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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO: Civil Society Organisation
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
CBO: Community-based Organisation
EU: European Union
EUD: EU Delegations
MS: Member States
RM: Roadmap
NDP: National Development Plan

## PART I – BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT AND PAST EU ENGAGEMENT

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Macroeconomic situation

Namibia is classified as an upper-middle-income country, with a gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016 of approximately US \$ 10.3 billion. The robust economic growth experienced by the country since independence (4.3% on average), came to halt in 2016, when the economy grew by 1.1%, compared to a strong 6.0% in 2015. The contraction in GDP growth was mainly caused by a decline in secondary and tertiary industries (7.8% and 3.9%, respectively).

Namibia has 2.32 million inhabitants<sup>1</sup>, with an average annual population growth of approximately 2.4% and almost an equal split between urban and rural population. Namibia has one of the most unequal income distributions on the African continent, with a Gini coefficient of 0.572<sup>2</sup>. Although there appears to be a declining trend, the rate of decline is slowing down. Despite poverty alleviation programs, poverty and inequality remain prominent features of the Namibian society, especially in rural communal areas where most of Namibia's population lives. The gap between rural and urban incomes fuels migration to the country's capital city and major towns, which in turn increases urban poverty. The incidence of poverty was estimated at 28.7% of the total population in 2010, with a higher concentration of poverty in rural areas (37.4%)<sup>3</sup>.

Household income varies greatly according to ethnicity. The average per capita income in German-speaking households (0.5% of the population) is 31 times that of Khoisan-speaking households (1.5%) and 13 times that of Oshiwambo speaking households (52%). Wide disparities in infrastructural development between the impoverished northern parts of the country, where most of the population lives, and the central and southern regions remain. Unequal access to quality education and health services is a major feature of poverty in Namibia. The economic and geographical dualism, partly a legacy of the country's apartheid era, poses one of the biggest challenges to the fight against poverty in Namibia. HIV is yet another challenge with considerable socio-economic costs, especially to the poorest groups. The low

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<sup>1</sup> World Development Indicators database, World Bank, 16 December 2016

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Finance of Namibia – Fiscal Policy Strategy 2016/2017

<sup>3</sup> Namibia Households Income and Expenditure Surveys - 1993/1994, 2003/2004 and 2009/2010.

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productivity of the affected and infected working population, together with the high number of orphaned children, poses a countrywide challenge.

Strong policy frameworks and expansionary domestic policies have contributed to macroeconomic stability, robust growth, and rising living standards. Yet, deep-rooted structural impediments have kept unemployment high and unresponsive to growth. Approximately 70% of the total population is considered economically active but unemployment rate stands at 34% (38.3 female and 29.8% male)<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.2. National Development Plans

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. Besides the 2030 Agenda, African countries have committed to implement the African Union Agenda 2063, which is both a vision and a plan to build a more prosperous Africa in 50 years. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the importance of the AU Agenda 2063 and considers it an integral part of it. Namibia is fully committed to the Agendas 2030 and 2063 and the National Development Plans are aligned to these Agendas.

Namibian Vision 2030 establishes a long-term planning system for Namibia. It offers a systematic process for developing and implementing consistent long-term development strategies, based on the active participation of all stakeholders at each stage of the process, and linking long-term perspectives to existing medium and short-term planning tools. One of the major principles upon which Vision 2030 is based is "partnerships" between government, communities and civil society, partnership between different branches of government, with the private sector, NGOs, CBOs and the international community, partnership between urban and rural societies and, ultimately between all members of the Namibian society.

The five-year National Development Plans (NDPs) are the primary implementation tools for Vision 2030. Despite the efforts to fast track implementation and to improve monitoring and evaluation, there are still some priority areas facing challenges. If lessons are to be learned from previous NDPs, these include the need for participatory engagement to ensure buy-in and commitment from stakeholders; the need to enhance structural consultation to ensure ownership; the need to address developmental imbalances among the regions as well as focusing on rural development and transform rural areas from being subsistence economies. NDP5 acknowledges the need for a coalition between state, private sector and civil society and the comparative advantage of NGOs in activities related to poverty reduction and understanding the needs of the poor. A coalition with NGOs is seen as helping to free them from other agencies such as those of *"donor countries and foreign assistance priorities and prevent them from becoming forces of destabilization"*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> National Statistics Agency's (NSA) Labour Survey - 2016

<sup>5</sup> Page 9: White Paper on Drafting the Fifth National Development Plan-NDP5: Big Push Towards Prosperity' Republic of Namibia, Office of the President, National Planning Commission (undated but presented by NPC to Development Partners on 24/05/2016).

