

# Election Watch X

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## NAMIBIANS STILL HAVE STRONG FAITH IN DEMOCRACY

### ELECTIONS AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN NAMIBIA: RESULTS FROM ROUND 5 OF THE AFROBAROMETER OPINION SURVEY

The 2009 national elections left a big legacy of controversy for Namibia's young democracy. Nine opposition parties brought a legal challenge over the conduct and the outcome of that November's contest. In addition to the prolonged court case that bounced between the High Court and the Supreme Court, some opposition parties refused to take their seats until the legal challenge was addressed by the High Court. Some civil society complaints about the election contrasted with the assessments of "official" delegations of observers. That the Supreme Court eventually agreed with the long delayed High Court judgement is less important than the high visibility of these controversial issues over several years. Politicians and activists have weighed in on the subject, but what did the Namibian public think about the process?

Round 5 of the Afrobarometer public opinion survey gives the first hint of a scientific measure of the perceptions by the general public concerning the election process. The latest survey also allows for an analysis of the longer term trends of public perception of the critical issue of the election process. Several questions open different views that the public holds concerning democratic elections in Namibia which are important measures of the commitment of the population to democratic values. In this article, questions will be examined that shed light on the freeness and fairness of the election process, trust in the Electoral Commission of Namibia, support for a multiple party system, and respondents' voting behaviour both in the 2012 survey and in previous rounds.

Many analysts consider free and fair elections to be one of the most important characteristics of democracy. Without being obsessive about this one measure, nonetheless it does make an essential contribution to voters being able to give consent to how they are governed. Over time, free and fair elections come to form an important part of public expectations and, therefore, an important part of the consolidation of democracy. Namibians also value elections as an important part of their democracy.

Not only do Namibians want elections to determine how they are governed, but they also find that elections in Namibia have been mostly



The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering up to 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). It measures public attitudes on democracy and its alternatives, evaluations of the quality of governance, and economic performance. In addition, the survey assesses the views of the electorate on critical political issues in the surveyed countries. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as four rounds of surveys have been held from 1999 to 2008 and Round 5 is currently underway.

Afrobarometer's work in Namibia is coordinated by the Institute for Public Policy Research. Fieldwork for Round 5 was conducted in Namibia by Survey Warehouse from 19 November – 18 December 2012. The survey interviewed 1200 adult Namibians, and a sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level.

