

**THE IMPACT OF DEMOCRACY IN NAMIBIA:
ASSESSING POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE DAWN OF
DEMOCRACY**

André du Pisani

Research report 116

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OF DEMOCRACY

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Johannesburg
Sept 2009

This paper is funded by the Kellogg Foundation



W.K. KELLOGG
FOUNDATION

Accepted for publication, December 2008

Published
September 2009

The Centre for Policy Studies is an independent research institution,
incorporated as an association not for gain under Section 21 of the
Companies Act.

The Kellogg Foundation generously provided the funding for this research work.
However, the views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not
necessarily reflect the views of the Kellogg Foundation

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ISBN 978-1-920408-00-8

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since Namibia became independent in March 1990, the politics of national reconciliation and nation-building have framed the development trajectory of the country. From its First National Development Plan (NDP1), whose five-year implementation ended during the financial year 1999/2000, and in both the Second and the Third National Development Plans (NDP2 and NDP3), the latter for the period 2007/2008-2011/12, the reduction of poverty and inequality remains a key priority for the government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN). The long-term national development framework Vision 2030 concludes that in the current situation “Inequality and poverty endangers social harmony, peace and democracy” and as its long-term development objective it states that “Poverty is reduced to the minimum, the existing pattern of income-distribution is equitable and disparity is at the minimum” (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004: 104f).

Strategies to implement Vision 2030, such as the successive medium-term National Development Plans, the 1998 Poverty Reduction Strategy, the 2001 National Poverty Reduction Action Programme, and the recently reviewed and revised Green Scheme Policy of December 2008, all have the reduction of poverty and social inequality among their chief objectives (GRN 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008). Collectively, these policy interventions all respond to poverty in respect of monetarist indicators, such as per capita income and skewed income distribution. None of these explicitly address asset poverty and outcome-based indicators of poverty, such as access to primary education and health care. Moreover, Namibia is also a signatory to major international agreements that frame the global development agenda, notably the 2000 Millennium Declaration, which commits member states of the United Nations to reducing the 1990 incidence of poverty by half before 2015, and a raft of other development objectives collectively known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This country report presents an overview of Namibia based on the most recent socio-economic data, such as comprehensive expenditure data culled from the 2003/2004 Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES), the 2nd Millennium Development Goals Report Namibia of September 2008, and the more recently published Regional Poverty Profiles by the National Planning Commission (NPC) of 2008. For each of the 13 administrative regions, data collected during the period October 2005 to February 2006 have been considered. Finally, for an integrated assessment of poverty and inequality in Namibia, the November 2007 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study by Levine and Roberts, and the October 2008 National Planning Commission report titled A Review of Poverty and Inequality in Namibia, have been consulted.

Based on background material, the paper presents findings and results in respect of four key issues. These are:

- Household socio-economic changes

- Social development changes including in-service delivery, more especially in the provision of basic services, education, health and welfare
- Political changes in the structure of government, perceptions of political accountability, perceptions of style of government and the relationship between citizens and government, and perceptions on popular participation in governance
- Other issues of relevance and importance to the enquiry.

The report culminates in a distilled consideration of the above issues and draws on the trends in the life of the young democracy to offer a closely reasoned conclusion.

2. METHODOLOGY

The report harnesses a qualitative research design that is based on a critical reading of both primary and secondary sources relevant to its focus. As far as possible, official publications and data have been interfaced with independent research, notably on poverty and poverty reduction. The political analysis draws on a comprehensive reading of available research. Where appropriate, it draws on local reporting in the print media, especially in respect of perceptions of political accountability, corruption, and the style of government.

3. FINDINGS/RESULTS

This part of the report summarises the principal findings/results of the report. These are:

- Household socio-economic changes
- Social development changes including service delivery and welfare
- Political changes: the structure of government - from national to local; perceptions of political accountability; perceptions of the style of government; intra-governmental relations, and perceptions of popular participation in government
- Any other issue of relevance and importance to the enquiry.

The key point that emerges is that Namibia's liberal democracy is pre-eminently rights-based. Namibia has less of a social democracy, and more of a classical liberal democracy that co-exists with profound socio-economic inequality. The Household and Expenditure Surveys of 1994 and 2004, respectively, have shown modest progress in terms of addressing the various regional poverty profiles. The most recent research into poverty reduction, for example, shows that the government's targets contained in the Third National Development Plan (NDP3) for 2012 would be achieved for rural electrification, but a significant

acceleration would be required to meet the targeted net school enrolment and access rates for safe water and sanitation (Schmidt, 2009). Available data suggest that pro-poor growth has not taken place in respect of public service delivery (Ibid.).

3.1 Household and Socio-Economic Developments

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has had two National Housing Income and Expenditure Surveys (NHIES), the first in 1993/94, and the second in 2003/2004. While the data methodology of the two surveys has remained essentially the same, the second survey had a notable improvement in coverage and added new questions on the needs of respondents. Furthermore, in cases where additional collections were found to have significant implications for the 1993/94 data, such implications were highlighted in the 2003/2004 survey. In both cases, two questionnaires were administered to randomly sampled households.

The need for relevant and timely survey data has necessitated that the current NHIES cycle of 10 years be reduced to five years. This will address international recommendations on socio-economic surveys, meet international reporting requirements, and provide a much more meaningful tool for monitoring and evaluating the impact of national development plans and programmes. Given the limitations associated with the methodology, the changes in the findings between the 1993/94 and 2003/2004 should be seen as more indicative of direction rather than precise estimates.

The demographic characteristics of the 2003/2004 NHIES showed that there were an estimated 371 678 private households at the time of the survey, with an estimated household population of 1 830 000. Most of the population and households were in the rural areas of the country; 65 per cent of the population and 60 per cent of the households respectively. At the time, Namibia had a rate of urbanisation of approximately 35 per cent (NHIES, 2003/2004: ii). Khomas was the most populated region, with 14 per cent of the total population, whereas Omaheke was the least populated, with 3 per cent of the population. The estimated average household size was 4.9 persons. The average household size in the 1993/94 NHIES was 5.7. This reduction is largely attributed to the impact of HIV/AIDS. Both the 1993/94 and 2003/2004 surveys showed that on average rural households are bigger than urban households, 5.4 compared to 4.2 persons respectively in 2003/2004. This phenomenon reflects the higher cost of living and of land in the urban areas when compared to rural areas.

