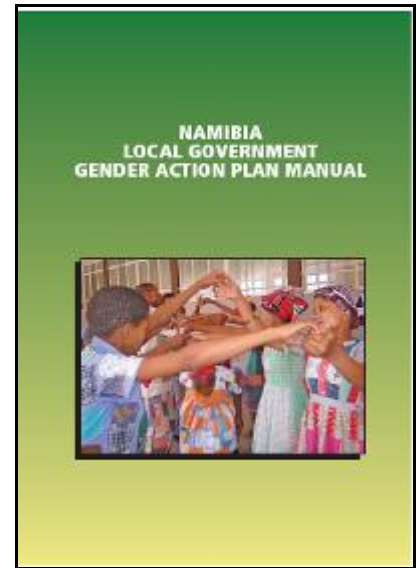


# Local Government Gender Action Plan Workshops



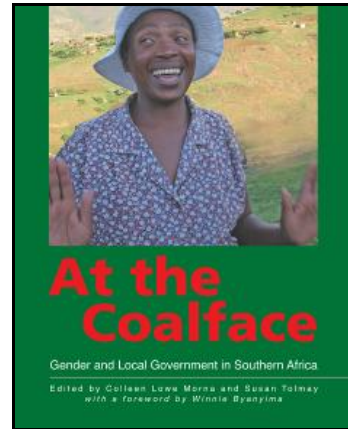
## Namibia Overview Report September 2008



This report is an account of gender action plan workshops conducted by Gender Links (GL) in collaboration with the Association of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) in six localities with participants from all of the 13 regions of Namibia between May and July 2008 with support from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

## **Background**

In 2003, GL undertook the first comprehensive study of the impact of women in politics in Southern Africa. One of the key findings of "*Ringing up the Changes, Gender in Politics in Southern Africa*" was that local government is a sadly neglected area of the gender and governance discourse. Taking heed of this finding, GL conducted groundbreaking research in 2006/2007, *At the Coalface, Gender and Local Government* which was a study on conditions necessary to increase the representation of women in local government in Southern Africa, and to ensure their effective participation. The study which took place in four countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Mauritius and Namibia) found that at 42 percent Namibia has the highest proportion of women in local government in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).



A key finding of this study was that few practical steps have been taken to mainstream gender in this tier of government or to build the capacity of councillors to lead this process. The conclusion drawn is that gender needs to be systematically mainstreamed into the work of local government so that this sphere of government can become a vehicle for achieving gender equality where it matters most, on the ground.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2007 the study was launched in Namibia in collaboration with ALAN and was attended by over 70 participants and was officiated by acting Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Acting Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in the presence of the late Hon Minister John Pandeni, Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development.

### ***Part of a regional process***

In November 2007 GL held a training of trainer (TOT) workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa to develop the gender action plan manual for rolling out gender action plans at district level in the four case study countries (Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa) in 2008. This training workshop brought together about 40 participants from local councils, ministries of gender and local government as well as local authority associations to undergo training as well as design a manual for developing gender action plans at council level.

Using their collective knowledge and experience, ALAN officials, representatives from the Ministries of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) and Regional, Local Government Housing and Rural Development (MRLGHRD) as well as four local councillors, adapted a draft training manual prepared by Gender Links to their country-

specific needs. They also shared ideas across countries. The result was the Namibia manual, including CD Rom with relevant additional resources, specifically tailored to its needs and circumstances, but with many ideas shared across borders that give this resource the vitality and richness of a shared regional experience.

Following the materials development, workshops commenced. In order to save resources two workshops were done back-to-back and regions in close proximity were joined so that all regions could be covered in six workshops. The Karas, Hardap and Omaheke region workshops took place in May, In June the Kavango, Caprivi, Otjozondjupa and Oshikoto workshops took place and finally in July Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Erongo and Kunene regions participated. Participants from the Khomas region joined the workshops in Ongwediva and Walvisbay.



### **Partnership**

The workshops were a partnership between GL and ALAN with the support of DANIDA.