Chart 1. Free and fair elections

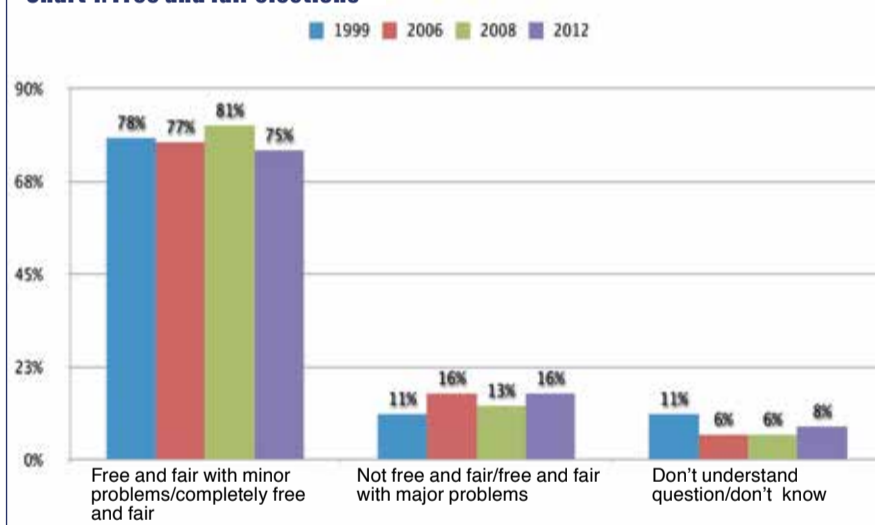
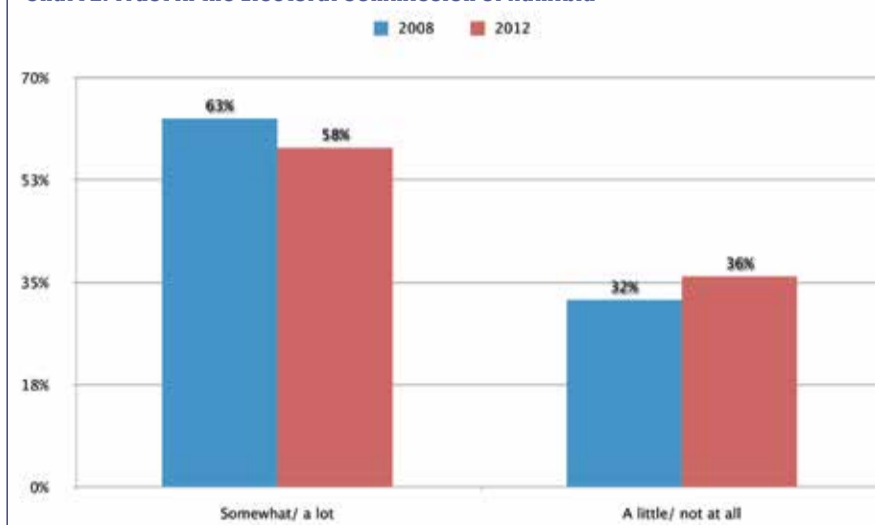


Chart 2. Trust in the Electoral Commission of Namibia



free and fair over the past decade and more.

Q28: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election?

Chart 1 makes clear that although there is a slight decline of 6% after the last election in 2009, the 2012 responses are in line with the overall trend since 1999 of Namibians seeing their elections as generally free and fair. Either the respondents agree with or were influenced by the court decision, or their experiences with elections have not changed much over the past 13 years.

Further, Namibians' support for multiple parties in the political system seems to have rebounded from earlier declines. In 2012, a total of 79% (q34) of respondents either agree or strongly agree that "leaders should be chosen through regular, open and honest elections". This is up from 57% in 2008 and even higher than the percentage who prefer democracy as a system of government (64% again in 2012). Elections have become critical for Namibians, but so have political parties. In response to question 35, 72% of Namibians agreed or strongly agreed in 2012 that "many parties were necessary to give voters real choices in who will govern them".

Namibians also retained trust in the Electoral Commission of Namibia in 2012, though this number was also down slightly against previous surveys (see chart 2). The 2009 election challenge did not dramatically erode public confidence in the Namibian election process.

Finally, actual voting behaviour is important for democratic consolidation. When asked (q27) if they voted in the last national election (2009), 69% indicated that they had voted, up from 63% saying so in 2008. Removing the number of respondents who were too young to vote at that time, the rate climbs to 80% turnout. This is in line with international and national estimates.

According to their responses in the latest Afrobarometer survey, Namibians value political parties and elections as an important component of democracy. They also remain optimistic about the future of continued democratic consolidation with 60% wanting it to be "completely democratic" and another 31% wanting it to be very close to that. This is good news for democrats.

#### ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education, which will appear regularly in the run up to the 2014 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) and *The Namibian* newspaper. The content of this edition of Election Watch was written and compiled by IPPR Research Associates Bill Lindeke and Nangula Shejavalu.

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.