In both, NHIES households were asked for their main source of income from a list of 11 possible source categories. These included: salaries and wages, subsistence farming, commercial farming, pensions, cash remittances, maintenance grants, drought relief, in kind receipts, and others. In the 2003/2004 Survey, almost half of all Namibians reported salaries/wages as their main source of income. Subsistence farming was the main source of

income for 29 per cent of the households, and pensions for 9 per cent. As in the earlier 1993/94 survey, there was a significant difference between urban and rural households. In rural areas, 48 per cent reported subsistence farming as their main source of income, as compared to a mere 1 per cent of urban households. On the other hand, 77 per cent of urban households reported salaries/wages as their main source of income compared to 26 per cent of rural households.

In the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTF) for the period 2008/2009 to 2010/2011, social grants for pensioners and the disabled increased by 21.6 per cent to N\$450 per month. This brings the total increase of the pension to 50 per cent since 2006/2007. The number of pension recipients is expected to increase from approximately 150 000 in 2008 to more than 180 000 by the end of the MTF period (Republic of Namibia, Medium Term Expenditure Framework for 2008/2009 to 2010/2011, 2008:5).

The coverage of grants to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) increased from 32 per cent in the 2005/06 fiscal year to 44 per cent in 2006/07 and it is expected that all OVCs will be covered by 2009/10. Namibia's war veterans, who number more than 22 000, have also received additional support to the existing subvention scheme. Each veteran, recognised as such by government, receives a monthly subsidy of N\$2 000.

In addition to the direct support of disadvantaged groups, government has put in additional resources to speed up the implementation of a Transformation of Economic and Social Empowerment Framework (TESEF) designed to address specific historic legacies. Government is also contributing financially to the work of the Small Business Credit Guarantee Trust (SBCGT) and provides technical support to entrepreneurs and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In addition, the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN) has been given a significant capital injection by government to expand its local operations.

The capitalisation of the National Emergency Disaster Fund that falls under the Office of the prime minister, has been boosted by a further N\$280 million in the current fiscal year, mostly to assist flood victims in the north and the north east of the country.

Framed by the overarching aims of the country's long-term development plan, VISION 2030, and informed by the goals the government has set itself in the 5-year National Development Plans, Namibia's expenditure priorities coalesce around a four-pronged strategy:

- Within the overall fiscal targets, making resources available to the poorest and most vulnerable communities.
- Improving the social safety net, to relieve poverty, especially in the rural areas.
- Investing for competitiveness, so as to promote growth and prosperity as the drivers of further economic development.

- Assisting ministries to properly maintain public assets and the required levels of service to the public (Medium Term Expenditure Framework for 2008/2009 to 2010/2011, 2008:4).

Within the frameworks mentioned here, Namibia prioritises social expenditure in the domains of education, health, agriculture, development, and investment in productive sectors, such as mining, fisheries and emerging industries. For example, Namibia spends more on education per head than most developing countries. Commensurate educational outcomes, however, have yet to be achieved. The Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) - a 15-year strategic framework - is meant to improve the overall quality and relevance of education.

The 2003/2004 NHIES collected data on the type of dwelling categorised as follows: traditional dwelling, detached house, semi-detached house, improvised house and flat, as well as on type of tenure or ownership. Overall, 44 per cent of households responded that they lived in a traditional dwelling, making this the most common form of dwelling. Of all the households surveyed, 27 per cent lived in a detached house, 7 per cent in a semi-detached house and 3 per cent in a flat. Seventeen per cent of households lived in improvised housing, while in rural areas, 71 per cent of households lived in traditional dwellings compared to 4 per cent in urban areas.

Since independence, the government has embarked on a housing policy programme aimed at the lower income sector of the market. Under the aegis of The National Housing Enterprise (NHE) a public enterprise, 35 000 houses have been built since independence in 1990. The current housing backlog is estimated to be 300 000, while the Third National Development Plan (NDP3) projects that government should build 8 000 houses per annum if it were to address the current housing backlog.

In the 2003/2004 NHIES, households were classified according to the type of tenure or ownership of the dwelling. The survey showed that 76 per cent of households reported that they owned their dwellings. In rural areas, 81 per cent of households - compared to 41 per cent in urban areas - owned their dwellings without a mortgage. The 2003/2004 NHIES also collected data on the main source of drinking water. Piped water was the main source of drinking water for 75 per cent of all households, 12 per cent reported a borehole or protected well, 8 per cent stagnant water, and 5 per cent flowing water. A larger proportion of urban households, 99 per cent, used piped water compared to rural households, which accounted for 58 per cent.

The type of toilet at the disposal of the household was seen as one of the important indicators of sanitation. The 2003/4 NHIES showed that 37 per cent of households used flush toilets, with 8 per cent using pit latrines, 1 per cent a bucket toilet, and 53 per cent used the bush/no toilet. A significantly larger portion of urban households used flush toilets (75 per cent), compared to rural households (11 per cent) (NHIES 2003/2004: iii).

In respect of distance to services, 65 per cent of households in the 2003/2004 NHIES responded that they were less than 1 kilometre away from their source of drinking water. For 7 per cent of the households the distance was 3 kilometres, while the remaining 28 per cent of the households had to cover a distance of more than 3 kilometres. In urban areas, 96 per cent of households were less than 1 kilometre from their source of drinking water, whereas 56 per cent of rural households were 1 kilometre or more away from their drinking water. The 2003/2004 NHIES showed that less than 30 per cent of households were less than 1 kilometre away from the nearest hospital or clinic, with slightly more than 7 per cent of households being more than 40 kilometres away. For urban households, 97 per cent were less than 6 kilometres away from a health facility. The corresponding proportion of rural households was 14 per cent.

The distance to the nearest primary school was less than 1 kilometre away for 46 per cent of households in Namibia. Less than 8 per cent of households were more than 20 kilometres away from a primary school. Among urban households, 66 per cent were within 1 kilometre of a primary school, compared to 32 per cent of rural households. In some regions, however, such as in Omaheke, 21 per cent of all households were 50 kilometres away from the nearest primary school.

In order to determine changes in the welfare status of households in terms of access to assets, the 2003/2004 NHIES inquired into three broad categories of owning, not owning but having access to, and neither owning nor having access to assets. The survey showed that more than 71 per cent of households owned a radio, while 13 per cent reported access to a radio and 15 per cent neither owned nor had access to one. Seventy-nine per cent of urban households owned a radio, compared to 66 per cent in rural areas. The percentage of households owning a radio has increased from 65 per cent to 71 per cent since the 1993/1994 NIEHS (Labour Force Survey 2004).

Regarding the ownership of or access to television, 29 per cent of households reported that they owned a television, 10 per cent reported access to TV, and 60 per cent had no access. More than 70 per cent of urban households had access to a television compared to 18 per cent of rural households.

