

Election Watch X

Produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

Issue No. 3 2009

HOW TO PRODUCE AN EFFECTIVE MANIFESTO

With six months still to go before Namibia's National Assembly and Presidential elections, political parties have started to issue their manifestos. The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) and Swanu have already launched their manifestos. The Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) has previewed the contents of its manifesto while promising to launch it at a public rally soon. Meanwhile, Swapo has launched a review of its 2004 manifesto analysing its achievements in the past five years.

The early production of some manifestos and the start of review processes is an encouraging sign that parties are taking their policy platforms seriously and that, in 2009, policy debates will feature more prominently during the election campaign.

A manifesto is a public statement of a party's intentions if it is elected as the government. Very few parties in Namibia produce extensive manifestos detailing policy positions on most of the issues of the day. Most are rather short and lack detail, in particular as to how policies would be paid for. This leaves such documents open to criticism that they are not much more than a rather unrealistic wish list instead of a properly researched set of policy alternatives.

Another problem with manifestos is that they are often not accessible. They are not distributed widely, they are only in English, and they are not available on websites (if the party has a website).

Very few parties appear to consider undertaking consultation and research before writing a manifesto. Often manifestos appear to be the product of a small committee of the party elite rather than being discussed at membership or branch level. Sometimes, it would seem that the manifesto is put together by one or two people just so that the party can say it has one. There seems to be little or no consideration as to whether the manifesto is accessible, understandable, or coherent.

Parties may argue that manifestos are not important in African or Namibian elections and therefore it is not worth investing much time or money in preparing them. Recently, several commentators argued that manifestos had very little influence on the electorate in the South African elections (see box on page 2). However, there are good reasons why parties should put serious



effort into preparing a manifesto. A party that does not have a well-argued and well-presented policy platform is probably a party that is not aiming to ever implement policies as a government one day or to influence the policies of the incumbent government. It may be that such a party exists for other reasons: providing jobs for its elite, representing a particular ethnic community, or advancing a single issue.

The policy platform articulated in a manifesto should not be forgotten once an election is over. Rather, its concerns should be a constant focus of the party's campaigning and participation in public discourse.

It has been said that previous Namibian elections have been largely fought over personalities and history rather than policy issues. However, the Namibian electorate is becoming better educated and more literate, while the history of the liberation struggle is inevitably receding in importance. As a result well-presented policies, in the form of a manifesto, are likely to have more influence over the electorate in the future.

Detailed manifestos may not be read by many members of the public, but they are used by the media and policy-watchers to assess a party's potential and credibility. To reach the broader mass of voters see the tips on making the manifesto more accessible below.

Tips for producing effective manifestos:

1. **Use the research** that is available on policy matters – both locally and globally – to prepare the positions and proposals of the party. Parties should develop their own research units or 'think tanks' to investigate policy options and keep abreast of relevant research findings and international trends between elections
2. **Consult the party.** Ensure manifesto proposals are discussed at meetings that are representative of the party membership, especially grassroots activists.
3. **Consult the voters.** Listen carefully to what those outside the party are saying, particularly potential floating voters. Consider holding 'focus group' discussions with groups of potential voters to gauge their views on possible policy options.

continued on page 2

NEWS FROM THE AFROBAROMETER

Fear on the march

Nearly two thirds of Namibians fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence during an election campaign, according to the Afrobarometer opinion survey. Some 10 percent were very fearful that they would be on the receiving end of intimidation or violence, while 55 percent were 'somewhat' or a 'little bit' concerned about the issue.

Considering that Namibia is usually considered a stable and peaceful country, the figures are worryingly high. People's responses may have been influenced by the fact that the survey took place in November 2008 – a period when there were several reports of violence and intimidation between party supporters. Since February this year, the number of such incidents has noticeably declined, apparently in response to President Hifikepunye Pohamba's calls for political tolerance.

However, it is clear that Namibia's democracy still faces major challenges, particularly concerning the establishment of a culture of political tolerance. Free and fair elections cannot take place if there is widespread fear among the electorate about their right to express their political views.

The Afrobarometer survey provided further evidence that a significant portion of the population do not have full confidence in their constitutional right to express themselves freely. Just over a third of respondents said it was likely that people would be punished by government officials if they made complaints about poor quality service or the misuse of funds. In addition, 46 percent said they often or always had to be careful about what they say about politics.