- **ALAN**, as the representative body of local authorities in Namibia, has taken resolutions in support of the gender strategy for local government and plays a key role in motivating councils as well as sharing best practices. ALAN provides the knowledge and context of local government in Namibia as well as the means for mobilising municipalities and ensuring their participation in the workshops, which will contribute to ownership and implementation.
- **GL** is a regional institution that produces cutting edge research, pilot projects, training tools, and methodologies focusing on women decision-makers, the mainstream media and gender activists. Operating from its South African base, GL has a strong record of conducting research, which then informs training and policy development, and managing such processes across all countries in the region, in partnership with a wide variety of institutional partners. GL provided materials, skills, experience and expertise that will help to ensure a high quality end product.
- Both Ministries, MGECSW and MRLGHRD, have been involved in this process since the strategy development stage and participated at the workshops and offered support.

### **Objectives of the gender action plan workshops**

This main purpose of the workshops was to:

- Build the gender analysis skills of councillors and staff, including on gender and governance; gender planning and policy concepts.
- Assist councils in developing gender action plans based on the *Gender Policy Framework for Local Government*.

## Programme

- 2 and a half days;
- Key gender concepts - sex, gender, stereotypes, gender and governance (access, participation, transformation) and key gender planning concepts (gender mainstreaming, gender disaggregated data, budgeting GMS) using relevant Namibia case studies from the research;
- Day two spent developing the plan;
- Third day review plan and agree on way forward.

## Activities

The workshops employ the learning by doing approach because GL's view is that the best way to learn is to immerse oneself in the activities. To this end the material makes use of role plays, exercises and relative and informative case studies that are used to provoke thought and discussions about and plan the work of Councils from a gender perspective.

Participants engaged in a very meaningful way in all of the activities and some very good and practical examples were used to demonstrate the issues being discussed through role plays. There were some heated debates but delegates felt free to express their views when they differed from their colleagues.



## Target groups

The workshop involved:

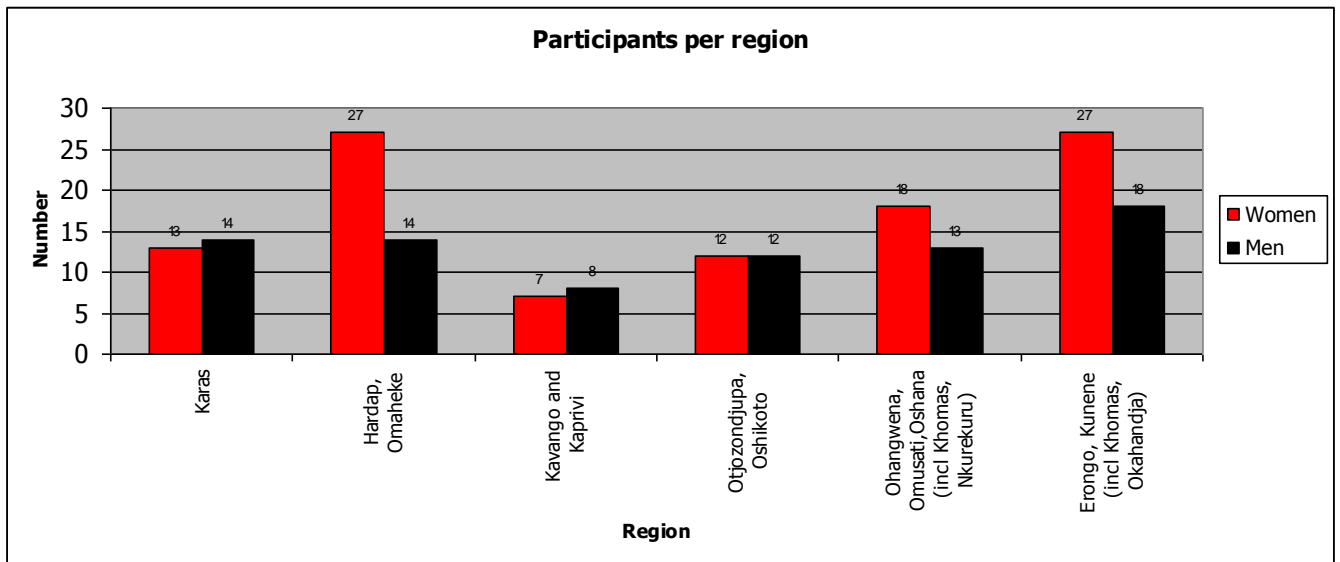
- Councillors and officials from local councils who will champion gender mainstreaming in their councils.
- Ministry of Gender representatives;
- Ministry of Local Government representatives;
- Associations of Local Government;
- Civil society organisations