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Greater progress in the achievement of national development goals requires mutually-reinforcing efforts of the Government, the bi-cameral Parliament and the citizenry through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). This requires more effective interaction between these stakeholders. Strengthening the oversight function of Parliament and the capacity of CSOs to provide effective support to the Government in the implementation and monitoring of public policies are important components of such improved interaction, but improving interaction mechanisms themselves between Parliament, the Government and Civil Society is an equally important challenge that is to be met in the years ahead.

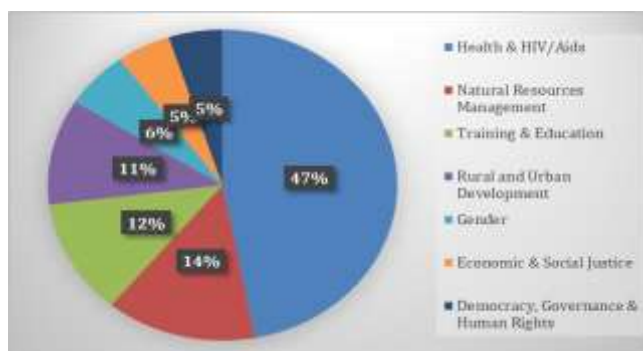
### 2. THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

#### 2.1. The civil society sector

Prior to independence in 1990, Namibia had a small number of non-governmental entities at various levels, from the communal to the national levels, fulfilling a variety of social and economic purposes. The key feature of Namibian pre-independence civil society, however, was the emergence of the national liberation movement, which defined civil society overwhelmingly in political terms. The basic functions of civil society regarding social services, membership-based organisations, or mobilising citizens around common interests of any sort were subsumed within the struggle for independence from South Africa. By all accounts, this legacy remains predominant in the evolution of civil society as a sector and in government-civil society relations in Namibia since 1990.

International donor resources flowed into Namibia in the 1990s to help the newly independent nation establish itself, create the structures and conditions for both economic and socio-political development, and provide citizens with basic services. Namibian civil society had to redefine itself due to the absence of a “common enemy” (South African rule/Apartheid), and had to grapple with sudden human resource constraints, as many senior CSO leaders joined the public service shortly after independence – a trend that is continuing today.

Data collected by the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) for the purpose of compiling a "Guide to Civil Society in Namibia" in 2012 found 568 active CSOs in Namibia, which are segregated by sector as follows (Keulder & Kisting, 2012):



The total number of CSOs in Namibia is impressive given the relatively small population of about 2.3 million people, however, many of these CSOs are small or inactive and the number of national-level CSOs

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with active and sustained programs, full-time staff and functional organisations is about 20 to 40.

The largest sector is the Health sector, with specific emphasis on orphans, home-based care, HIV and Aids prevention, which demonstrates that it is, in the practical engagement, in relief and welfare where CSOs have become more active. The focus on service delivery is, however, also prevalent in the other sectors, with comparatively few CSOs conducting advocacy work on policy issues.

There is no recent study on the state of civil society in Namibia, therefore, a new mapping of civil society would be very useful for those wishing to collaborate with or support CSOs in Namibia.

### **a) Enabling environment for civil society**

Basic legal rights: The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia contains a number of provisions that guarantee the space for CSOs to operate. Chapter 3 of the Constitution contains fundamental human rights and freedoms relevant to the operation of CSOs. Under Article 131 of the Constitution, the rights and freedoms contained in Chapter 3 are entrenched and the provisions may not be repealed or amended insofar as such repeal or amendment detracts or diminishes from such rights and freedoms.

The relevant rights contained in Chapter 3 include protection of liberty; respect for human dignity; equality and freedom from discrimination, arbitrary arrest and detention; access to a fair trial; the right to political activity; the right to administrative justice, culture, and education. The fundamental freedoms contained in Chapter 3 include freedom of speech and expression; freedom of thought, conscience and belief; freedom of religion; freedom to assemble peaceably and without arms; freedom of association; freedom to move freely throughout Namibia; freedom to leave and return to Namibia; and freedom to practice any profession, or carry on any occupation, trade or business. Under Article 25, the courts are given the power to declare invalid any law or any action of the executive and agencies of the government that is inconsistent with the provisions of Chapter 3. These provisions of the Constitution are generally upheld.