The Afrobarometer is a public opinion survey of 1,200 Namibians, with a margin of error of three percent.

ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education, which will appear regularly in the run up to the 2009 National Assembly and Presidential Elections. It is produced as a PDF download and as a printed newspaper insert. Election Watch is a project of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). It is produced with the support of the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) and The Namibian newspaper. The content of Election Watch is the sole responsibility of the IPPR. Comments and feedback should be sent to the IPPR, PO Box 6566, Windhoek, Namibia. Tel: (061) 240514; fax: (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. For more on Election Watch check <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

ELECTIONS EXPLAINED

The Electoral Act, passed in 1992, governs Namibia's elections. The Act has been amended eight times since then and it is expected to be amended again this year. The Electoral Act as amended can be downloaded from the Election Watch website (<http://www.electionwatch.org.na>).

The Act provides for:

- The election of Namibia's President
- The election of members of the National Assembly, regional councils and local authority councils
- The establishment of the Electoral Commission and its powers, duties and functions
- The registration of voters and political parties
- The conduct of elections

The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) is established as the exclusive authority to direct, supervise and control in a fair and impartial manner elections in Namibia.

In particular, the ECN has to:

- Supervise and control the registration of voters
- Supervise the preparing, publication and maintenance of a national voters' register and local authority voters' register
- Supervise and control the registration of political parties
- Supervise, direct and control the conduct of elections

The next edition of Election Watch will look at how the Electoral Commission of Namibia is selected and how the Director of Elections is appointed.

4. **Presentation** is crucial. Avoid dry academic, bureaucratic and technical language. At the same time ensure the language is not flowery or emotional. Rather concentrate on communicating the party's ideas and proposals clearly and directly.
5. Ensure the final document is **edited and proof-read**. It is surprising how many manifestos are full of basic spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.
6. **Include costings** and explanations as to how policies, particularly ones requiring a large amount of public expenditure, would be financed. For a party to have credibility it must show that if in government it could deliver on its promises.
7. In addition to a detailed manifesto, the party should pro-

duce an **attractive leaflet** summarising its main manifesto positions. This should be translated into as many Namibian languages as possible. The points in the leaflet can also be reproduced in media adverts.

8. Hold **training workshops** for party activists and candidates to ensure they are fully conversant with the contents of the manifesto and are able to use it as a campaign tool.
9. Ensure there is a **distribution strategy** for both the detailed manifesto and the leaflet summarising its main points.
10. Hold a manifesto **review meeting** after the election as part of the party's post-election assessment of its performance, with a view to improving the processes before the next election.

DOES ANYBODY READ MANIFESTOS?

Election manifestos do not sway voters. This was the overriding conclusion of a debate hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand in March ahead of the South African elections. Participants in the debate agreed that manifestos constituted "sound and fury signifying nothing".

Political journalist Justice Malala argued that party manifestos do not form the basis of a voter's decision. Rather, he claimed, it is the actions and media image of a candidate that count. Malala said that in the digital age, choices were made "on the basis of the sound bite" rather than extensive policy documents.

Another panelist, Chris Hart, an economist, said that the economic aspects of South African election manifestos were

mostly "hot air with very little detail". The solutions offered by political parties to economic problems were often "flowery promises" that were never realistically possible, and demonstrated a lack of understanding of economics.

The economist went on to say that this year's election was an unusual one, as it was being contested under the conditions of a recession, which made politicians desperate. Hart's objection to the election manifestos currently in circulation was that parties were introspectively focused while they should be offering views on how to deal with the economic crisis.

Professor Susan Booyesen from the University of the Witwatersrand's graduate school of public and development

management agreed that the manifesto was not a "magic wand" to inspire and draw voters but said they did have a role to play. "They actually do make a difference...they are not magic wands but they are one way in which voters extract accountability. "Voters do remember... election manifestos have a big role and help keep parties accountable." Booyesen said she read the manifestos "side-by-side" and found that they seldom varied. "It's remarkable, there is so much policy compatibility... South Africa has moved toward a huge amount of consensus over policy over the past years. All parties have seemingly converged...the difference will be in the way they implement these policies and the difference in emphasis on the various issues," she said.