The percentage of households that owned a telephone has increased from 17 per cent to 34 per cent since the 1993/1994 NIEHS. In the 2003/2004 survey, 34 per cent of households indicated that they owned a telephone or cell phone, 33 per cent had access to a telephone, and 33 per cent had no such access. In urban areas 60 per cent of households owned a telephone or cell phone, compared to 15 per cent in rural areas. Since then, MTC, the biggest mobile service provider, has more than 1 million subscribers, with Cell One, the other service provider, claiming over 250 000 subscribers.

The 2003/2004 NIEHS provided useful data on annual household consumption. The average annual consumption per household was estimated at N\$42 078, while the consumption per capita was estimated at N\$8 546. Annual consumption was significantly

higher in urban settings. For example, while rural households accounted for 60 per cent of all households in the country, they only accounted for 38 per cent of total consumption. Accordingly, average consumption per capita was N\$4 914 in rural areas, compared to N\$15 393 in urban areas (2003/2004 NIEHS: 95-97).

Female-headed households constituted 41 per cent of all households, but only consumed a marginal 29 per cent of total consumption. Consequently, the average consumption in male-headed households was N\$50 113, compared to N\$30 465 in those headed by females. Similarly, consumption per capita in male-headed households was N\$ 10 204, compared to N\$6132 in households headed by females. Thus, consumption per capita was 40 per cent lower in female-headed households compared to those headed by males.

Household income varied greatly across language and ethnic groups. Income per capita in households where Khoisan was the main language spoken was N\$2 642 compared to N\$81 772 in households where German was the main language. In other words, individuals in a German-speaking household on average had a level of income that was 31 times higher than individuals in a Khoisan-speaking household. In 2003/2004, the GINI-coefficient - a measure of income per capita distribution - for Namibia was 0.604 according to the results of the NHIES compared to 0.701 in 1993/1994. The inequality in the distribution of income has decreased marginally over that period. Despite this decline, however, the level of inequality in Namibia remains among the highest in the world and the GINI-coefficient target on less than 0.6 set in the Second National Development Plan (NDP2) was not met.

Most consumption in Namibia is of food and beverages: 24 per cent, followed by housing, 21 per cent, and transport and communications, 16 per cent. In urban areas, the largest share of consumption is allocated to housing (24 per cent), while in rural areas most of the consumption is on food (39 per cent). Female-headed households have a higher share of consumption on food/beverages and housing than those headed by males (2003/2004 NIEHS: 121). The 2003/2004 NIEHS used the ratio of food consumption to total consumption as a crude poverty measure. If 60 per cent of the total household's consumption was spent on food, then the household was considered 'poor', while a household was considered 'severely poor' if 80 per cent or more of household consumption was spent on food.

According to this crude definition of poverty, the 'severely poor' households in Namibia constituted 4 per cent and the 'poor households' (including 'severely poor') 28 per cent. The proportion of 'severely poor' households was 6 per cent in rural areas and 1 per cent in urban areas. The percentage of 'poor' (including 'severely poor') households in rural areas was 42 per cent and 7 per cent in urban areas (2003/2004 NIEHS: 125).

Table 1. Income poverty and inequality in Namibia

	1993/1994	2003/2004	NDP2 targets for 2006
Share of households living in poverty* (%)	37.8	27.9	10% reduction
Share of households living in severe poverty** (%)	8.7	3.9	5 % reduction
Gini-coefficient	0.7	0.6	Less than 0.6
*Poverty is defined as spending 60 per cent or more of total income on food.			
** Severe poverty is defined as spending 80 per cent or more of total income on food.			

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics (2006); GRN (2001); NPC (2008)

Some of the key indicators that reflect socio-economic changes at the household level as shown in the 1993/1994 and 2003/2004 National Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (NHIES) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Household Indicators: 1993/1994 - 2003/2004

Indicator	1993/1994	2003/2004
Average household size		
Namibia	5.7	4.9
Urban	4.8	4.2
Rural	6.1	5.4
Proportion of population aged 15+ with no formal education		
Namibia	30%	17%
Urban	11%	7%
Rural	39%	23%
Average annual per capita income		
Namibia	3 031	8 839
Female-headed	1 804	6 320
Male-headed	3 783	10 570
Proportion of households that are 'poor' or 'severely poor'		
Severely poor households	9%	4%
Poor households (including severely poor)	38%	28%
Gini-coefficient	0.701	0.604

Sources: 1993/1994 and 2003/2004 NHIES, National Planning Commission of Namibia, National Planning Commission of Namibia (2008).

The data presented above shows that urban areas experienced significantly slower growth than rural areas, albeit from a higher base, and even registered slower access to piped water and sanitation, most notably among poor urban households. Demographic changes suggest that rural-urban migration explains part of the trend, with the country as a whole, particularly the towns and cities, experiencing rapid rural-urban migration.

In retrospect, Namibia has made significant progress in respect of income poverty and inequality at household level. This is due to sound development policy decisions such as those provided for in the various National Five Year Development Plans (NDP1-3) and other enabling policies such as the National Gender Policy and the National Policy on HIV/AIDS.

However, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are challenged by high levels of regional income disparities, the impact of HIV/AIDS on public service delivery and relatively weak technical support institutions. Tables 3 and 4 summarise some of the key

Table 3: Basic Demographic Indicators.

Region	Area in sq.km	Population (2001)	Urban population	Rural population	Household poverty levels (poor)	Household poverty levels (extremely poor)
Caprivi	19,532	79,826	28%	72%	40%	7%
Erongo	63,720	107,663	n/a	n/a	19.7%	7.1%
Hardap	109,659	62,249	n/a	n/a	26.1%	4.7%
Khomas	36,861	370,500	93.3%	6.7%	7.6%	1.1%
Kavango	43,418	202,691	28%	72%	51%	19.6%
Karas	161,086	68,329	n/a	n/a	24%	4.1%
Kunene	115,293	68,735	25%	75%	28%	3.9%
Oshikoto	38,653	151,007	9%	91%	28.8%	9.0%
Ohangwena	10,582	228,384	1%	99%	32.4%	9.9%
Omusati	26,573	228,842	1%	99%	40%	9%
Omaheke	84,732	68,039	20.4%	79.6%	29%	25.1%
Oshana	5,291	161,916	31%	69%	25.3%	6.1%
Otjozondjupa	105,185	135,384	41%	59%	15.3%	3.4%

Sources: Participatory Poverty Assessments - Poverty Profiles of the 13 Regions, published separately for each Region by the National Planning Commission, Windhoek: 2007.