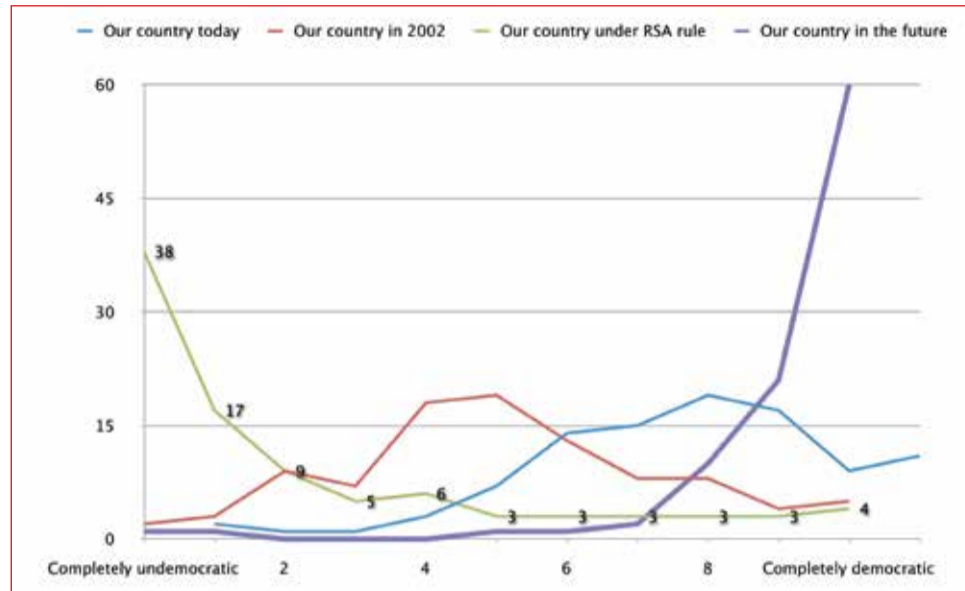
Tel: (061) 240514; fax: (061) 240516; email: info@ippr.org.na. For more on Election Watch check <http://www.electionwatch.org.na>

# DEMOCRACY? YES PLEASE AND MORE OF IT

WHAT DO NAMIBIANS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR DEMOCRACY? VIEWS FROM ROUND 5 OF THE AFROBAROMETER PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY.



Much attention has been paid to evaluating how democratic Namibians are. Usually the Afrobarometer question on respondents' preference for democracy is the centre-piece of this evaluation. Namibia has been on the lower end of the scale among Afrobarometer countries over the past decade and more of previous surveys. At 64% "preference for democracy" in 2008 and again in 2012, Namibia falls far short of what other countries favour, with 80%-90% in the top range and 70% as average in 2008. When these responses are combined with the high levels of proclaimed satisfaction with democracy in Namibia, a great imbalance is perceived between the demand for and supply of democracy according to previous survey results. This was pointed out in 2003 by IPPR researchers Christie Keulder and Tania Wiese and this resulted in the designation of Namibia as a "democracy without democrats".



In Round 5 of the Afrobarometer a series of parallel questions allow for an interesting new comparison. Respondents were asked to rank a number of countries on a scale of 1-10 (1 is undemocratic and 10 is completely democratic) as to how democratic they are. For Namibia, a "time series" of questions enables an analysis of what Namibians understand in terms of where they were, where they are, and where they want to be in terms of their democracy.

As the chart shows, Namibia is gaining added respect from respondents as a democracy. Under South African colonial rule few

respondents perceived any democratic character to the political system. Respondents also see much improvement in the current situation of democracy over that of a decade ago. A clear shift to the democratic side of the chart is noted at present. The aspirations for the future show clearly that Namibians value "democracy" and want more of it. A full 60% want a complete democracy in the future and another 31% seek a nearly complete democracy (ranking it 8 or 9 on the 10 point scale). This would seem to indicate a much stronger commitment to democracy than suggested in the previous survey focus questions.

## WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

According to International IDEA, "Democracy is understood as a political system where public decision-making is subject to popular control and where all citizens have an equal right to participate in this process. Whilst levels of democracy cannot easily be compared between states and democracy cannot be easily measured, there are ways to make assessments of the quality of democracy in a state at a given time."

The State of Democracy Framework notes two fundamental principles to democracy:

1. Popular control over decisions and decision makers, and
2. Equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control.