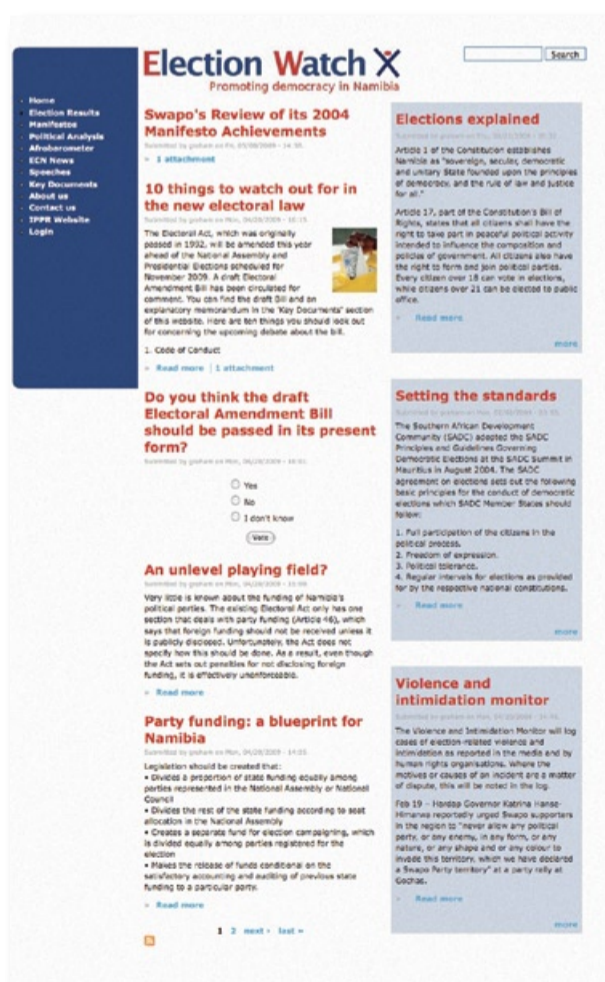
ELECTIONWATCH.ORG.NA

In April the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) launched the Election Watch website (<http://www.electionwatch.org.na>). The edited remarks of IPPR Director Graham Hopwood at the launch are reproduced below:

Namibia is entering a two-year-cycle of elections with the National Assembly and Presidential elections due to be held in November 2009 and the Regional and Local Authority elections in the latter part of 2010. This period will be a vital one for Namibia's reputation as one of Africa's most successful democracies.

By the end of 2010, Namibia could have considerably enhanced its democratic credentials, having organised four separate ballots successfully in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance. Indeed, Namibia could be a model for many other emerging democracies around the world. We have a chance to showcase our professionalism when it comes to the administration of elections, our fairness when it comes to allowing ruling and opposition parties to compete on a level playing field, and our high levels of tolerance and mutual respect when it comes to enabling various parties to organise their activities without hindrance and to express their views freely.

However, there have been some dark clouds on Namibia's electoral horizon for several months now. Although such incidents are still isolated, we have had more reports of intimidation and violence than ever before in our history as an independent nation. In addition, the reform of the electoral process, in the form of an amendment bill to the Electoral Act of 1992, has been seriously



delayed. This means there is now little time left to review the important changes envisaged for the Electoral Act and for a broad consensus, involving the various parties and civil society, to be reached.

These kinds of challenges mean that there is an urgent need for many actors – from both the political and civil society realms – to work together to ensure Namibia emerges from this two-year electoral cycle as a nation that is showing the way when it comes to democratic practice and political tolerance.

In it is in this context that the IPPR decided to embark on its Election Watch project. As a vehicle for voter education, electoral analysis and monitoring of electoral developments, we would like Election Watch to be an example which others in other countries would want to follow. The inspiration for Election Watch came partly from Africa, where websites and social networking have been used to highlight election flashpoints in countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe, but perhaps more significantly from the web coverage of the 2008 US presidential elections when websites such as realeclearpolitics.com and several others became virtual clearing houses for up-to-the-minute information and analysis on the election campaign.

Election Watch will appear in three different forms – as a regularly updated website, as an electronic bulletin that can be emailed, and as a printed bulletin that will appear in *The Namibian*.

