



GIZ Namibia

Gender Week 2020

Join us on 2nd March
10:00 – 11:00
at National Art Gallery

Panel Discussion

Zebra style politics and women's rights –
How has this approach contributed towards curbing cultural barriers to gender equality?



Agenda

10:00 – 10:10	Opening Remarks Country Director Dr. Kirsch
10:10 – 10:15	Welcoming
10:15 – 10:20	Introduction of Panel Members
10:20 – 10:45	Panel Discussion
10:45 – 10:55	Q&A from audience
10:55 – 11:00	Closing remarks



Panelists

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
James Itana	Executive Director	Regain Trust
Naita Hishono	Executive Director	Namibian Institute for Democracy
Barbara Kowalczyk-Hoyer	Development Worker	GIZ Probats
Prof. Lucy Edwards-Jauch	Associate Professor Sociology	UNAM



Zebra style politics and women's rights – How has this approach contributed towards curbing cultural barriers to gender equality?

Background for discussion:

Ending sexism and promoting gender equality is a central part of the government's quest for a society based on equal enjoyment of all human rights, freedoms, and life opportunities, as envisaged in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. The Constitution states that “No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex...” (Art. 10) and acknowledges that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered discrimination (Art. 23). It therefore calls for legislation to guarantee “equality of opportunity for women, to enable them to participate fully in all spheres of Namibian society” (Art. 95).

Gender promotion in Namibia has led to impressive results in the political sphere and in formal decision making. In 2014, the leading South West African People Organisation (SWAPO) party adopted a zebra election lists with 50% women representation. As a result, 45% of the 96 members of the 2014-2019 National Assembly were women, as opposed to only 26% in 2004. The 2019 presidential elections saw a female presidential candidate run for office for the first time in Namibian history. The strong representation of women is also reflected at the electorate, where in 2014 about 53% of registered voters were female. At the Local Authority level, due to existing quota systems, about 48% of councillors in 2015 were women.

In a 2014/2015 Afrobarometer survey, almost 80% of respondents indicated that “women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men”. In more recent surveys, over two-thirds of Namibians “support the use of gender quotas to ensure more equal participation of men and women in both National Assembly and regional council elections” and more than 50% of Namibians think that “the increased number of women in the National Assembly has made Parliament more effective”. Comparing these results with older surveys demonstrates how acceptance of women in political leadership has increased over time.

However, a recent study conducted by UNAM found that female parliamentarians of the leading party SWAPO, who represent an overwhelming majority of female members of parliament, have only tabled five of the 60 motions in the National Assembly from 2015 to 2018. Further, none of these motions were related to gender issues and women's participation in politics.

Despite the fact that Namibia's progressive law on Affirmative Action (AA) positively discriminates in favor of women, one might question

- Why women continue to be underrepresented in management and decision-making structures of public service, regional councils, parastatals and private sector?
- Why regional councils and the National Council continue to be dominated by men?
- Why customary governance structures are often patriarchal, favouring men's interests over women?