

## TEMPLATE 2: DRIVERS OF CHANGE

[http://forms.genderlinks.org.za/edit\\_form.php?id=188](http://forms.genderlinks.org.za/edit_form.php?id=188)



Th

**Title: Women empowerment, the way to success!!**

### Quotable quotes

I heard and knew of Gender Links and SADC Protocol, but I never made it a priority on my lists of priorities to advance its agenda. Today I am proud to say that I succeed in my journey.

### Fact file:

<b>Name of beneficiary</b>	Victoria Nelago Kapenda					
<b>Country</b>	Namibia					
<b>City/ Town/ Village</b>	Ruacana Town Council					
<b>GL Programme</b>	Centre of Excellence					
<b>GL staff member submitting Changing Lives</b>						
<b>Organisation</b>						
<b>Designation</b>	Chief Executive Officer					
<b>Area of work</b>	Media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government	GBV	Alliance		
<b>Sex</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female		<input type="checkbox"/> Male			
<b>Age Group</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 - 17	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 -30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 31- 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 – 60	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 +
<b>Education level</b>	Primary School <input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary School <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tertiary <input type="checkbox"/>		Vocational <input type="checkbox"/>	Adult literacy <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>First met GL</b>	Year	2013	Event		Management meeting to discuss the way forward between Gender links and Ruacana Town Council	
<b>Encounters with GL since first meeting</b>	I (Council) participated in the first Northern Region Local Government Summit in 2014 not knowing really what to expect, however the learning process was worth it and it motivated me as an individual, my colleagues and the political leadership at our Council whereby our focus changed drastically and we are since then committed towards achieving the targets of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.					
<b>Phone number</b>	+264 811297098					

<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:vkapenda@ruacanatc.org">vkapenda@ruacanatc.org</a> or vickynashongo@yahoo.com
<b>Permission to add to newsletter?</b>	Yes
<b>Instructions for follow up</b>	Allowed
<b>Extent of change</b>	

**A. Begin with an anecdote about the beneficiary's most memorable experience with GL:**

My experience with Gender Links is short and fruitful. I came to know about it in 2013 when we received a request to be part of this successful programme. Ruacana Town Council committed itself and has never looked back since then.

Gender mainstreaming is our focus and we have developed strategic partnerships and networking opportunities across different sectors. We signed twinning agreements with three local authorities (Rundu, Nkurenkuru and Eenhana) in order to learn best practices and replicate them in our Council. We created platforms where we discussed various issues affecting our communities, how best we could deal and solve those issues. Furthermore, the focus was also on local economic development, staff exchange, tourism and infrastructure development. In addition, evidence of progress in gender mainstreaming in service delivery at our Council is the order of the day. We have indeed changed people's lives and improved their living conditions.

Apart being a female CEO, it has been challenging amongst my fellow male colleagues as we are only 7 female CEOs among 49 males in the country. Not only did I have to proof myself to my fellow colleagues, but I also had to proof it to the community we are serving and the country at large. I spearheaded various community meetings where we discussed various issues pertaining development and how we as a Council could assist them (community) in improving their lives. Since the proclamation of the town, we realized that people were resistant to change and did not really understand the reason for a town council. We decided to recruit Grade 10 and 12 school dropouts and we trained them for 2 weeks at our offices. We taught them regarding basic issues such as the reason for the existing of Council, the services we provide and also their responsibility as community members to honour their obligations and pay for services provided. These learners then had a door-to-door campaign in the community where they informed them on these vital issues. This exercise we repeat

each year in order to bring others who might have migrated to our town on par with the others and have the same understanding.