We chose these different formats to ensure that Election Watch reaches the widest possible readership. There

are an increasing number of Namibians with internet and email access.

According to 2007 data, 27% of Namibians over 16 know what the Internet is and 9 percent use the Internet. With the availability of more advanced mobile phones at reasonable prices it should become much more possible for people to access websites such as Election Watch. This is the technology of the future – not just for the developed world but for us as well. However, we have to be cognizant that many still do not have internet access and therefore we also wanted to produce printed Election Watch material. At the moment, the project is limited to the English language, but we are also looking at producing the bulletin in Afrikaans and Oshiwambo. We see Election Watch as an important contribution from civil society's side to raising voter education and awareness in the coming months.

Election Watch will aim to:

- Provide a vehicle for voter education, including important announcements from the ECN
- Act as an early warning mechanism for possible problems in the electoral

- Provide briefing information for journalists, students, civil society activists and voters in general
- Provide a platform for civil society's and citizens' views of the electoral process
- Point out positive examples and experiences within the democratic process
- Promote Namibian, African and international benchmarks on elections and democracy such as the Namibian Constitution, the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, and the SADC Principles and Guidelines

Specific issues that will be included on the website and in the bulletin are:

- Electoral Act amendments and debates
- Namibia's political system
- Freedom of association and political tolerance
- Voter registration
- Funding of political parties
- Gender-related issues such as the zebra-system for party lists
- Electoral processes including voting, counting and announcement of results

- The role of civil society in ensuring elections are free and fair
- Role of election observers
- Measures to counter fraud, rigging and other illegal activities during elections
- News emanating from party campaigns
- Party manifestos
- Media coverage including party access to state media

Election Watch will be even-handed and impartial in its approach to the various political parties. Where parties have material available in electronic form we will endeavour to post such documents on the website so that they are available for voters to review as long as the language therein complies with political code of conduct and the Constitution

Election Watch will be an interactive website. Citizens can comment on any material that appears on the website. Citizens will also be able to raise any points of concern about the electoral process and questions about the elections which the IPPR's researchers will attempt to follow up with the relevant authorities.

SETTING THE STANDARDS

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections at the SADC Summit in Mauritius in August 2004. The SADC Principles and Guidelines set out the role of SADC Electoral Observation Missions (SEOM). In terms of the nature and scope of election observation, SADC member states should focus on the following guidelines and factors:

1. Constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom and rights of the citizens
2. Conducive environment for free, fair and peaceful elections
3. Non-discrimination in the voters' registration
4. Existence of updated and accessible voters roll
5. Timely announcement of the election date;
6. Where applicable, funding of political parties must be transparent and based on an agreed threshold in accordance with the laws of the land;
7. Polling stations should be in neutral places;
8. Counting of the votes at polling stations;
9. Establishment of the mechanism for assisting the planning and deployment of electoral observation missions
10. SADC Election Observation Missions should be deployed at least two weeks before the voting day.

Election Watch will look at the SADC Principles and Guidelines in more detail in future issues.

REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

According to the Electoral Act of 1992, the general registration of voters is supposed to take place every ten years. The last general registration of voters took place in 2003 and the next one is, therefore, not due until 2013. This means that if your name was on the voters register for the 2004 elections, you do not need to register again for this election as long as you still live in the same constituency as when you previously registered, still have your voter registration card, and still have the same name.



voters' register is updated. It is doing this through two methods – continuous registration in the regions and national supplementary registration. Since last October continuous registration has taken place in the Omusati, Omaheke, Kavango, Erongo, Khomas, Otjozondjupa, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Oshana regions. This leaves the Caprivi, Karas, Hardap and Kunene regions still to be covered.

National supplementary registration is scheduled to take place in September 2009. If you have missed out on continuous voter registration in the regions, you can still register in September. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) advertises the places and dates for registration in several national newspapers.

The ECN keeps the national voters register at the offices of the Commission for inspection by the public. Any person desiring to inspect or make copies or take extracts from the register is entitled to do so during normal office hours.

At the moment, Namibian citizens cannot register outside Namibia if they happen to be living abroad. However, a draft amendment to the Electoral Act does allow the ECN to set up temporary registration points at Namibian diplomatic missions. It is not clear when the amendment bill will go before parliament and therefore if this will be possible before the 2009 elections.

