

LG 4: LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY - ARANDIS TOWN COUNCIL



Isabella Kavendjii,
Deputy Mayor Arandis
Town Council

Title: Women leaders make a difference in Arandis town council

Quotable quotes

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Fact box

COUNTRY	Namibia
COUNCIL	Arandis Town Council
WHY SELECTED	Best case
Score when score card first administered	Count only the relevant 25 questions
Agreed score at summit/during verification	New score card
Population	5521 (2011 Census)
Key characteristics	Women 2546 and Men 2975
Contact person	Isabella Kavendjii
Designation	Deputy Mayor
Contact details	0812504838, ikavendjii@hotmail.com

Description: To transform Arandis to a town of choice for current and future inhabitants and investors through smart partnership. It is based on notions such as Excellence service provision, honesty, trustworthiness and teamwork. It is the only Council so far that has set aside a gender budget as they call it, in a sum of R30.000.00 for events related to 16 days and other related matters to violence at the town.

What was the situation of gender mainstreaming before the intervention by GL?

I was not yet in the council when Gender Links(GL) came. I was working in a programme and became a councillor later. Before Gender Links came in 2009 we had less representation of women. In previous years it was 2 women to 5 men out of 7 councillors. Currently we are 4 women to 3 men in the council. By then the women did not understand the role of gender-based violence (GBV) in the communities. When GL came we started awareness campaigns for gender equality and ending GBV. People started to understand the difference between gender and sex. Women were also introduced to the policies that were in place in the government. The way society treated women and the traditional norms and beliefs kept women out of leadership responsibility.

Our upbringing as women also creates a challenge for taking up leadership positions. To break this perception is a challenge. Awareness has been created for women to break out of this limitation. I personally broke out by being involved in community-based activities in my own community. When you start realising how women in general go through difficulties then you get to understand the needs of women and get information so we can educate each

other. That is when I realised that there is more to do in empowering other people. I also want to be empowered and my capacity built so that together as women of one community we can fight GBV. I was just a stakeholder in the community and I just showed interest in the issues so that I can come out strong and support other women.

What is the current situation with regard to gender mainstreaming?

As I said we have mainstreamed gender in the council and the ratio is 4 women to 3 men. The deputy mayor is a woman. We think it is a milestone in terms of gender mainstreaming. We are also fortunate to have the chief executive officer (CEO) who is a woman. There are 2 women and 2 men in management. When you talk women to women, women tend to understand better. Our activist who was the chairperson of the gender committee was a woman. She is one of the councillors who played a magnificent role in mentoring us the young women to carry on the work they started. When she left the council we just took it forward as new councillors.

We have a gender committee consisting of stakeholders from the community. They represent the different organizations. After the meeting, the representatives go back to their organizations to give feedback and implement activities. The action plan is drawn for a year and we have monitoring and evaluation incorporated. All the programmes are budget oriented but sometimes the budget cannot cover all the activities. Sometimes we rely on donor funding, for example when we have investors coming to the town council we ask them to contribute as part of their corporate social responsibility. Because our action coordinates with all activities of our stakeholders, we make sure we support each other to implement activities in the action plan so we don't divide the community. We have implemented the stages outlined in the gender action plan. We have implemented the governance and leadership components, and now we have moved to the local economic development (LED) component.

How has life tangibly and demonstrably changed as a result of the intervention?

The voices of the women are now heard. More women are empowered and awareness is created within the community. People have started realising that empowering women makes GBV decrease in the community. Also when you involve women as key players in policy making then their issues are heard and they are more visible. Men now know that they must also give women opportunity to come up and support them. Previously other women did not support women candidates during elections but this has changed. The women have come to a level of understanding the important roles women leaders are playing. They have realised that women are capable leaders and that they were not given opportunities in the past. Women can also make good leaders just compared to men. It's about standing for your rights as women in the community and fighting so that you can create that sense of awareness among other women. If nobody takes a certain step in the community nothing can happen. Somebody had to stand up.

GL came to awaken women with potential to come up strongly to take up leadership positions. It is just about the feeling of inferiority but not being incapable. Women are capable. The fear should be broken so that we can overcome it. When this was addressed I think that is the component that made women stronger in our council. Leadership is something that can be enhanced and you can stand just like a man and address the community. In general the women also did not have interest to run for office in the past. Leadership was seen as the role for men only and women are to remain at home. More women gained interest in participation when GL came and sensitized us. It came out clearly that every person has potential.

How do we know this change has occurred?

There are now more women in leadership positions on the ratio of 4 to 3 and more women are standing up for their rights in the communities. The cases of rape have reduced. The committee looks at what can be done to reduce GBV such as street naming, street lighting, and making sure that minors are not used in child labour. Those types of issues are detected and we make sure we address them. Women started understanding laws that are in place and they started being part of decision making. We have taken up leadership roles and are key players.

We won the 16 Days and the CoEs, and the implementation of all stages of the CoE in last year's summit. When we went for the first summit in 2010 we presented on 16 Days of Activism. 16 Days is our first activity as a council and we marched in the town council. Our 16 Days was one of the best campaigns in the country and we presented it as a case study in the 2011 summit. This year we included the local economic development. We won the CoE award, LED, GBV response and we also got an award of leadership for one of the women in the community in the country summit. We came back with 4 awards at the national level. Four of us went to the regional summit and we were the runners up for LED. We also won the award on gender under ALAN last year. The ALAN congress is held after every 4th year. Arandis is a member of ALAN like all local authorities within Namibia. Arandis has implemented gender successfully within the council.



We are a unique municipality because we have a participatory community. When we always do activities we want to excel so we make sure we involve the people that are needed for that specific activity. When we talk about gender mainstreaming we are dealing with people right from the grassroots level affected by the issues of gender inequality. I think from the beginning we embraced the initiative from GL and we wanted to be successful. We had a positive mindset and the council supported gender mainstreaming to the benefit of our community. We created this teamwork and in-depth coordination mechanisms to make it work from the onset. We wanted to see results that change our people. We vigorously ensured the community is part of the process.

What factors would make for success?

The M&E made us to cover the stages that we were supposed to cover. The different CoEstages created guidelines for implementation. We used case studies that represented Arandis, it was a true reflection of the community activities. We used the capacity in us to the fullest to make us succeed. We budgeted for each activity and chose key priorities every year. And we evaluate to see which one did we cover and which one to move to the next year or which one to solicit funding for from the stakeholders. That is why the M&E is very important to take important decisions. The council addresses the budget issue after seeing the previous year's expenditures. Some of the activities will be shifted based on the availability of funds.

Who are the poorest and most marginalised people in the community and how does the council reach out to them?

These are unemployed women in general, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's), the elderly, and the disabled people within the community. As a council we make sure that we empower women to run their own projects. Women are now winning tenders in the mines, competing with men. For example one woman won the cleaning tender in the mines. Two of our women entrepreneurs were finalist in this year's summit. The one with the LED on

flowers won the runners up award in Johannesburg. She is doing gardening and flowers. She has a garden that she is managing and flowers for events like conferences, funeral arrangements, and businesses. We support them to run their projects as SMEs in the town council. They shared their stories and empowered other women as role models. These women have inspired other women to succeed in their projects. The women have discovered strengths in themselves. When you listen to the testimonies of these women you realise the growth in their lives. One of them has registered for a course to improve her business management skills.

Has your intervention resulted in any unintended impacts, and if so, how?

There is just more to do in terms of soliciting funding for activities and to keep the momentum going. As a mining town with a lot of migrants the challenge is to create continuity of the programme to support the new immigrants. The challenge is for the council to be ready to receive the immigrants and the growing population.