Poor and severely poor households currently constitute around 28 per cent and 4 per cent of all households respectively. The various Participatory Poverty Assessments undertaken at household level in the 13 regions, mostly during the period between October 2005 and February 2006 (with the exception of the Caprivi, Otjozondjupa and Omaheke Regions, where surveys were undertaken earlier, provide a graphic picture of socio-economic life in the country.

Table 4. Selected Social Indicators per region

Region	Literacy Rate: 15+ *	Access to safe Water**	Electricity for lighting (at household level)***	Access to health services within 10 km
Caprivi	78%	86%	21%	82%
Omusati	84%	83%	4%	n/a
Ohangwena	79%	78%	4%	86%
Omaheke	67.4%	89%	27%	37%
Hardap	83%	94.6%	n/a	79%
Oshikoto	83%	75%	28%	60%
Omaheke	67.4%	65%	4%	37%
Otzondjupa	68%	98.3%	42%	n/a
Kunene	59%	72.9%	22%	n/a
Khomas	95.8%	97.8%	85%	90%
Oshana	89%	97.4%	19%	n/a
Erongo	92%	95.7%	n/a	82%
Kavango	70%	n/a	n/a	82%
Karas	92%	93.7%	n/a	80%
Key: *National average: 81% ** National average: 87% *** National average: 32% n/a: Not Available				

Source: Participatory Poverty Assessments, 2007

3.2 Social Development -Key Indicators

Overall, the Namibian economy is heavily dependent on its natural renewable and non-renewable resources, both of which are dependent on climatic and market conditions. The economy continues to rely on its traditional outputs, such as minerals, fish, livestock and agricultural crops. There is evidence of a slow process of diversification at the micro-level, with non-traditional agricultural products such as grapes and dates being produced domestically. These incremental changes can partly be attributed to the government's Green Scheme and the diversification of markets for table grapes under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act II (ALGOA II).

The government identified investment in the social sectors as a priority after independence. New health clinics and centres were constructed, especially in rural areas, to improve access to health facilities, while the number of hospitals was reduced in line with government's emphasis on primary health care rather than the provision of more specialised treatment. The 2000 Namibia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) mirrors the achievements in health since the 1992 survey. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, however, has reversed the positive outcomes of investments in public health and resulted in a substantial drop in life expectancy. Part of the explanation for this trend has been the government's slow roll-out of Anti-Retroviral Virus treatment (ARVs), in the period 1992 to 2001/2. At the time of writing, 120 000 Namibians are on ARV treatment, while the HIV prevalence rate has gone down significantly, from 12 per cent in 2000 to 5.1 per cent in 2008 for the age group

15-19 years, and from 20 per cent to 14 per cent for the age group 2-24 years (2nd Millennium Development Goals Report Namibia, 2008: x).

The prevalence rate of HIV increased steadily over the period 1995-2002, but dropped in 2004 to 19.7 per cent, compared to a high of 22 per cent in 2002. The latest Sentinel Survey for 2008 recorded a decline in the prevalence rate to 16.5 per cent. The Sentinel Survey is conducted every second year among pregnant women at 24 different sites across the country. The government has implemented various programmes to curb the spread of HIV infection, ranging from awareness creation to the provision of treatment to prevent the transmission of the virus from mother to child, as well as the provision of anti-retroviral treatment (Schade, 2008: 141). While these programmes have collectively reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and child and infant mortality (as shown in the following table), life expectancy has dropped and infant mortality has remained high when measured against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This suggests that policy coherence remains a problem, while government remains dependent upon outside support in its efforts to reverse the developmental impact of HIV/AIDS.

Table 5. Some selected health indicators

Indicator	2000 DHS value	1992 DHS value
Mortality rates		
Infant mortality per 1 000 live births	38	57
Under 5 mortality per 1 000 live births	62	83
Child mortality per 1 000 live births	25	28
Maternal mortality per 100 000 live births	271	225
Immunisation coverage*	65	58
Antenatal care	91	87
Malnutrition (% of children under 5 years)		
Moderately stunted	24	28
Severely stunted	8	8
Severely wasted	2	2
Moderately underweight	24	26
Severely underweight	5	6
*The following injections have been included: BCG, DPT3, polio 3 and measles.		

Sources: Ministry of Health and Social Services, Demographic Health Survey, 2003.

Maternal mortality has increased, not only because of the impact of HIV/AIDS, but also on account of the fact that the 1992 Demographic Health Survey statistically under-reported maternal mortality per 100 000 live births (Interview with the under secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Windhoek, 26 May 2009).

Sustained investment in education has resulted in increased literacy and enrolment rates. Net enrolment rates declined in the 1990s. Drop-out and repetition rates remain high, and subsequently the transition rates from junior secondary and further to tertiary education are modest. According to a test of Grade 6 learners in 13 countries conducted in 1995 and 2000 by the South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, Namibia ranked 11th out of 13 countries in English reading skills and last in mathematics. In addition, the proportion of Namibian learners that could not read with any level of proficiency increased from 69 per cent to 76 per cent from 1995 to 2000.

Since independence in 1990, the government has initiated various commissions and research projects into education. Three of the most policy-relevant research studies were, Education for All, published in 1993 by the Ministry of Education, Namibia Human Capital and Knowledge Development for Economic Growth with Equity, penned in 2005 by Dr Marope from The World Bank, and Investing in People, Developing a Country, released in 2008 by the Ministry of Education.

All of these studies emphasised the fact that pedagogy and poor teaching quality in English and mathematics were at the heart of poor learner performance, poor learner readiness, and a shortage of textbooks, compounded by geography, added to the woes. (Marope, 2005:36, quoting from NIED, 2003).

In 2006 the government launched the first five-year phase of a 15-year Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). ETSIP is the most comprehensive plan for education in the country's history and is meant to run concurrently with the Third National Development Plan (NDP3). The rationale for ETSIP emanated from the country's long-term development plan - Vision 2030 - in particular the vision that by 2030, "Namibia should join the ranks of high income countries and afford all its citizens a quality of life that is comparable to that of the developed world" (Vision 2030, 2004: 1). In addition to Vision 2030, ETSIP is based on the assumptions that, if successful, it could promote productivity growth, reduce poverty, produce more equitable social development, enhance the country's international competitiveness ratings, and provide a basis for Namibia to enter the knowledge economy.

At the time of writing, the implementation of ETSIP has been very preliminary and uneven. The project manager retired (and has yet to be replaced) and the donor funding has been slow in coming, while the newly-established National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) has limited capacity to discharge its advisory and oversight mandate. Moreover, Higher Education needs an appropriate policy framework which is currently under development, while the NCHE operates without a strategic plan. The only substantive progress has been the approval of a Funding Formula for the Higher Education Sub-Sector.