During 2009, the following people should register to vote:

- Those who have turned 18 since the last registration of voters
- Those who have moved to a new constituency since the last registration of voters
- Those who have lost their voter registration cards
- Those who have adopted new names, for example through marriage.

It is the Electoral Commission of Namibia's responsibility to ensure the

Training programme of the Hanns Seidel Foundation

The HSF Namibia offers training for political parties and organisations of the civil society. So far almost 450 courses were presented to some 11,000 participants countrywide. This is the course overview:

- Economic Indicators • The Namibian Constitution • Human Development Indices • Namibia's History • How to run a meeting • Basics for development policies • Logical Framework – Strategic Planning • The successful election campaign • Establishment local structures for parties
- Establishment local structures for organisation • Revitalisation of local party branches • Taking minutes • Report writing • Project planning • Writing project proposals • How to find candidates • Project planning • Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) / Aids • Interpersonal Relationships
- Electoral Process • Communication skills • Democracy in Namibia

Bodies interested in this training should contact the Hanns Seidel Foundation: office@hsf.org.na, Tel. 061 237373/4, Fax 061 237375

Election Watch is supported by the



Q & A

This regular feature in Election Watch will answer questions received from readers about the electoral process. Please send questions you would like answered to info@ippr.org.na

Q: Which documents do I need to present when registering to vote?

A: To register you need to prove your identity, age and Namibian citizenship. You can do this by producing the following documents: New Namibian ID or a valid Namibian passport. Both these documents prove your identity, age and Namibian citizenship. Or you can produce your Namibian birth certificate (proving your age and Namibian citizenship) and your new Namibian drivers licence (proving your identity). If you do not have a Namibian ID or passport, you can bring along your Namibian birth certificate and two people who are willing to make statements under oath that you qualify to vote in Namibia.

Q: What happens if a presidential candidate does not obtain more than 50% of the vote in the presidential election?

A: The relevant section of the Constitution is Article 28, which says that if no presidential candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote then further elections will be held until a candidate gains over 50 percent. The Electoral Act of 1992 basically repeats this in Section 88. Neither law refers to a run-off election between the two top candidates which is now a common way of deciding presidential elections around the world if no one gains over 50 percent in the first round. At present, under Namibian law, the election would be held again and again until someone got over 50 percent – potentially a very expensive and time consuming process. This problem is addressed in the new Electoral Amendment Bill (yet to come before parliament) which changes Section 88 to say the second ballot in the presidential election should be between the top two candidates.

NAMIBIA UNDER A SWANU GOVERNMENT



Political parties have started issuing their manifestos some six months before the next National Assembly and Presidential elections. One of the first out of the blocks is the South West Africa National Union (Swanu). Historically, Swanu has sought to establish a socialist state in Namibia. As such it has been one of the few options for voters on the left of the political spectrum.

However, the party's manifesto for the 2009 elections, entitled 'Swanu Cares for the People', underplays the party's radical credentials. In fact, the word 'socialist' only appears once – on page 12 of the 13-page document.

Instead the manifesto starts off with a statement from Swanu President Usutuaije Maamberua which emphasises political tolerance, national unity, promotion of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all as the party's main political priorities. This introductory statement then goes on to list a series of grievances about the democratic process, which includes the use of hate speech, unfair airtime allocation by the NBC, the current party funding system, and the printing of ballot papers by a Swapo-owned company. In addition, the party does not want pencils to be used by voters when marking ballot papers.

Since Swanu is a socialist party, one might expect the running of the economy and the land issue to take centre stage in the manifesto. One of the party's historic slogans was "Patji! Ngarikotoke" ("Give back the land to the people"). In fact, the manifesto is surprisingly vague about the land issue. It says the "programme of land acquisition must be based on the number of people who need land and also when this is translated into number of families." The manifesto adds that land should be acquired through the payment of "benchmark tariffs" set by "farm regulatory bodies". The manifesto concludes on land by saying "acquisition must be done in the public interest. Once acquisition has been achieved there should be resettlement criteria that are not ambiguous and do not favour those who have opportunities of buying farms."

