



Emily May Brown - Gender Links Board Chair



### 15 years of service

- At the Coal Face Study completed in 2006 formed roots for Gender Link's programme work, lobbying and advocacy activities in Namibia.
- 36 Local Government COEs completed the 10 stage COE process, developed, adopted and implementing gender and GBV action plans.
- Active 365 Days Campaigns including 16 Days of Activism to end GBV conducted annually.
- 1 Media COE - the Namibia Broadcasting Association.
- 2011 to 2015 Namibia Barometers produced annually and launched by key leaders in government and within local government.
- National Summits held annually since 2012.
- District summits held annually since 2014 - three in 2014 and three in 2015.
- Entrepreneurship project piloted with 128 beneficiaries in 10 councils.
- **Key partners:** Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare; Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN); The Namibian Association of Local Authority Officers (NALAO); Polytechnic of Namibia (PON); and Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders (AMMICAAL)



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After securing a NEPAD grant in 2012, GL Namibia moved its offices from the country manager's back office to Ausspanpaltz in Windhoek central. The office went on to recruit a programme officer and finance officer to cope with the increased amount of work during the COE cascading process. Unfortunately when the NEPAD grant ended in September 2014, the office had to downscale and is once again anchored from the home of the former country manager, now a consultant and GL Association Member.

The lack of sustainable funding setback has not stopped impactful operations in the country. Work with local governance authorities has been the flagship of GL Namibia, the alliance and media work has also been strong. The Namibia NGO Forum (NANGOF) is the mother body of all NGOs in Namibia and has been a key partner in all GL Namibia activities. The Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) and the Namibian Association of Local Authority Officers (NALAO) as well as the Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders (AMMICAAL) have played a crucial role in support of GL Namibia's work across the country.

The year 2015 will go down as a seminal one in GL Namibia's push for a fair, just and inclusive society; as the office focused on influencing progressive change at the individual, community, policy making and implementation levels. The Namibia office focused on completing the Entrepreneurship and Life Skills Training programme for women GBV survivors while working closely with 10 local authorities spread across Namibia, to support women and end violence in their communities. Sustainable linkages between local councils and entrepreneurs have been established through the interactions that Gender Links has had with these two key stakeholders.

### Key achievements

**Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government:** GL Namibia has made great strides in the implementation of the COE programme in more than half of the country's local authorities. Thirty-six councils now have gender action plans, and most of them have also aligned their current action plans to the planning framework of the SADC Protocol and Gender and Development. The Entrepreneurship programme enabled GL Namibia to actively continue work in councils and backstop some, dovetailing with planned entrepreneurship programme activities for the women GBV survivors at their councils. Some local councils have promised to monitor progress made by the groups and allocate stalls to the emerging entrepreneurs at a reasonable rental fee. This is an example of how Gender Links cascades gender empowerment initiatives to the local level.

**Ending violence, empowering women:** In the entrepreneurship programme, 156 women started the programme and 128 completed phase three. 95% completed a business plan and 89% followed through on the plan. 51% grew their businesses; 39% added new products; and 38% found new markets. 50% started a business and 39% opened a bank account. The average monthly income for the Namibian participants rose from R105 to R611. While, 60% indicated a positive change in their financial status after the programme, and 84% indicated experiencing less or much less gender based violence.

The women entrepreneurs testified on how the programme opened new opportunities for them. Some said it was a learning opportunity for them since they never attended school before and they gained knowledge suitable for the job market and they now have their first certificate in their lives. For instance, the programme brought about a change

in IT skills. Sixty-four percentage of the women now use a computer compared to twenty three percent at the start of the project. 18% have access to Email (compared to 9% at the start). 18% surf the internet (compared to a 14% baseline at the start).

The office successfully organised and facilitated three **district summits** in three political regions of Namibia, and the winners proceeded to participate in the National Gender Summit. Winners at national level had an opportunity to showcase their good practices at the regional SADC Protocol@Work Summit in Gaborone Botswana.

#### Protocol@Work Summit facts

- 88 participants - 63 females and 25 males.
- 49 final entries, 40 women and 9 men in 13 categories.
- 19 Entrants were awarded.
- 6 female and 6 male won three first prizes while 5 females and 2 males were runners up.
- 10 NANGOF Alliance Organisations were represented.
- 10 COEs from the 14 political regions of Namibia participated.
- 4 Media houses were represented.

#### Key challenges

- Programme sustainability is a major challenge with lack of funding for the GL Namibia office. In-country and regional funding through traditional donors and corporates is critical for cascading the entrepreneurship programme, strengthening and cascading the COE programme in Namibia. The situation is more precarious as Namibia is classed a middle income country with minimum donor focus, hence access to donor grants is even more difficult.
- Some council's effective implementation of their gender and GBV action plans is deterred by lack of budgets that allocate funds specifically to gender mainstreaming and gender violence campaigns.
- Council's financial support of women GBV survivors through the entrepreneurship programme is still inadequate for the level of assistance needed. In some councils, entrepreneurs worry that while this programme is very important to them, council commitment to cascade it

remains elusive. Mobilising start-up capital and mentorship funds for local enterprises is difficult to achieve by the village councils.

- The office space is not ideal for the work GL do especially if the donors or other stakeholders want to visit the actual office to get materials. Funds permitting it would be necessary to relocate the office to business locations.

#### Lessons learned

- The Ministry of Gender's intervention and increased budgeting for local authorities is critical for the effective implementation of action plans. It is vital for the Ministry to anchor and drive gender mainstreaming and promote women's economic empowerment.
- Concrete efforts at council level to improve the sustainability of the programme by taking ownership is critical.
- The COE process has not covered all the councils of the country. 36 of the 58 councils have gone through the process and the remaining 22 councils feel left out.
- Sharing of best practices country at the district, national and regional summits creates more interest in the COE work and encourages COEs to own the gender mainstreaming efforts.
- All partner Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) need to be revisited. GL and partners should improve collaboration.
- COEs funding workshops and training demonstrates ownership, commitment and ensures sustainability of the gender mainstreaming programme.
- The Entrepreneurship programme has created the spirit of teamwork among the emerging and existing entrepreneurs and as a result, they have initiated some group saving schemes to support each other through information sharing. The entrepreneurship and life skills programme is the future of GL work and must be strengthened.

#### Key priorities for 2016

- Develop an aggressive funding strategy to attain local and regional funds for the continuation of country gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment activities in Namibia.
- Explore funding opportunities within the private sector and strengthen gendered mainstreaming networks within civil society.



New beginnings: Letisia Mutilifa, one of the emerging entrepreneurs trained by GL in Namibia, show casing her work. Photo: Veronika Haimbili