Civic Organisations Partnership Policy (COPP): The Government of Namibia launched the COPP in June 2006, which aimed at creating a clear policy framework for co-operation between Government and Civil Society. The policy calls for an improved environment for public-private partnerships, closing the gap between government and the people and strengthening the capacity of civil society. The Helpdesk for Civil Society was established within the National Planning Commission (NPC) to coordinate the implementation of the policy, which has four objectives:

- a) To create a greater commitment for civic participation through the promotion and encouragement of active citizenship;
- b) To enhance the environment for civic participation and partnership;
- c) To bring the government closer to the people and create partnership opportunities and
- d) To enhance the capacity of partners to enter into partnerships and jointly respond to development challenges and opportunities in an efficient, effective and sustainable fashion.

In order to implement the COPP, the government wanted to establish a voluntary registration system with the so-called "Registration Bill". The bill has been largely criticized by some CSOs who argue that the

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registration system is a mechanism for the government to control the activities of civil society. Government argues that if CSOs want to receive public funds they need to know who are the CSOs interested and their functioning.

The National Planning Commission and some CSOs have started discussing the possibility of revising the policy. The National Planning Commission has expressed interest in receiving support from development partners to facilitate the revision process. If the COPP is revised, accepted by all parties and finally implemented, it would be the framework for a more effective interaction and collaboration between government and civil society.

In addition to the basic legal rights, there are various factors that affect the enabling environment where civil society operates:

Government: Some government officials consider criticism from CSOs, especially on human rights issues, to be politically unacceptable. Public criticism has created a reticence by some CSOs to speak out for fear of a negative reaction. However, there has been no threat of restrictive legislation and CSO representatives have not been arrested or physically intimidated. Some CSOs are regarded negatively based on suspicion of their motives and the extent to which they may be mouthpieces for donor interests. Jealousies arise in some cases because of personal relations where former government employees left the public sector to work in CSOs.

Parliament: The structure of government and system of proportional representation used to elect members of the National Assembly makes effective access to decision-makers limited, while it may increase loyalty to the party and its president by legislators, diluting accountability to the electorate. The influence on policy development of parliamentary committees, where some CSOs have participated in hearings, appears low but there are examples of parliament passing legislation in local interests.

Access to information: Namibia's Constitution does not expressly provide for the right to Access to Information, however, the government has been working on the "Access to Information Bill" with input from civil society. There have been delays in tabling the bill in parliament but the Minister of Information and Communication Technology announced in March 2018 that the bill will be tabled before the end of 2018.

### **b) Participation of CSOs in public policies**

The participation of civil society is a crucial element of democracy. The concept of civic participation in governance is arguably the fundamental pillar in the promotion and protection of democratic governance.

CSOs and Government at national level: Structurally, there are various opportunities for interaction between CSOs and elected leaders. With regard policy formulation and implementation, the Civic Organisations Partnership Policy is the framework for government and civil society engagement, however, this policy has not been implemented and its revision is long due as mentioned earlier. There is, nevertheless, informal and mostly ad hoc collaboration around policy formulation between ministries and CSOs. The process is not always perfect, sometimes CSOs are consulted early in the process and sometimes late. Sometimes they are given too little time to respond, and sometimes they find it difficult to present a coherent point of view due to their own weaknesses.

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CSOs and Government at regional, local level: At regional, constituency, municipality, town, village and settlement level, citizens can participate in the so-called development committees. They are meant to be advisory, consultative and supervisory bodies. Development committees from the settlement to the regional level should be involved in regional development planning, in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of development projects as decided upon by the respective authorities and should be involved in the evaluation of development projects. In reality, only a few development committees function properly, some have become dormant and many are non-existent. The Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development is responsible for the coordination of development committees but they rarely fulfil this mandate, either because there is no budget allocated for this purpose or because they have capacity constraints.

CSOs and Parliament: In Parliament, a standing committee system aims to fulfil the oversight function of the legislative over the executive. Parliament conducts outreach programs into the regions, where members of Parliament and the Parliamentary leadership consult with the public. As part of their operations, they conduct public hearings on a regular basis within which public input is possible. There are currently seven oversight Parliamentary Standing Committees that are assigned to oversee government ministries and departments, and that provide opportunities for input by the public and CSOs. However, citizens generally do not know how to engage with Parliament and Parliament feels that the Civil Society is not well organised and do not have the capacity to engage with Parliament.

Some of the reasons for lack of involvement of Civil Society in policy formulation and oversight are:

- a) Lack of core funding has forced CSOs into service delivery, neglecting advocacy efforts as a result
- c) The sector is not well structured internally, CSOs compete for funding and have capacity constraints
- e) Some of the Windhoek-based CSOs try to define and represent the interests of the communities but are far from the communities and the communities do not feel represented by those CSOs.
- d) Although CSOs are invited to provide input in legislation, their recommendations are seldom acknowledged

### **c) CSOs capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors**

Financial capacity: From a legal point of view there are no limitations in the ability of CSOs to obtain funding from any particular source. However, foreign donor funding for the implementation of development initiatives is limited and decreasing. This is largely due to the classification of Namibia by the World Bank as an upper-middle income country. Downscaling of donor programmes and withdrawal of donor and international CSO staff is observed generally in all sectors. Core funds tend to be scarce, driving CSOs to pursue multiple short-term projects, which can mean fluctuations in funding levels, uncertainty concerning resource levels and fragmentation of programs. Donations from private firms are not a reliable source of support, and tend to be one-off contributions of cash or material goods. Many company offices in Namibia consist of regional representatives of South African or multinational firms, and are not motivated to support Namibian Civil Society groups. A few CSOs have started selling its services to the private sector as a way to bring in some income, however, this is not a realistic option for most CSOs.

Management capacity: The pool of well-trained and experienced Namibians is relatively small. The shift



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from core-funding to project-funding resulted in a brain-drain as, with insecure working conditions, CSOs are increasingly unable to compete with government and the private sector for qualified people. Competent CSO staff joins the public or private sectors for better remuneration. Many CSOs lack proper organisational, monitoring and evaluation and financial management skills, relying on the capacity of a few individuals whose departures could leave organisations severely weakened. The focus of many CSOs is on the implementation of project activities to the neglect of proper management structures and procedures. CSOs usually have few staff to train and most CSOs are so thinly-staffed that they cannot afford to let staff go for any length of time. In addition, training one individual with no follow up may make it difficult for that person to bring about change in the CSO. That person's understanding of how to make changes may still be weak and there may be little support within the CSO for change.

Thematic capacity: Most CSOs are service-oriented and involved in development related activities in areas such as education, health, environment and rural development. Only a handful of CSOs in Namibia are active in the field of advocacy and public accountability, carrying out independent surveys, monitoring and reporting on public policies and actions. Few CSOs exist that are solely focused on the production of data through research. Quite a substantial amount of data is being generated by such CSOs and governmental institutions, such as the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), but such data is not widely used to, amongst others, provide the basis for policy input and advocacy work.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE EU ENGAGEMENT SO FAR

Policy and political dialogue: The EUD, Germany and Finland have regular communication with those CSOs that are implementing development cooperation programmes in different sectors. The EUD is supporting the civil society sector with European Development Fund (EDF) funded programmes for which the Government of Namibia is the Contracting Authority and under which key stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss the state and role of civil society in Namibia and the priority areas of support. Currently there is no coordination mechanism between government, development partners and civil society or a structured political dialogue on the role of civil society in the development process. The revision of the Civic Organisations Partnership Policy could be an opportunity to establish this coordination mechanism. At sectoral level there are some coordination mechanisms with participation of government, development partners and civil society but the participants vary from sector to sector.

Operational support: the EUD, Germany and Finland were the only EU partners who had development funds to support CSOs through development cooperation programmes. Other Member States (Spain, France, Portugal and UK) do not have development cooperation programmes with Namibia and their interaction with civil society has been sporadic and mainly through cultural events or through international CSOs from their respective countries implementing projects in Namibia, generally in partnership with Namibian CSOs.

Mainstreaming CSOs into EU focal sectors of cooperation: in addition to the support provided to civil society in the priority areas of the Roadmap, the EUD and EU MS also support CSOs working in the EU focal sectors (i.e. education, rural development, environment, energy and climate change,...) as well as in the cross cutting issues (i.e. gender, human rights, ...).

Coordination between the EUDs and MS: The CSOs Roadmap 2014-2017 was adopted by the Heads of Missions from France, Germany, Finland, Spain, United Kingdom and the EU. The state of civil society and the support provided by the EUD and the EU MS has been shared and discussed in HoMs, HoPs and HoCs

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meetings. The EUD has coordinated the preparation of the annual implementation reports and the EU MS have contributed when they had actions contributing to the priority areas. Coordination and information sharing could be improved with regular communication by email and structured meetings.

### 3. REFERENCES TO DEEPEN THE KNOWLEDGE

- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations" (12/09/2012): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>