The realisation of these two principles is made possible through seven mediating values: participation, authorisation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and solidarity.

Source: International IDEA

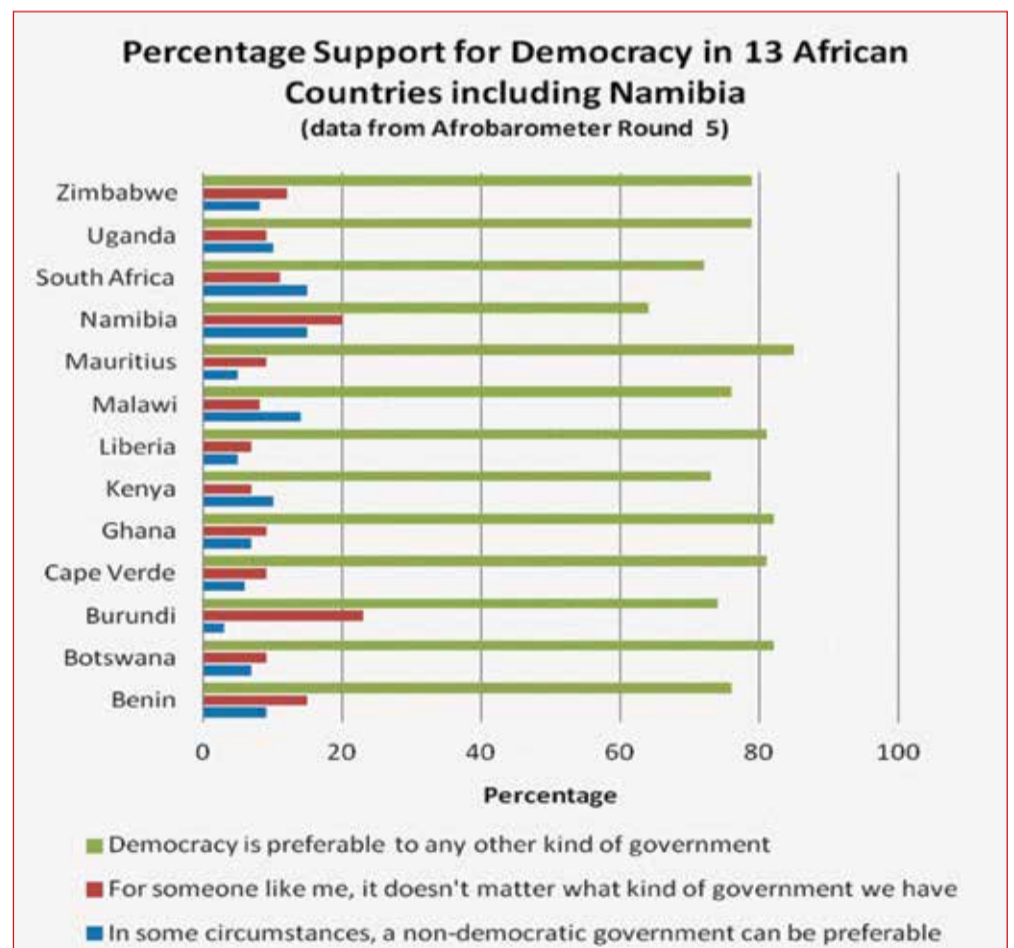
## DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND MEDIATING VALUES

### Basic principles:

- popular control over public decision making and decision makers
- equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control