It took approximately 3 years for the community members to really understand and start responding positively which we appreciate as the authority in place. The response and support is overwhelming. We further extended our education / civic campaign to the Traditional Authorities because part of the town was in the jurisdiction of the Traditional Authority. They were also resistant at the beginning because they simply felt that we (as a Council) are denying them of their rights and are taking over their responsibilities. However, after several meetings between the Town Council and the Traditional Council, an understanding was reached and cooperation is evident. The following quote was from **Mr. Namene Hishidhimbwa** a headmen in the Oshifo area:

*“I must acknowledge that the beginning was not easy, we as the traditional council knew little about the operation of a local authority and I must say that we were not happy when we heard about the transformation. However, after the various meetings we held whereby information was shared with us, we are now on the same level in terms of understanding, thank you for being patient with us and for educating us”.*

SMEs in our town received basic financial management training from various training institutions in order for them to improve the way they do business, we managed to invite the Development Bank of Namibia for a presentation to share more information on how SMEs can apply and acquire for loans to start or expand their businesses. This is evident by the following quote from **Ms. Rebecca Shooya**:

*“I am very grateful for the assistance and support from the Town Council, now I am able to run my business successful.”*

As a Council we did not had an Open Market for our community, I wrote letters to the Ministry of Trade and Industry to assist us with funding in order for us to have such markets and create an enabling environment to our people. Although it took several years (approximately 4 years), we succeeded as a Council and a modern Open Market was constructed to the value of approximately N\$18 million. This market consists of shops and stalls for vendors to sell their products. We further continued to lobby for investors to come and invest in our town and various shopping outlets are visible. With

regards to the infrastructure, we managed to construct various streets up to bitumen level, provided street electrification, made provision for water and sewerage services.

Having looked at our community and other towns as well as the world at large, we knew how people were faced with many challenges in the informal settlements, whereby in other countries it is referred to slums. As a Council we decided to change the situation and lobbied for funds from Central Government, where we formalized our areas, namely Omonawatjihozu and Okondeka. Gravel roads were constructed, water, sewer and electricity services have been provided as well. We went a step further and constructed individual toilets for each plot (180) just to improve the sanitation problem that existed and this was cemented by our **Town Mayor, Hon. Andreas Shintama** as follows:

*“We listened to our government and wanted to meet them halfway, the President has always been talking about improving the sanitation problem that our communities are facing in various parts of our country, we decided to implement the idea and construct the individual toilets for each household. Even if you are living in a zinc structure, you are still having access to a flushing toilet.”*

Under my leadership we managed to scoop various awards among others, being the overall Best Performing Local Authority for 2015 (Awarded by our Ministry of Urban and Rural Development), Winner in Best Category 2015 for the Wellness Champions Awards (awarded by AMICAALL-Namibia), Best New Comer 2010 for the Finstel Financial System (awarded by //Ae Gams) and several awards for Netball and Soccer as we partake in the NALASRA and SAIMSA games.

## **B. A short history of the beneficiary’s learning journey with GL**

The Chief Executive Officer is the head of Administration, leading all Ruacana Officials and fully responsible for the day-to-day running of the institution. As the highest Administrative Officer within the institution, the office of the CEO is directly accountable to the Council for the management of the entity.

Part of the duties of the CEO is to ensure that delivery of services to our communities is improved constantly. In affirming Ruacana's commitment to service excellence, the Office of the CEO ensures implementation of the Local Authorities Act, Act 23 as amended, the Strategic Plan and all other policies and regulations to intensify organizational culture on service delivery and to foster appropriate behaviours and attitudes amongst staff. Ruacana CEO's office is the catalyst for social transformation and service delivery. The Office of the CEO exists to oversee execution of those strategies and policies, ensuring that set visions and missions are attained within the set time frame.

My first encounter was after Council committed itself (on 26 June 2013) to be a roll out Centre of Excellence for Gender Mainstreaming. On 29 July 2013, we (management) had a meeting with a Gender Links official (Ms. Beverly Mpho Slinger) in Ruacana. I learned a lot from my first encounter as I did not know much about Gender links' area of focus and only realized it after the first meeting. Our Council further attended the Northern Region Local Government Gender Summit from 03-07 March 2014 in Oshakati and scooped the second runner-up award. We then proceeded to the National Summit held in Windhoek (14-17 April 2014) and scooped the first runner-up. This year we received the first runner-up at the District Summit and the overall winner at the National Summit in Windhoek. It was indeed a learning experience as we improved at every competition we partook.

### **C. Change at the individual level**

My perspective in general has changed from the way I used to do things with regards to the gender mainstreaming aspect. This has changed as I have seen the 'light on the other side of the tunnel'. I did not realize the importance of mainstreaming in our daily operations and the impact it has on our community.