On the economy, there are more signs of the party that said in 2004 that it stood for the public ownership of the means of production. A Swanu government would "restructure the foreign-owned mining and marine industries to partner with general low-income and rural-based cooperatives (communities) in shareholdings."

When in government the party would ensure the criteria for BEE would target

the "poorest of the poor" with the emphasis being on communities rather than individuals as beneficiaries. There are a number of populist measures which the party would introduce, including increasing pensions for the elderly, abolishing fees for tertiary education students who cannot afford to pay, and getting rid of "exorbitant" rural water bills. The Swanu government "would give more money to development institutions like Agribank and National Housing Enterprise for the creation of manufacturing industries, housing and so on."

One of the more radical policies would be a universal health insurance for all Namibians to be funded by the private sector and public sector. There are several mentions of the need to introduce a Marshall Plan (referring to the US plan for rebuilding western Europe after World War II) to invest in poor and disadvantaged communities. Manufacturing would be boosted through public investment, but there is little detail on how exactly this would be implemented.

The manifesto is silent or very hazy on how all of this would be funded. There is no mention of changes to the current tax system for either individuals or companies. And while the manifesto talks of boosting public spending in several areas, particularly health and education, there is no suggestion of cuts being made to other ministries' expenditure.

On government performance, Swanu would seek to institute professional standards and non-partisanship in the civil service. The party objects to the imposition of the Swapo election manifesto on civil servants, arguing that the document has no legal basis. On corruption, a Swanu government will strengthen institutions such as the Office of the Auditor General and Public Accounts Committee to ensure accountability.

In terms of education the Swanu government will put more emphasis on

"vocational/professional opportunities" while strengthening the mandate of the Polytechnic to produce more "technical graduates as opposed to degree candidates".

Other measures proposed by the party include creating a legal aid commission, a legal parliamentary commissioner (to protect human rights), and more effective decentralisation matched by public investment in rural areas.

Although the language of the manifesto is markedly less radical than Swanu's Guiding Principles produced for the 2004 elections, it is also much vaguer and unclear in parts. The lack of clarity and poor presentation of ideas is surprising for a party that has in the past been accused of being dominated by intellectuals and academics rather than ordinary people.

• *Election Watch will endeavour to review all the parties' manifestos in the run up to the November 2009 elections*

Who is the party's leader?

The Swanu President is Usutuaije Maamberua, who is a senior lecturer in the department of accounting at the University of Namibia.

Does the party have a website?

Yes, at <http://www.swanu.org.na>

More about the party

Swanu was formed in 1959 and initially acted as an umbrella movement for the nationalist campaign against South African occupation. However, in the 1960s it lost ground to Swapo, which became Namibia's leading liberation movement. Swanu opposed South African rule throughout the 1970s and 1980s and refused to join various 'interim governments'. Since independence the party has never gained more than 2 percent of the vote and has never had its own seat in the National Assembly. However, in the 2004 Regional Council election, the party did win the constituency of Otjombinde in the Omaheke region.

STANDOUT POLICIES

- Restructure foreign-owned mining and fishing companies
- Target BEE towards the poor
- Boost manufacturing through public investment
- Introduce universal health insurance
- Expand legal aid

WHAT IS THE IPPR?

The Institute for Public Policy Research was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver, independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues which affect development Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research. The IPPR is independent of government, political parties, business, trade unions and other interest groups and is governed by a board of seven trustees. Anyone can receive the IPPR's research free of charge by contacting the organization at 14 Nachtigal Street, Windhoek; PO Box 6566, Windhoek; tel: (061) 240514; fax (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. All IPPR research is available at <http://www.ippr.org.na>, Material related to Election Watch is available at <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

ELECTION WATCH WILL BE PUBLISHED ON A REGULAR BASIS IN THE RUN UP TO THE 2009 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ELECTION WATCH WILL: • PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR VOTER EDUCATION • PROVIDE BRIEFING INFORMATION FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS, JOURNALISTS, STUDENTS, AND VOTERS IN GENERAL • PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR CIVIL SOCIETY'S AND CITIZENS' VIEWS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS • PROVIDE 'EARLY WARNINGS' OF POSSIBLE PROBLEMS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS • POINT OUT POSITIVE EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS • PROMOTE NAMIBIAN, AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS ON ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY