

## Activity Report

*Country/Place:* Namibia / Swakopmund  
*Date:* 13-14 September 2008  
*Title of Activity:* **Reproductive Health & Lobbying Skills workshop**  
*Local Partner Organisation:* SWAPO Party Women's Council  
*Name of Rapporteur:* Mr. Johan Gamatham

### 1. Background / Context of Activity:

The Government of Namibia after its independence engaged to develop the capacity of Namibians in various fields to take up the challenge of developing the economic sector for the wellbeing of its people. The Ministry of Health and Social Services has placed issues of sexual and reproductive health as one of the priority components of Primary Health Care towards the attainment of health for all Namibians by the year 2000 and beyond. Women have been submissive to their male counterparts as this is decided by society due to cultural, traditional beliefs and values. This has caused that women do not have control over their health and has to rely on the decisions taken by their husbands or boyfriends. Due to HIV pandemic, the SPWC has realized that women are more vulnerable than their male counterparts and that only women are taking up challenges of caring for the families. The SPWC has further noted that even women further discriminate amongst themselves as it relates to power and decision making positions. Due to the cultural backgrounds mentioned earlier, women often believe that only men can be in decision making positions, however, this has changed drastically and that lobbying has taken place that put women at a satisfactory level in decision making more especially on Regional and Local Councils. Much still remains to be done as it comes to representation at Parliamentary level. Therefore, women need additional skills such as advocacy and lobbying to enable them to stage successful elections next year. In this context, that the SPWC has decided to hold a reproductive health and lobbying skills training for its members to capacitate them in these fields to realize its objectives of making informed choices and decision on their sexual and reproductive health and attainment of 50% representation at all levels of decision making.

### 2. Objectives of Activity:

1. Increase women's knowledge about sex and sexuality
2. Equip women with the facts that can take away myths regarding S&RH, gender in order for them to develop positive attitudes toward family life education
3. To equip women with new knowledge to improve the quality of life, by helping reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancy and prevalence of HIV
4. Increase women's knowledge about lobbying skills to increase the number of women in decision making level
5. Increase the knowledge of participants on gender issues and identify challenges that are faced in their communities
6. To develop an action plan for awareness creation amongst women in the communities

### Participant Expectations:

1. Want to know more about sexual and reproductive health
2. How best to impart the knowledge gained to other women
3. Acquire ability to assist others
4. Gain more knowledge to advocate and lobby
5. Acquire knowledge to mobilize women

6. be able to transform society using new knowledge
7. Be able to speak openly on issues of sexuality
8. Be empowered to make informed decisions and choices

### 3. Concept / Methodology of Activity:

The main facilitator which was contracted as the Consultant guided the entire training assisted by two additional facilitators from UNFPA, Dr. Pandu Hailonga van Dijk and SWAPO Party Youth Secretary, Comrade Eliah Ngurare. The methodology mainly used was participatory plenary discussions and video watching that lead to the discussions and trouble shooting and consensus building on way forward. The draft programme only served as the guiding tool, however, it was not followed as indicated due to the level education of the participants and that we wanted to tap from their own situations and experiences in their communities.

### 4. Target Group / Participants of Activity:

Members of SPWC

### 5. Results / Outcomes of Activity:

## **SWAKOPMUND DRAFT DECLARATION 14 SEPTEMBER 2008**

### **Definition of Reproductive health**

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.

### **Sexual health**

Sexual health aims at the enhancement of life and personal relationships, and a safe sex life.

### **Educating Women**

Most women feel uneasy talking about sex and sexuality. Much of the discomfort comes from inadequate information. Many women feel that they themselves do not understand sexuality well enough comfortable talking about it. They often lack facts about anatomy, physiology, menstruation, puberty, masturbation, and conception. When parents have access to facts, when they have the chance to clarify their own values and learn to express them, and to become comfortable talking about these subjects in groups with other parents and also with young people.

The participants openly discussed reproductive organs definitions in their own vernacular that served as an icebreaker to enable them to talk about sexuality issues.

Noting the challenges women face in Namibia as it relates to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, we the participants of the first sexual reproductive health and lobbying training workshop that was held from 13-14 September 2008 in Swakopmund, Erongo Region at Alte Brücke and Conference Centre declares that:

1. Women especially the young people are faced with challenges such as unwanted

- pregnancies that exacerbate back street abortion and baby dumping which eventually contribute to the high incidence of maternal mortality, all women of SPWC should embark rigorously on awareness creation and sensitization of women, men and young people on sexual and reproductive health to make informed decisions by the end of 2009.
2. In addition, the women also noted the underlying challenges such as alcohol and drug abuse that leads to unprotected sexual activity most importantly at an early age amongst young people with multiple concurrent partners, calls on the government and civil society organizations to address these issues promptly by the end of 2009
  3. To re-instill cultural values and disseminate those cultural platforms to educate the youth
  4. Realizing the important role women are playing in our society, the SPWC members will hold mass mobilization of rural, peri-urban and urban communities to increase the utilization available ante-natal, delivery and post-natal services at health facilities to reduce maternal mortality which is 449/100 000 birth.
  5. Noting the importance of increasing access to services, the SPWC should engage the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture to institutionalize an extra curricula to open the Multi-Purpose Youth Resource Centre during weekends and also at Polytechnic and University of Namibia on sexual and reproductive health services.
  6. Realizing the importance of male involvement in sexual and reproductive health issues, the SPWC should engage all relevant male organizations, Rural Women Development Trust and other FBO, Soccer Clubs, Traditional Authorities etc to create awareness amongst men on S&RH issues
  7. Cognizant of the delay in the review and finalization of the National Gender Policy and Plan of Action, the Secretariat of SPWC will hold discussions with the Political Heads of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to accelerate the review process before the end of 2008 and ensure that the updated policy development and plan of action is started in consultation with the Rural Women Development Trust by the first quarter of 2009  
and that the entire process is completed by the end of 2009 in line with the NDP III, Vision 2030, MTP III, SWAPO Party election manifesto of 2004 and MDG's.
  8. Noting that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is not spending all its budget allocation annually and that the surplus is being referred back to Treasury, the SPWC Secretariat will hold an urgent meeting with the Minister of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to ensure that all surplus funds be transferred to the Rural Women Development Trust for implementation of projects especially at rural level. Confirming the absence of formalized women structures at national and rural level to mobilize women on issues of common interest that will realize women's emancipation, the Secretariat of SPWC must entrust the Rural Women Development Trust to establish women's and youth Dialogues in all 107 constituencies and 13 regions and formalize these structures in partnership with the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing and Rural Development Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture.
  9. Understanding the importance of skills transfer to all women in the communities, all participants that attended the sexual and reproductive health and lobbying skills agree that follow-up skills transfer seminars will be conducted in their regions within two weeks upon their return to ensure that all women are at the same wave length.
  10. Recognizing the poverty amongst the rural and peri-urban communities, the SPWC participants should engage the relevant government institutions such as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing and Rural Development and the

Ministry of Environment and Tourism , Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and Ministry of Mines and Energy to allocate jointly an amount of N\$3 million annually Rural Women Development Trust to establish an SME Trust Fund and give it also fishing and mining rights etc.

11. SPWC challenged to advocate for museum with history told by the heroes and heroines who are alive on video tape, DVD tape and make it real and place this structure close to where the majority of the people stay or closer to people.
12. To further note the challenges that face women, the SPWC should establish projects for economic empowerment of women at rural level.
13. Noting the importance of monitoring gender equality at national level, SPWC Secretariat will hold periodic discussions with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to hold it accountable for national and internationally agreed conventions, declarations, goals, outcomes etc.
14. Noting the upcoming elections in 2009, SPWC should start to mobilize women and men from all angles through the structures of the SWAPO Party to ensure 50% representation of women at all levels of decision making.
15. Further noting the upcoming elections in 2009, SPWC should hold mass rallies to address the electorate on the importance women's 50% representation at decision making
16. Realizing the importance of the newly acquired skills on lobbying, all participants are required to hold follow-up meetings within two weeks after the return from this training and report to the SPWC Secretariat one week after the follow-up meetings.
17. Noting the importance of unity to reach our goals, the participants are calling on the wings party including the Trade Unions to constantly meet and exchange issues of common interest
18. Recognizing and valuing the spirit of unity of purpose to reach our goals, the SPWC Secretariat will closely work with *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* and *United Nations Population Fund* to realize its development aspirations that are in line with the national development goals and MDG's.
19. Further recognizing the importance of the development agenda to improve the quality of life of our people, SPWC through the Rural Women Development Trust should engage the government representative of Namibia on NEPAD to provide funding for implementation development aspirations
20. Noting the role churches are playing, the SPWC should lobby government to provide grants to churches to enable them to assist us in realizing our goals
21. Agreeing with all these important and critical issues, the SPWC declares to implement all these resolutions and evaluate at the end of 2009.
22. Noting the importance of achieving gender equality, the SPWC should lobby politburo to set up a formal reporting structure for all ministries political heads to report to a special committee of all wings and affiliates of the party on a quarterly basis on progress and achievements made on the national and international development aspirations.

## 6. Evaluation / Assessment of Activity:

The participants in general noted that the workshop was well conducted and that have gained new knowledge which they will apply in their own situations and promised to share this experience with other women in their communities. The training was educative and informative of nature and also requested that similar trainings be provided to other women in the regions as well.