Namibia's progress towards achieving the MDGs gives useful social indicators in all eight MDGs. This progress is captured in Tables 6 a and 6b, which shows that despite significant progress in some areas, such as education and maternal health, progress in other areas remains uncertain or has worsened.

Table 6 (a). Progress towards achieving the MDGs

Indicator	1992	2003	2006	Progress towards target
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger				
Proportion of households living in relative poverty* (%)	38	28	28	Good
Proportion of households living in extreme poverty** (%)	9	4	4	Good
2. Achieve universal primary education				
Net primary school enrolment (%)	89	92	95	Good
Survival rate of Grade 5 (%)	75	94	95	Good
Literacy rate, 15-24 years (%)	89	89	94	Slow
3. Promote gender equality and empower women				
Primary education (girls per 100 boys)	102	100	100	Good
Secondary education (girls per 100 boys)	124	113	100	Good
Tertiary Education (girls per 100 boys)	162	111	100	Good
Proportion of seats held by women in National Assembly (%)	9	19	30	Slow
4. Reduce child mortality				
Infant mortality (per 1 000 live births)	67	52	36	Slow
Under-five mortality rate (per 1 000 live births)	87	71	54	Slow
Proportion of 1-year- old children immunised against measles (%)	63	72	80	Good

Table 6(b). Progress towards achieving the MDGs

5. Improve maternal health				
Indicator	1992	2003	2006	Progress towards target
Proportion of births attended by trained health personnel (%)	68	75	88	Good
Contraceptive prevalence rate (%)	21	37	50	Good
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases				
HIV prevalence among 13-19-year-old women (%)	6	11	9	Worsening
HIV prevalence among 20-24-year-old women (%)	11	22	15	Worsening
TB treatment success rate (%)	58	69	75	Good
7. Ensure environmental sustainability				
Proportion of rural households with access to safe drinking water (%)	45	80	80	Good
Proportion of rural households with access to basic sanitation (%)	15	21	50	Slow
Freehold land (%)	5	6	8.5	Slow
Registered conservancies	0	5	10.9	Slow
8. Develop a global partnership for development				
Per capita overseas development assistance to Namibia (in US\$)	130	60	90	Worsening

Source: Office of the President, National Planning Commission (2004); UNDP (2006).

The narrative and data presented above show that Namibia is making good progress in terms of most of the MDGs, except in the areas of public health, freehold land tenure, and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). These negative trends are likely to impact on the country's development programmes in three important social sectors that are vital to long-

term sustainable development. These are: education in terms of ETSIP, land redistribution, and public health. All three of these challenges have their roots in pre-independence politics and are some of the most significant legacies that will continue to shape politics in the post-colony. Land, for example, has been at the heart of both German and South African colonial control, with a large number of Namibians systematically losing their land to European settlers or to the former colonial state. The former South African policy of apartheid and ethnic homelands was the most recent form of land dispossession. Failure to address these three core policy issues will hinder national efforts to reduce poverty and to address the inequality in the social economy. There is evidence, however, to suggest that the governing party, the South West African People's Party of Namibia (SWAPO) will reflect these challenges more forcefully in its election manifesto, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry is currently developing an integrated National Agricultural Policy. Moreover, one of the important enabling policies for ensuring food security at household level, the Green Scheme Policy, has recently been reviewed.

Against this brief socio-economic canvas, the principal political changes will now be considered with reference to specific aspects as outlined earlier.

3.3 Political and Governance Developments

Four aspects will be considered. These are:

- The structure of government: from national to local.
- Perceptions on political accountability.
- Perceptions on the style of government and the relationship between different tiers of government.
- Perceptions on popular participation in governance.

3.3.1 The structure of government

Namibia's Constitution establishes the country as a "sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary state founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all" (The Constitution of Namibia, 1990: Chapter 1, Article 1 (1)). Common to democratic states, the Constitution provides for the principle of the separation of powers; government is divided into three branches or arms independent of each other - the Executive (law implementation), the Legislature (law-making), and the Judiciary (law enforcement and interpretation).

Executive powers are vested in a popularly elected president and the Cabinet. The Cabinet consists of the president, prime minister (leader of government business in parliament) and other ministers appointed by the president. The president can also appoint a deputy prime minister as part of the Cabinet. The president is obliged to consult with Cabinet, except where the law says he/she can act on his/her own or in consultation with other bodies, such as the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The Cabinet has oversight of ministries and government departments, including public enterprises, and initiates bills for submission to the National Assembly (NA).

The prime minister, deputy prime minister and ministers must be appointed from the ranks of the National Assembly, although deputy ministers can also be drawn from the National Council (NC), the second house of the legislature. In 2005, incoming President Hifikepunye Pohamba appointed 26 members of Cabinet. At independence in 1990, Cabinet had 22 members. Apart from ministers, other senior government officials can serve as part of the Cabinet on the invitation of the president - such posts include the director general of the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the attorney general. As in the case of many new democracies, the Executive dominates the legislative process. Since the members of the Executive are also members of the Legislature, the separation of powers is not total.

Legislative authority vests in the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council (NC), with the NA playing the dominant role. The National Assembly (NA) consists of 72 members elected every five years using a Proportional Representation (PR) system. The president appoints six additional members for their special expertise, status, skill or experience. These six members do not have voting rights. The National Assembly is established in terms of Chapter 7 of the Constitution which gives it the power to make and repeal laws for “the peace, order and good government of the country in the best interest of the people of Namibia” (The Constitution of Namibia, Article 63). The NA also approves budgets and taxation regimes, defends the Constitution and laws of Namibia, ratifies international treaties, receives and discusses reports of government agencies and public enterprises, and promotes democratic governance.

Since independence, SWAPO has held the most seats in the National Assembly. Various smaller opposition parties are also represented in the NA. Table 7 shows the share of seats in the National Assembly since 1990.

Table 7. Political parties' share of seats in the National Assembly since 1990

Name of Party	Share of seats in the National Assembly			
	1990	1995	2000	2005
SWAPO Party of Namibia	41	53	55	55
Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA)	21	15	7	4
United Democratic Front (UDF)	4	2	2	3
Congress of Democrats (COD)	-	-	7	5
National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO)	-	-	-	3
Republican Party (RP)	-	-	-	1
Monitor Aksie Groep (MAG)	-	-	-	1

Table 7 illustrates the dominance of SWAPO in national political life and the decline and fragmentary nature of parliamentary opposition since 1990. If the seats in the 26-member NC that came into being in 1993 are taken into account, the hegemonic position of the governing party becomes even more pronounced. Since 1993, SWAPO has never held fewer than 19 of the 26 seats in the NC. The former official opposition, the DTA, held 7 seats in 1993. It now has 1 seat against SWAPO's 24. The UDF holds the other seat.

