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"Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia" (EPDN),
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NATIONAL GENDER POLICY (NGP) 2010 - 2020

Summary and recommendations for Civil Society by EPDN





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Vision

“The revised National Gender Policy (NGP) derives its direction and focus from Vision 2030 and the Namibian Constitution. This Policy envisions the creation of a society that is just, moral, tolerant and safe, and where legislative, socio-economic and political structures are in place to eliminate marginalisation, while ensuring peace, equality and equity between females and males in all spheres of life.”

Mission

The National Gender Policy does not provide a mission statement.

Goal

“To achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of Namibia.”

Leading Offices / Ministries / Agencies (O/M/As)

The policy seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Vision 2030¹ objectives, specifically the creation of a society in which all men and women enjoy equal right and access to basic services in all sectors. The NGP is therefore applicable to all aspects of society.

The Ministry of Gender, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW) is the custodian of the policy. Since 2020 the ministry has been located under the Office of the President. The ministry fulfils a crucial role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NGP as well as the accompanying National Gender Plan of Action 2010 – 2020 (NGPA). According to the policy, the NGPA will “outline specific activities required to achieve the policy objectives, define the roles of all stakeholders, the timeframes and resources required.”

¹“A national vision is a perception of the future, which reveals and points to something new, beyond what is already available and accessible. The goal of our Vision is to improve the quality of life of the people of Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world, by 2030. (...) Namibia Vision 2030 presents a clear view of where we are, where we want to go from here, and over what time frame”
https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/vision_2030.pdf





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What does the policy say about responsible bodies?

The National Gender Policy states that the implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

This policy should be read together with the National Gender Plan of Action and the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy, both published around 2015. These documents address some gaps and provide further detail on the implementation of the *NGP*.

However, the policy document suggests an institutional framework made up of five entities, which "will focus on coordination, research, monitoring and evaluation as well as capacity-building" to facilitate the *NGP's* implementation. The five entities are: *MGEPEWS*, Permanent Gender Taskforce, Parliament and the Parliamentary Gender Caucus, Gender Focal Points/Units and Development Partners.

Furthermore, the policy stipulates the roles and responsibilities for each of the five institutional entities in detail. Hence for example *MGEPEWS* is to implement the overall policy, to establish the necessary coordination structure and to "set standards for gender mainstreaming." The responsibilities of the Permanent Gender Taskforce include among others, advising "stakeholders on gender-related research and data-collection," and lobbying parliament and development partners for funding to realize the *NGP's* objectives. Parliament meanwhile should advance gender equality and women's empowerment by "ensuring that laws are gender responsive."

Given the need to integrate gender equality across all sectors, the policy is essential for all government *O/M/As* to facilitate coordination and support the work of government entities in its implementation. The National

Gender Plan of Action provides a guiding framework divided into six thematic clusters with respective priority areas. The six cluster are:

- Human rights;
- Health, HIV and AIDS;
- Education, Training and the girl child;
- Poverty, Rural and Economic Development;
- Governance, peace security and disaster management;
- Media, research, Information and Communication.

It should be noted that the six cluster themes are based on 12 priority or key programme areas identified by the *NGP* which in turn are each linked to a specific policy objective, listed in the Policy objectives & benefits section.

The framework assigns each *O/M/A* to one or more clusters to "minimise overlaps and maximize synergies." Importantly, the National Gender Plan of Action framework also lists many other stakeholders under the clusters – including *CSOs*, *NGOs*, universities and training and financial institutions. The clusters fall under and report back to the Permanent Gender Taskforce on a regular basis.

It should be noted that the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy (2010-2020) document – published in November 2015 – changes the institutional framework as initially outlined in the National Gender Policy. It mandates the establishment of four coordination components - keeping the Permanent Gender Taskforce and implementation clusters from the *NGPA* and establishes a Regional Gender Permanent Taskforce for each region. Importantly, these structures are all overseen by the High-Level Gender Advisory Committee (*GAC*). Chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister and made-up by Minister and Regional Governors the *GAC* "will expedite decision making on gender issues such as resource."



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What main measurable and positive outcome should be produced by the policy?

The National Gender Policy from 2010 is a very comprehensive document and provides an extensive list of policy objectives and associated strategies covering everything from Gender Based Violence (*GBV*) to issues around the girl-child and gender equality in the family context. However, the policy at this stage is outdated and missing many of the components which would guide implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For example, the policy does not provide measurable targets or baselines. The document does refer to the respective National Development Plan 3 (*NDP3*) as well as the Millennium Development Goals (*MDGs*) both guiding documents at the time when the policy was drafted.

The *NGPA* from 2015 however does provide a detailed matrix for each cluster which includes strategies, targets, baselines, actions and time frames. Therefore, the policy's action plan, in combination with the National Gender Policy gives a detailed and long list of outcomes – intended to be achieved by the policy by 2020. However, the cluster matrixes are dated, with targets based on old data and on timelines that are no longer applicable.

What the National Gender Policy brings across is the importance of making gender equality a national priority goal and encouraging all government entities, stakeholders and the Namibian society at large to pursuing it. Hence, the policy states that it is "designed to provide guidance for stakeholders and institutions at all levels, and to ensure that they always consider a gender perspective in their planning and programming processes." From a practical perspective this means that the policy will "guide actions towards the integration and mainstreaming of gender perspectives" in all sectors to realize the policies overarching goal.

Policy objectives & benefits

Each of the 12 priority areas the policy identifies has a corresponding policy objective. These are:

1. Reduce gender inequalities and improve access to productive resources to enable poor women and girls to overcome poverty.
2. Reduce gender inequalities in education, improve school completion rates for girls and increase women's access to vocational training, science and technology.
3. Improve women and men's health, including reproductive health, and prevention / management of HIV and AIDS.
4. Reduce the prevalence of gender- based violence and increase protection for women and girls.
5. Improve access and control of productive resources and services such as land, credit, markets, employment and training for women.
6. Increase women's participation at all levels of decision-making and provide support for women in governance and decision-making positions.
7. Promote women's access to information and communication technology and eliminate the negative portrayal of women and girls.
8. Enhance the role and benefits of women in the environment.
9. Promote and protect the rights of girls and eliminate discrimination against them in education and training.



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10. Promote the human rights of women and ensure legal protection of women's rights through an enhanced legal framework, effective implementation of laws and policies, and meaningful access to the justice system.
11. Increase and strengthen women's participation in conflict resolution, promote women's contribution to peacebuilding, and involve women in natural disaster- management.
12. Ensure gender equality and respect for the important role of women in all aspects of family life, including steps to protect women's rights in respect of marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance and cohabitation.

What does the policy say about public participation in its creation and revision?

There is limited information on the *NGP's* development. This current policy is based on a review of Namibia's first gender policy and accompanying plan formulated in 1997 and 1998 respectively. The review process leading to this policy included consultations with stakeholders who provided valuable inputs to the development of the National Gender Policy. *CSOs* were among the consulted stakeholders.

The policy does not mention public participation except in terms of advocating for improving women's engagement, participation and responsibilities across all sectors in the society at large.

The National Gender Policy does not provide details around its planned review, indicating only that there will be a "mid-term review" after five years of implementation. It can however be assumed that an eventual policy review process will include some form of stakeholder and public consultations.

Associated costs / budget assigned to the policy

Neither the National Gender Policy nor the National Gender Plan of Action provides a budget or cost estimate to achieve the policy's objectives and strategies. However, the policy states that: "since gender is a cross-cutting concern, all stakeholders are expected to provide financial, human and material resources to ensure effective implementation."

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the policy say about its enforcement?

The policy does not provide information on its enforcement.

What does the policy say about Parliament's role?

Here are some examples of what the policy states:

Parliament should ensure that laws are gender responsive

Sensitise both female and male Parliamentarians to gender-related issues;

Monitor all matters pertaining to gender issues and ensure that all laws respect the equal rights of men and women, and address the special issues facing women in Namibia

Scrutinise national budgets to ensure their gender responsiveness in resource allocations;



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What does the policy foresee about its evaluation?

The *NGP* has a short chapter that provides some guidance in terms of monitoring and evaluation (*M&E*) and the long-term impact of the policy's implementation. The policy states that all stakeholders are responsible for doing their own respective *M&E*, noting however that it is the responsibility of *MGEPEWSW* to “coordinate and lead the process”. Indeed, one of the roles of *MGEPEWSW* is to “develop monitoring and evaluation tools” in collaboration with other institutions.

In addition, the policy provides a brief list of indicators for each priority area to track gender equality and women's empowerment.

Finally, the coordination mechanism document states that each cluster should develop or support their own respective *M&E* systems.

What does the policy need to succeed?

At this stage the policy and its associated implementation plans should urgently undergo a comprehensive review and revision process to ensure that it reflects new evidence, challenges and policy tools.



The policy and civil society - the policy's impact on the day-to-day work of CSOs

Core elements of the policy remain relevant, providing a list of comprehensive objectives and strategies for many sectors and areas of concern. However, due to its age the *NGP* does not address more recent issues of concern and most of the National Gender Plan of Action's cluster actions and targets are based on outdated information and lack baseline data.

The coordination mechanism made up of the six clusters provides an important platform for *CSOs* to engage government and other stakeholders and to monitor progress, exchange information and advocate for systematic actions on identified issues.

Recommendations: How can CSOs make best use of the policy?

The policy and the National Gender Plan of Action are outdated, and it is likely that government will soon move to review and possibly revise, update or replace the policy – considering societal change and new data. It would be best for *CSOs* to systematically collect and collate data on the *NGP*'s implementation and policy objectives based on their activity areas or sectors. This would provide important monitoring and evaluation information to an eventual review process of the policy.



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In addition, civil society could identify new gender-related issues that have emerged after the development of the current policy and suggest strategies on how to address these new challenges. Finally, CSOs could advocate for the inclusion of a detail cost plan, streamlined coordination mechanisms and stronger capacity building mechanism – to address the shortcomings of the *NGP*.

CSOs should advocate for an updated policy aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the National Development Plan 6, other relevant conventions and their own programmatic data.

Some visuals in this publication have been created with AI tools, using LeonardoAI.

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The policy is published here:

[https://mgepesw.gov.na/documents/792320/918990/
NATIONAL+GENDER+POLICY+%282010-2020%29.
pdf/63b069a7-348f-102d-8f15-
0a999821ad12?version=1.0](https://mgepesw.gov.na/documents/792320/918990/NATIONAL+GENDER+POLICY+%282010-2020%29.pdf/63b069a7-348f-102d-8f15-0a999821ad12?version=1.0)

