Education	97 29%	236 71%	6	7	33	78	9	22	4	9	45	120
Commerce	40 42%	55 58%	12	7	3	4	13	19	6	11	6	14
Building & Construction	268 86%	43 24%	1	-	7	2	5	19	245	21	10	1
Manufacturing	23 41%	38 59%	-	-	1	-	1	3	20	35	4	-
Industrial & Engineering	321 73%	121 27%	3	-	23	19	14	10	269	92	12	-
Administration Planning, Management & Development	118 37%	197 63%	6	1	77	73	10	43	1	12	24	68
Transport	91 93%	7 7%	2	-	26	2	26	2	26	2	11	1
Technical Training	2 100%	0 0%	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Tele-Communications	9 39%	14 61%	-	-	1	1	-	3	6	8	2	2
Mining	52 93%	4 7%	4	-	-	-	1	1	47	3	-	-
Human Sciences	10 40%	15 60%	4	1	1	1	1	8	-	-	4	5
Journalism	11 92%	1 8%	8	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Languages	0 0%	7 100%	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Food & Home Economics	34 68%	16 32%	-	-	2	2	-	3	31	11	1	-
Pure & Applied Science	9 41%	13 59%	1	1	4	-	2	6	2	6	-	-

Source : SWAPO Head Office, Windhoek

**Table 7 : Women In Positions of Seniority in Government
(March 1991)**

Post	No. of Women	No. of Men	Total	Women as % of Total	Minister
Deputy Minister	2	18	20	10%	
Public Service Com.	1	5	7	28%	
Permanent Sec.	2	8	10	20%	
Deputy Perm. Sec.	3	19	22	13%	
Under Secretary	11	59	70	13%	
Director	15	60	75	20%	
Deputy Director					
TOTAL	37	196	233	16%	

Source : Bentil, M., 1991