The Judiciary includes the Supreme Court, the High Court and the Lower Courts. The courts are independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law (Horn & Bosl, 2008). The Constitution explicitly prohibits members of the Executive or the Legislature from interfering with the independence of judicial officers (The Constitution of Namibia, Chapter 9). Judges are appointed by the president on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The JSC consists of the chief justice, a judge nominated by the president, the attorney general and two representatives of the legal profession.

The highest court is the Supreme Court, which is headed by the chief justice. The Supreme Court hears appeals from the High Court and gives final rulings on any disputes about interpretation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and Fundamental Freedoms contained in Chapter 3 of the Constitution. The High Court, which is headed by the judge president, hears serious cases and appeal cases from the Lower Courts. The Lower Courts include magistrates' courts, which deal with less serious cases, and community courts, which deal with matters concerning customary law.

Namibia's provision for constitutional checks and balances is also augmented by three other institutions: the Office of the Ombudsman - a watchdog body that protects human rights, promotes fair and effective public administration, combats corruption, and protects the environment - the auditor general, that audits government spending and presents annual reports on various ministries and public enterprises to the National Assembly, and the attorney general - the principal legal advisor to the president and the government.

In 2005, the government appointed the first director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). The ACC was officially inaugurated in February 2006, and has a specific brief to investigate corruption in both the public and private sectors. During its first year of operation, the ACC received over 600 reports of corruption; however it could only achieve its full staff complement in 2008 (Hopwood, 2008: 233-234).

The regional state comprises 13 Regional Councils that are elected every six years using the first-past-the-post constituency system. The 13 Regional Councils are each chaired by a regional governor elected from their own members for a period of three years. Since their inception in 1993, Regional Councils have found it difficult to execute effective planning and development in their respective regions. Although the legal framework for decentralisation has been in place for the past few years, meaningful progress in this regard has been slow. Poor co-operation among line ministries and a lack of fiscal and human

resources have undermined efforts to meaningfully decentralise authority to the regions. SWAPO has been dominating regional council seats since 1993, and currently holds 96 out of a total of 107 seats. The official opposition party, the CoD, does not have a single seat at regional state level (Hopwood, 2008: 25).

In 2008 Namibia had 48 Local Authorities. They are elected every five years by their residents. Municipalities, town and village councils are elected according to the party list system. Local authorities fall under the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Rural Development. Of the 48 local authorities, SWAPO controls 29, with the DTA and the UDF controlling 1 and 2 respectively in 2008. The remaining 16 local authorities are controlled by independent candidates. Overall, SWAPO polled 64.44 per cent of the vote, while the CoD and the DTA polled 12.5 and 4.6 per cent respectively at the local level.

Many local authorities find themselves in near-permanent crisis, with poor and irregular service delivery, allegations of widespread corruption and nepotism, and a poor fiscal and human resource base. Consequently, this compromises service delivery at the local state level.

3.3.2 *Perceptions of political accountability*

Data culled from Afrobarometer Round Three (2006) indicate that the supply of democracy in Namibia seems to outstrip the demand for it. Namibians expressed a relatively high degree of satisfaction with what democracy has done for them (57 per cent preferred democracy and 69 per cent were satisfied with government), but they did not demand or support democracy as strongly as respondents did in other African democracies, scoring the lowest points of any of the surveyed countries in terms of demanding democracy (Lindeke and Shijavali, 2007:4).

Data from the more recent 2008 Afrobarometer Round Four suggest that Namibia is regressing towards the mean; in other words, Namibia is displaying a similar pattern of democratic demand and supply to that of Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 67, May 2009). Also, there has been a stronger demand for democracy, perhaps as a result of greater public awareness of the Human Rights and Freedoms provided for in the Constitution. Thus, Namibia is closer to the regression line.

Namibians expressed strong support for the view that elections have been free and fair (77 per cent). Significantly, the 2006 Afrobarometer survey indicated greater expectation of democratic sustainability for Namibia than for Botswana, 63 per cent against 56 per cent. Despite the relatively weak popular support for democracy, Namibia seems to have made meaningful progress towards consolidating its young democracy.

The 2006 World Governance Assessment Survey (WGAS) for Namibia found that governance - defined as the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions -

shows a healthy respect for political accountability across most of the WGA's six areas. These areas include: respect for governing rules, the accountability of legislators to the public, the subordination of the security sector to civilian government, the accountability of civil servants, the regulatory framework of the private sector in protecting workers and holding judicial officers accountable to the public.

Of the 10 countries (the list included Peru, Bulgaria, Uganda, Indonesia, Argentina and Palestine) that took part in the second round of the WGA (the first round took place in 2001), Namibia scored the highest. Bearing in mind that the range of the WGA scale is from a low 36 to a possible 180 for the overall scale, Namibia's overall scores of 119 (2001) and 114.4 (2006) are in the upper-middle of the scale. Namibia's WGA scores corresponded with other international cross-country surveys such as Freedom House's Freedom of the World and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. In 2007, Freedom of the World accorded Namibia the status "free" (Political Rights:2; Civil Liberties:2), while in the same year, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index score for Namibia was 4.5, a marginal improvement over the previous year.

The fact that the total score for accountability was fairly high (3.38 in 2006 and 3.27 in 2001) was somewhat surprising, given the weakness of the parliamentary opposition, weak bicameralism and the relative weakness of the separation of powers within a system of executive dominance and the electoral dominance of SWAPO. The system of proportional representation at national and local state levels, too, makes politicians primarily accountable to their parties rather than to their respective electorates (Hunter, 2008: 9).

Women's participation in decision-making in both the public and private sectors is a key step towards women's empowerment. Education is essential for women to advance in public and private life. In 2007 there were 98 females for every 100 males in primary school, and 117 females for every 100 males in secondary school. Furthermore, female literacy is higher than male literacy. The MDG targets for the ratio of females to males in secondary education and the female-to-male literacy rate have been achieved.

From a regional perspective, the female-to-male ratio in primary and secondary education in Namibia is good. In primary education many countries in southern Africa have gender equality in enrolment rates, while this is not so in secondary education. This is true for Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Botswana, on the other hand, shows the same trend as Namibia, with the female/male ratio increasing from primary to secondary education (2nd Millennium Development Goals Report, Namibia, 2008: 17).