## Participation

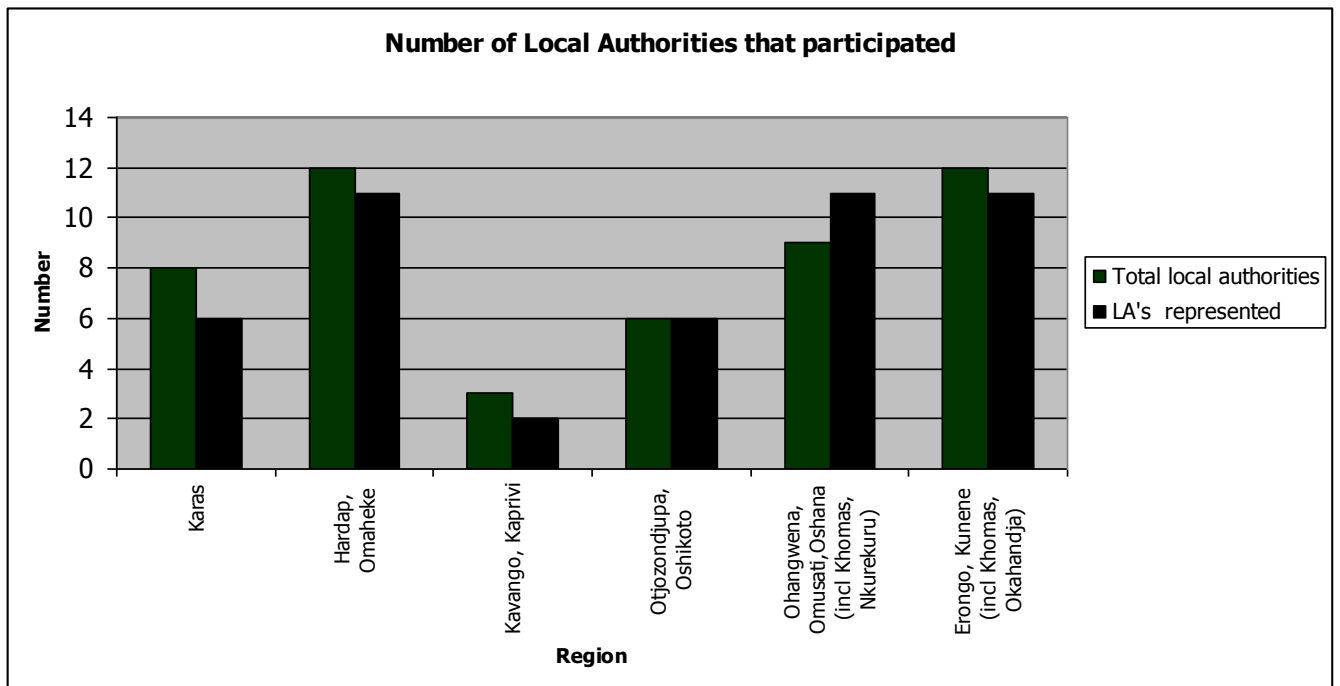
There was a high level of participation at the workshops in Namibia. In total 183 people - 104 women (57%) and 79 men (43%) - participated in the six workshops with variances between the regions. At 45 participants the workshop in

Walvisbay including participants from Erongo, Kunene and Khomas regions had the highest number of delegates, while the workshop with the Caprivi and Kavango regions

had the least number of participants (15) which is understandable as these regions have the fewest local authorities. The graph below gives a breakdown of participants by sex and by region.



Of the 50 local authorities across the country 47 (94%) were represented at the workshops. The graph below compares the number of local authorities in each region to the number of local authorities that participated per region. Araob and Luderitz in the Karas region and Opuwo in Kunene were the three councils not represented at any of the workshops.



## Outputs

The workshops yielded six regional draft gender action plans that can be taken back to local councils and fine tuned to the circumstances of each municipality to be adopted and implemented.

The plans, which include strategic objectives, actions, who responsible, timeframes, baseline data and targets to mainstream gender in all areas of municipal work, including:-

- ✓ Governance: representation, participation, community mobilisation and communication
- ✓ Gender specific programmes: including gender violence and early learning
- ✓ Gender in existing programmes: safety and emergency services, economy and job creation, infrastructure, social development and HIV and AIDS
- ✓ Employment practices and environment
- ✓ Gender management system: planning, gender structures, budget, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building.



