



## Otavi Town Council

### The Gender Driven Council

#### Quotable quotes

"The Otavi Town Council makes sure that all office bearers are made aware of gender, and make decisions based on a principle of equality"

#### Fact box

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>Namibia</b>
<b>COUNCIL/ MEDIA HOUSE</b>	
Baseline score	64
Latest score	57.5
Population/audience	<b>4562</b>
Key characteristics	Maize Triangle
Contact person	Mr. Gous Mumbalu
Designation	Gender Focal Person
Contact details	0812755716

The Otavi Town Council makes sure that all office bearers are made aware of gender, and make decisions based on a principle of equality. In the past, the council did not consider gender sensitivity when it selected political office bearers; e.g. Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairperson of the Management Committee and its Deputy. This issue has changed a lot, and the situation is now trying to level the playing field with the filling of these positions. During this process, councillors are aware that a zebra style should be used for selections to ensure gender balance.

After the Council's involvement with Gender Links on gender mainstreaming in the work of the council, we engaged ourselves to ensure that gender balance has been made across the board at both the political and management levels in council. Therefore, we have a male Mayor and female Deputy Mayor, and the Chairperson of the Management Committee is female. She works closely with the management and preparation of the council programmes and budget for council's consideration. In the past, this was difficult, as the Party nominates names for selection of the councillors. Members of the Party vote for who they want. Whoever scores the highest votes in sequence then wins for the total number of councillors for the specific town council. Therefore, it is difficult to ensure that women get elected, as democracy is at the epicentre of voting process. This was a bigger challenge; however, we campaigned and told women of the party to come in bigger numbers, and also campaigned with men at the party level to vote for women. Even though we did that, this process is still a challenge to make sure that more women are voted for. However, the Parties will change their method of voting at party level and change its constitution to ensure gender balance and (50/50) representation this year as the next elections are due in 2014.

This helped a lot, as women are in the driving seat to ensure that issues that concern our communities are addressed adequately. This phenomenon has motivated many women over the years to get involved and participate in politics and leadership positions in the town. Women are also motivated to take up the challenge and start small businesses and realise their potential in the development of the town, and also participate in the economic field by engaging in small scale business ventures.

At an employment level in the council, the selection process is transparent, but usually only men are applying for strategic positions in the council. However, the Affirmative Action Act is applied to ensure gender balance and the representation of women at senior management level. This is still a challenge for the council since the management committee is selecting the best suitable candidate, and women do not apply even though they are encouraged. In future, council has taken a resolution that any vacancy that occurs in management shall be filled by suitable women candidates.

Community meetings are held frequently to give feedback to communities on major decisions that the council takes affecting their lives. The council also holds monthly meetings to inform communities of the work of the council. Councillors also have public meetings when tariffs are increased or anything else is taking place that will affect their lives.

All these endeavours have served as a motivating factor as most women in Otavi now believe that they too are able to do something for others. They can also participate and serve as equal partners with men in all areas in life. We have a motto in Otavi that women have set for themselves. "We start small, we end bigger." Therefore, we are grateful for the programme of Gender Links, and we will push forward the agenda of gender mainstreaming in our council. In doing that, we will realise gender equality.