As a signatory to the SADC gender protocols and policy that target women representation at 50 per cent, Namibia, with 26.9 per cent, actually falls short of this target. Local government is the only level of government where a statutory target of 30 per cent female representation is provided for in law. Although most political parties in the country provide in their manifestos for 50 per cent women's representation, the reality is different. Women remain under-represented in both public and private life. The country has a 50/50

Movement campaigning for more significant representation of women in both the private and public sectors.

Women do hold important positions within the governing party, SWAPO. The deputy prime minister is a woman, as are the Finance, Justice, Home Affairs, Environment and Tourism, Gender Equality and Child Welfare ministers, and the deputy minister of health and social services. The deputy speaker of the National Assembly is a woman; so is the deputy chairperson of the National Council. The deputy foreign minister and the deputy secretary general of SWAPO are both women. Two of the 13 regions have female governors.

Women do occupy important positions in civil society and the print media. Examples include: the chairperson of the Namibia Nationhood Coordinating Committee and the Namibian Girl Child Organisation, the Women's Action for Development (WAD), arguably the most visible women's organisation in the country, the co-ordinator of Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (BWS) - a campaigning group largely consisting of people detained by SWAPO in the 1980s - the chairperson of Citizens for an Accountable and Transparent Society (CATS) and of Sister Namibia, established in 1991. Women are also prominent in the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) a human rights organisation established before independence, the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) that has had a woman as its executive director since May 2007, Criminals Return Into Society (CRIS) and the Women's Leadership Centre, an organisation that intends to develop a new generation of young feminists in Namibia.

The editor of the country's biggest daily newspaper, *The Namibian*, is a woman, and a woman heads up the country's biggest and most important diamond producer, NAMDEB.

Female-headed households account for 41 per cent of all households, but for only 29 per cent of total income. Furthermore, there are relatively few women in higher-level positions. In the private sector, women held 33 per cent of senior management positions in 2005. In the same year, women comprised 29 per cent of Public Enterprise Boards of Directors, while on the Boards of Directors in the private sector, 18 per cent were women. Overall, it is encouraging to note that 47 per cent of people taking up employment in the non-agricultural sector are women.

Notwithstanding Namibia's positive democracy and governance rating in various global surveys, the country has not yet acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of the African Union (AU). There has been public discourse on the matter, but the government has insisted that the country meets the criteria associated with a multi-party democracy. In its view, there is no need to be peer reviewed by the AU or by any other external agency or body. Despite its weaknesses, local civil society is organised and vibrant enough to play a meaningful part in such a process.

3.3.3 *Perceptions of style of government and the relationship between the different tiers of government*

Democracy in Namibia is grounded in a liberal notion of fundamental individual rights and freedoms. The developmental project of the Namibian state continues to be undermined by, among others:

- Weakening capacity for governance, especially at the regional and local state level and for the delivery of social services (Totemeyer, 2007).
- An economy that relies heavily on extractive industries and is heavily dependent on foreign investment and technology transfers.
- Skewed income inequality from both a racial and urban/rural perspective.
- The impact of HIV/AIDS on national development.
- Shortages in human resource endowment in areas of strategic national importance.

While the government enjoys high levels of public legitimacy and a healthy transparency rating, decentralisation has not yet been meaningfully embedded. Consequently, there is a growing need for spatially-enabled governance, more so at the regional and local level. The dominant party system entrenches the executive in government and results in a relatively weak legislature (Melber, 2006). The fact that Namibia has a weak bicameral legislature - the National Council is a house of review - that is also dominated by the governing party, coupled with considerable executive patronage at regional level (regional governors are appointed by the Head of State) result in low policy coherence, with an accompanying limited capacity to monitor and evaluate policy impact.

3.3.4 *Perceptions of popular participation in governance*

The view of the Namibian government regarding citizenship participation is reflected in various policy pronouncements deriving primarily from the provisions of Article 95(k) of the Constitution. This Article explicitly advocates the adoption of policies for the encouragement of popular participation in their respective organisations with a view to affording the public the opportunity to influence government policies and programmes. In 2005 Cabinet approved a framework for interacting with civil society. The newly adopted partnership policy between the government and civil society advocates the overhaul of the existing regulatory framework, which includes the Trust Money Protection Act, 1934, Section 21 of the Companies Act, 2004, the Welfare Act, 1979 and various official government policy statements and cabinet directives (Kaaopama et al, 2007: 42). The 2005 policy calls for improved environment for public/private partnership; closing the gap between the government and the people; strengthening civil capacity, and the need for collective

responses to development challenges and opportunities (Civic Organisations Partnership Policy, 2005: 10-17).

At the time of writing, the Civic Organisations Partnership Policy of 2005 has not been implemented. Capacity constraints within the National Planning Commission (NPC) charged with implementing the Policy, coupled to the primacy of bilateral relations with the European Union (EU) and the completion of the Third National Development Plan (NDP3) have detracted from making progress on this important policy. The NPC, has however, prioritised further deliberations with civil society agencies on the way forward in mid-2009.

The partnership envisioned will be based on synergies and co-ordination among social actors operating at different levels and in various areas and sectors in order to enhance the participation of citizens in governance and development processes. In terms of the National Planning Commission Act, 1994, the policy will be overseen by an advisory committee drawn from all the relevant levels of the government and civil society agencies. To date, however, there is little evidence to show that the policy has been taken seriously by government. There is also evidence that suggests that civil society agencies have not consistently been successful in lobbying lawmakers and members of parliamentary Standing Committees on bills and matters that cover their particular concern. In practice, due to the relative weakness of Namibian civil society, this has rarely happened (Hopwood, 2008:27).

The political consequences of the two electoral systems in use are important for public accountability and responsiveness to the needs and preferences of citizens. For the National Assembly and Local Authority elections Namibia uses a closed party list system in which candidates are selected and ordered (ranked) by their parties. The electorate does not have a chance to elect a particular candidate and the ballot paper consists of parties' names and their symbols rather than the list of those standing for election. Voters simply choose the party they prefer and the candidates elected are predetermined by the parties.

In a closed party list system, as is used in Namibia for two levels of government, the National Assembly and Local Authorities, candidates on the list are not directly accountable to the electorate but rather to the party that placed them on the list. The other argument against a closed party list is that it concentrates too much power in the executive structures of the party. Candidates are likely to curry favour with party leaders to ensure that they remain high on the list, rather than adopting their own stances on issues that might at times run counter to their party's official positions.

Unlike the National Assembly and Local Authorities, Regional Councils are elected on a constituency basis. The First Delimitation Commission recommended in 1992 that Namibia be divided into 13 regions and 95 constituencies. The Regional Councils Act of 1992 formally created 13 regions from the previous 26 districts. Following boundary changes recommended in the Second and the Third Delimitation Commissions, Namibia now has 107 constituencies.