Each workshop identified priority actions and agreed of a way forward to ensure that the actions plans became living, working documents by adopting and implementing them in their councils.



Whilst the ways forward varied from council to council, there were important common elements in all of them:

- ✓ Participants to sensitise the council to the plan and make amendments to suit the specific needs of each council.
- ✓ The plan is to be tabled at management committee meeting as an agenda point which will then be tabled before the council for adoption.
- ✓ ALAN to facilitate and monitor this process from August 2008.
- ✓ Report back at the ALAN Congress

taking place in September 2008

- ✓ Implementation by December 2008
- ✓ Both Ministries avail themselves for assistance and information and be kept updated on the process.
- ✓ Mid term review to take place on short term action areas in February 2009.



## Outcomes

The workshops resulted in increased knowledge and awareness on mainstreaming gender at the local government level.

Feedback in the evaluations showed an overall appreciation by participants for the workshops and programme. Participants found the programme to be an eye opener as many of them had never participated in any workshop on gender issues.

Participants felt that there were good discussions in the groups and women and men worked well together and complimented each other with differing view points.

Despite feeling tired by the end of the workshop most of the delegates were excited about the gender action plans that had been developed but expressed concern regarding their implementation. ALAN and GL attempted to allay their fears by offering additional support to those local authorities that requested it.

## Feedback from participants

- It was good to attend this workshop to upgrade our knowledge about gender balance.
- We need follow-up workshops or enquiries to make sure that the action plan are implemented as decided. I want to see that the points will be implemented.
- This workshop needs 5 days to finish this manual, 3 days is very tight.
- This workshop should be done in the rural areas also, because many of the neglected women are there.
- The workshop was an eye opener as this was the first one for me to attend.
- Strategic plan is most useful because it prepares the council to work very smoothly in day to day work. It was very important to me because it concerns gender equality 50% men 50% women.
- Drafting of action plan, involvement of gender policy at councils was very excellent.
- Group work and learning environment was conducive
- Networking exchange was good, various ideas about different situations within different local authorities.
- Should be repeated every year as a refresher for inclusion of new staff and councillors.



## Challenges

- **Time** - In all of the gender action plan workshops, the feedback from participants was that the duration of the workshop needed to be extended. The suggestion on more than one occasion was that the workshop should have been presented over four or five days instead of three days. There were also complaints about time not being kept by participants who arrived late.
- **Participation** – While participation levels were good including decision-makers, in some cases municipalities were not represented by participants with authority to take decisions and this was seen as a shortfall especially in relation to developing the action plans. Some participants also felt that regional councils should have been involved.
- **Implementation** - Councillors expressed concern regarding the implementation of the gender action plan especially because of budget constraints and also requested ongoing support and assistance from ALAN and GL to ensure that the plans are implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- **Lack of coordination** – Some participants said that a challenge as far as advancing gender in Namibia is concerned is that there is poor coordination around the various gender initiatives undertaken. Nationally, there are pockets of initiatives and even different policies in different locations such as for example, initiatives being driven by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and those driven by Association for Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN), but unfortunately there is no single institution that coordinates these initiatives. As a result, there is often a gap of information around the various initiatives as well as the coordination thereof, a gap which needs urgently to be addressed at the national, regional and local levels.



## Conclusions and recommendations

Overall the local government gender action plan workshops were a success and they illustrate the importance of addressing gender mainstreaming at the local government level. However, it is acknowledged that such initiatives are not an overnight miracle and there is need for constant backstopping, follow up and support.

Suggested next steps include:

- Presenting this report at the ALAN Annual Congress in September 2008.
- Bringing high level decision-makers on board in addressing the gender agenda in municipalities because without their support the plans will most likely not be adopted within a reasonable timeframe.
- Strategising with ALAN, MGECW and MRLGHRD LG on the need to provide ongoing guidance and support as well as monitor the progress of adoption and implementation of the gender action plans. Ensuring that training and capacity building are well coordinated to avoid confusion and duplication of efforts.



- Using the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, expected to be adopted by heads of state in August, as a way of mobilising at the local level and popularising action plans.
- Using the upcoming 2009 elections as a further way of mobilising around gender and local government.
- Continued, regular and targeted training on gender issues in municipalities.
- Sharing of best practices with ALAN and possibly introducing annual awards for good practice in mainstreaming gender at the local level.