Gender links has been the driving force of this whole aspect and I am grateful for Ms. Sarry Xoagus' unconditional support together with her team, the deliberations and assistance we received is highly appreciated. For instance, when we recruited our employees being permanent or temporary, we did not deem it necessary to balance the gender, however now we are implementing it. The other issue is when we allocate

plots or houses, it was done 'randomly' and now we 'pay attention to details' and do it the correct way where we deliberately allocate plots and houses to women and bring them on par with the male colleagues. In addition, the political leadership and my fellow colleagues through their commitment and dedication have helped us as a Council to succeed in whatever we do. Committees have been established in various wards to help council deal with land allocation as well as at various water points where the majority are women. They collect the payments and report all issues of concern to council for immediate action and solutions.

#### **D. Change at the level of close relations**

Yes they do, e.g. my husband is now willing to help with house chores and can cook. Basically it is an issue of mind change and I have realized that after educating my relatives, they now know the 'essence' of gender mainstreaming. The response is overwhelming as my sister is also willing after acquiring 'knew knowledge' and now does jobs that were perceived to be preferably for males only such as cleaning the yard. The following was said by Dianne Nashongo (sister):

*"I always thought that chores like digging trenches cleaning yards, cutting of grass were only meant for males, but after the information I received with regards to gender links and SADC Protocol, I realized that I have been wrong all along and now feel much better with the change mindset".*

#### **E. Change at the community level**

Change is most definitely evident, for instance as a Council we have a brick making project and we recruit community members for 6 months on rotational basis, this was merely done to transfer skills and to empower our people. A lady (**Martha Muye**) has been part of the project, and she said the following:

*"I really want to thank Ruacana Town Council for being innovative and changing our lives, I did not know anything about brick making before, but now I make bricks and sell them, I am empowered and is able to feed my family".*

As a Council we knew that the unemployment rate is high in our town as well as the poverty level and we wanted to make a difference in people's lives. Besides the brick project we mobilized groups of people to group them and have a garden project whereby Council donated a piece of land for such gardening project. In addition, after various investors came to invest in our town, they youth were fortunate and are now employed in various shops such as U-SAVE, Style, Pep Stores and others.

#### **F. Change at the societal level**

I was instrumental in the formulation of various policies in our institution. When we started there was no policy and together with my team we managed to come up with policies such as, Training and Development, Debtors and Creditors Policy, Street naming etc. and these are accessible in our files of evidence. The aim was to have a good start and in the process capacitate our staff members, be able to collect and develop our town. In addition, many of our staff members did not received tertiary education before joining Council; however, today I am proud to say that 65% of my colleagues have obtained diplomas and degrees through the assistance provided by Council. The following was said by **Ms. Johanna K. Eilo**:

*“Being a founding member of Ruacana Town Council, I started as a Meter Reader in this Council and with the guidance and support from my seniors, I managed to work hard and I was promoted to a Cashier. I thought of improving my qualifications as I only had a Grade 12 Certificate, I enrolled at a College and obtained first my Diploma and now I have an Advance Diploma in Financial Management. Today I am proud to announce that I was promoted to a position of Debtors Accountant”.*

As a means to create new knowledge several meetings are held with the staff members where we educate them with regards to Gender links, what it means and how we should conduct ourselves and execute our duties to advance its agenda. We also have information sharing session whereby various topics such as financial management, team work, alcohol and drug abuse etc. are discussed among staff members in order for us to improve and change our behaviour.

#### **G. Next steps**

I experienced various challenges among others, the resistance to change by the community, lack of skills among staff members, high unemployment rate within our town, lack of infrastructural services.

We overcome them firstly by introducing the necessary policies and thereby starting implementing those policies as approved by Council. Financial discipline was instilled and implementing of projects within each financial year was a priority on our lists of priorities as we wanted to better the conditions of living of our people.

My future plans are basically to advance the Gender links agenda in our communities and to ensure that I make the contribution that can change our people's mindset to be better people in our society.

My concluding thoughts are as follows: ***The journey was long, with many hurdles to overcome, but with the necessary support, commitment and dedication, we will always be victorious.***