Since the independence elections of 1989 up to and including the last elections of 2004, voter turnout has remained healthy in the case of National Assembly and Presidential Elections, and less so, in the case of Regional Council and Local Authority elections. Table 8 shows the voter turnout for the respective elections from 1989 to 2004.

Table 8. Voter turnout at elections since 1989

Year	Election type	Registered voters	Voter turnout	Comments
1989	Constituent Assembly (drafted the Constitution)	701 483	97%	Independence elections - UN supervised
1992	Local Authority	156 663	82%	First Local Authority Elections
1992	Regional Council	470 006	81%	First Regional Council Elections
1994	National Assembly	654 189	76%	
1994	Presidential	654 189	76%	
1998	Local Authority	188 302	34%	
1998	Regional Council	534 278*	40%	Not including registered voters in uncontested constituencies/local authority areas
1999	National Assembly	879 222*	61%	The 1999 voters register was found to be seriously flawed with repeat entries and ghost voters
1999	Presidential	879 222*	61%	See comment above
2004	Local Authority	363 776	44%	
2004	Regional Council	950 66	55%	
2004	Presidential/National Assembly	975 700	85%	

Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

As shown in Table 8, voter turnouts, particularly in National Assembly and Presidential elections, are high. This trend suggests that many Namibians are expressing their gratitude for their hard-fought liberation and freedom. Namibian politics remains powerfully symbolic and the governing party capitalises on this.

Voting patterns also suggest that race continues to exert some influence on voting behaviour, since most of the Namibians other than black, consistently vote for the smaller opposition parties rather than for SWAPO. While social and economic life is deracialising, the country has a considerable distance to travel in bringing about an open society.

3.3.5 Other issues of relevance

In the recent past, the political landscape in Namibia has been characterised by low levels of violence during two recent by-elections in the north and the central part of the country. Supporters of the newly founded Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) - a breakaway faction from the governing party - and SWAPO supporters have been involved in acts of

violence in which two people lost their lives. There is also evidence of growing intolerance towards the RDP, for example in holding public rallies in certain towns in the Oshiwambo North. The youth are getting more impatient with the older generation and former liberation leadership of the governing party.

While remaining pluralistic, media diversity remains a matter of concern, with the State still the largest media owner. By the end of 2008, the country's biggest daily newspaper, The Namibian, was selling its shares in Free Press Printers, the joint venture with Trustco Group International, which publishes the weekly tabloid, Informante. The decision by The Namibian to sell its shares in Free Press Printers would further strengthen the monopoly of Newsprint, a division of Democratic Media Holdings, which prints the dailies Republikein, Allgemeine Zeitung, New Era (a government-funded paper) as well as the weekly Namibian Sun. The print media has also come under attack from some members of the ruling SWAPO, while The Namibian newspaper still faces a government ban on advertising in it.

While recognising the concern about media diversity, Namibians continue to enjoy all fundamental rights and freedoms provide for and protected under Chapter 3 of the Constitution. These include freedom of speech and of expression, inclusive of freedom of the press; freedom of thought, conscience and belief; freedom to practise any religion; freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. There have indeed been significant improvements in terms of opportunities for Namibians to enjoy these civil liberties as a result of the dawn of democracy since 1990.

In the context of national and presidential elections later this year, it is to be expected that there will be some turbulence in the political realm as the SWAPO Youth League (SYL) and the unions attempt to radicalise the dominant party's stance on the land issue, youth empowerment, industrial relations, and poverty reduction at rural level. SWAPO will remain the dominant party, but it is likely to signal the end of the politics of 'silent reconciliation' that have characterised politics since independence, in favour of more meaningful redistribution. The newly-grounded RDP might become the official opposition. The structure of government will not be seriously affected by the turbulence. Government transparency will remain at roughly the same level, but service delivery might be hampered by tighter budgets and a more uncertain economic environment regionally and globally.

The politics of land redistribution will remain on the national agenda and might become more salient in the context of an election year. Overall political stability, however, would not be negatively affected. The economy is likely to grow more modestly than the NDP3 target of 5 percent and this will impact negatively on social investment in public health, education, welfare, sustained progress on the MDGs, and the ability of government to create employment. Namibia is likely to continue the pattern of jobless growth. Herein nestles the seed for future instability, disenchantment and conflict.

4. CONCLUSION

As a middle-income country, Namibia has a relatively open and small economy, which is heavily influenced by both regional and global economic events, especially in the country's main trading partners - South Africa, the European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA) and China.

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has been making steady progress in terms of human and social development and in consolidating its democracy. Such progress, however, has been contingent on a favourable investment climate, positive economic growth for most of the past 19 years, and the maintenance of democratic governance. Like many other countries, Namibia faces a period of greater fluidity and uncertainty, not least on account of the global financial crisis and the conditionalities put forward by international donor agencies, notably the European Union (EU). Jobless economic growth is likely to continue for some time into the future and this could compromise the country's key social and developmental indicators and targets as provided for in the Third National Development Plan (NDP3).

Based on NDP2 targets and achievements, as well as on a reading of the local and global economic trends, Namibia is unlikely to reduce unemployment, which stands nationally at over 37 per cent, while the ratio of private investment to GDP is likely to remain stagnant. Imports growth will exceed the NDP3 targets, while exports growth may not meet the targets. In the climate of an election year, state expenditure is likely to rise. Economic growth will decline, and may be negative, reducing the prospects of growth with equity further. It is unlikely that the Gini-coefficient will be reduced significantly over the next few years, making Namibia one of the most unequal countries in the world. Meaningful poverty reduction will be harder to achieve. The country will remain politically stable, but deforestation and desertification will continue to take their toll. Water scarcity will continue to pose a special challenge to national development.

The macro-economic and trade policy environments will remain stable, if more complicated by the ongoing differences over the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union; at the same time, the goods and services trade deficit continues to show significant fluctuations. The government will continue to make significant investments in education and human resources development. Gender equality will continue to make modest progress, while Namibia is likely to meet some of the MDGs.

A reasonable degree of political stability will prevail, while the state will remain functional in most respects. The ruling party, SWAPO, will remain in power and continue to dominate elections at all levels despite some reconfiguration in opposition politics. Elections will remain substantially free and fair. Government will remain relatively free of corruption. Modest progress will be made on gender equality. HIV/AIDS will continue to undermine national development and place a heavy burden on public health services. Land reform will

become even more politically salient as the current land reform efforts are widely seen to be inadequate.

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