Mediating Values	Requirements	Institutional Means of Realisation
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights to participate</li> <li>• Capacities/resources to participate</li> <li>• Agencies for participation</li> <li>• Participatory culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil and political rights system</li> <li>• Economic, social and cultural rights</li> <li>• Elections, parties, NGOs</li> <li>• Education for citizenship</li> </ul>
Authorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation of constitution</li> <li>• Choice of office holders/programmes</li> <li>• Control of elected over non-elected executive personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referendums</li> <li>• Free and fair elections</li> <li>• Systems of subordination to elected officials</li> </ul>
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislature representative of main currents of popular opinion</li> <li>• All public institutions representative of social composition of electorate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral and party system</li> <li>• Anti-discrimination laws</li> <li>• Affirmative action policies</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear lines of accountability, legal, financial, political, to ensure effective and honest performance; civil service and judicial integrity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule of law, separation of powers</li> <li>• Independent auditing process</li> <li>• Legally enforceable standards</li> <li>• Strong powers for scrutinizing legislation</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government open to legislative and public scrutiny and debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament as a forum for national debate</li> <li>• Freedom of information laws</li> <li>• Independent media</li> </ul>
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of government to electors and different sections of public opinion in policy formation, implementation and service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic, open and accessible procedures and channels of public consultation</li> <li>• Effective legal redress</li> <li>• Local government close to people</li> </ul>
Solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tolerance of diversity at home</li> <li>• Support for democratic governments and popular struggles for democracy abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic and human rights education</li> <li>• International human rights law</li> <li>• UN and other agencies</li> <li>• International NGOs</li> </ul>

Source: International IDEA



## THE SEVEN 'ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS' OF DEMOCRACY (AS PER THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2004 RESOLUTION)

1. Separation and balance of power
2. Independence of the judiciary
3. A pluralistic system of political parties and organisations
4. Respect for the rule of law
5. Accountability and transparency
6. Free, independent and pluralistic media
7. Respect for human and political rights; e.g., freedoms of association and expression; the right to vote and to stand in elections

Source: Democracy Reporting International, UN Resolution A/RES/59/201

# ARE THE YOUTH APATHETIC?

The 2011 National Census shows that Namibia has a very young population, with a median age of 21 years, and 57% of Namibians between the ages of 15 and 59. By the 2014 election, it is projected that over 50% of Namibia’s population will be under the age of 30, and over 50% of the voting population will be under the age of 35. That’s a huge youth vote!

While these numbers tell us that appealing to this large percentage of the electorate will be critical for parties to make a mark in the 2014 elections, the latest Afrobarometer Survey finds that younger Namibians “show a significant disinterest in public affairs and party politics compared to older Namibians”. In addition to holding a lower preference for democracy than Namibians aged 35 and older, a higher percentage of Namibians aged 18-34 also say that it doesn’t matter to them what kind of government we have.



## YOUTH’S INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Moreover, youth have shown in both the 2008 and the 2012 Afrobarometers, that they do not necessarily feel closely affiliated to a political party. In 2012, only 50% of young people aged 18-24 said that they felt close to any particular political party, compared to 74% in the 25-34 age group, and 78% in the 35+ age group.

## POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

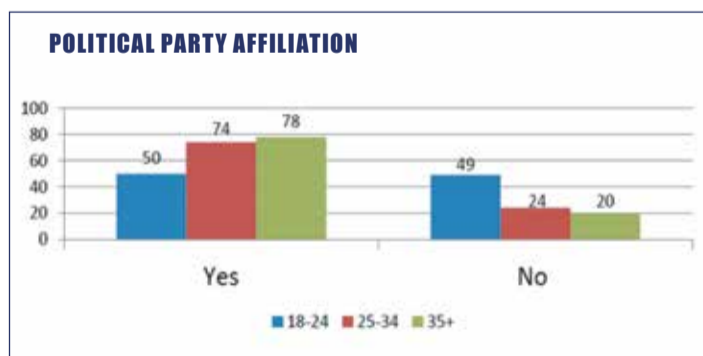
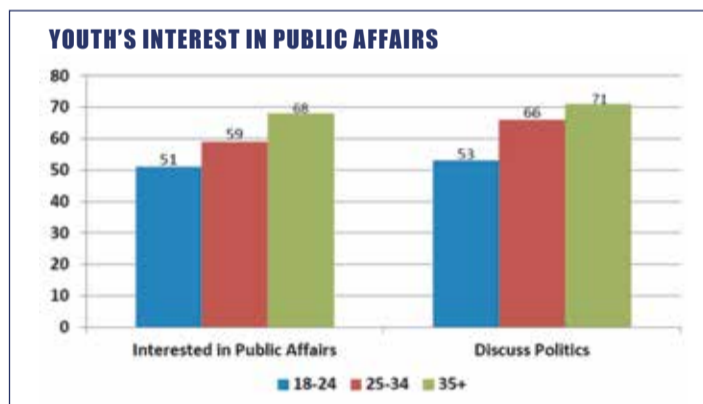
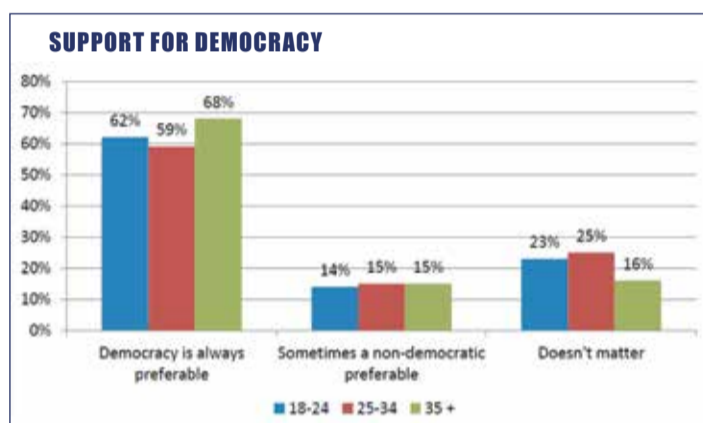
While this large disparity and the lack of closeness to political parties

## SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

In the 2009 election, youth claimed an important stake in discussions and dialogue leading up to the election, because that election marked the first time that the ‘born-free’ (i.e. youth born after Independence) generation would participate in a Namibian election. Henning Melber (2010) notes that “For the first time a considerable number of young voters were able to express their preferences. During the pre-election build-up these ‘born free’, because of their sizeable numbers, were considered to be of some influence as a much speculated unknown variable.” In the weeks leading up to the elections, for example, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) launched a campaign called ‘Listen Loud’ to “capture the views, the perspectives and the priorities of young people about key issues that affect their lives.” (African Elections, 2009) using mobile communications technologies. The campaign engaged the born-free youth on the issues of Child Protection, Education, HIV and AIDS, Health, and ‘Your Future, Your Vision’.

In addition to this campaign, various media placed a spotlight on the youth vote. Importantly, they noted that “Often the youth vote is overlooked or underestimated by both analysts and political parties alike, and this may be due to the fact that youth generally are not motivated to go to the polls as they are cynical about politics in general. Youth must therefore ensure their voices are heard and this can only happen if they turn out in numbers.” (*The Namibian*, 2009)

In the 2014 election, ‘born-frees’ will comprise an even bigger chunk of the electorate than in 2009. Despite this, the Afrobarometer points to a lack of interest in public affairs, with only 51% of youth in the 18-24 age bracket noting they are interested in public affairs, and only 53% stating that they discuss politics with their friends or family, compared to significantly higher number in the older age groups.



may signify general apathy amongst the youth when it comes to politics, it is also important to question what the underlying reasons for this apathy may be.

Highlighting the importance of “symbolic representation”, Bastedo (2012) writes that youth are much less likely to vote or to be involved in politics when they feel that “their values are not aligned with those of political leaders”. She goes on to state that “if the values that young people care about are not symbolically represented by political leaders and their electoral platforms, then youth will have less to vote for, and will likely just stay home and ignore elections altogether”; and concludes by noting that “Conversely, if political leaders make modest changes to their campaign strategies that also appeal to values — rather than strictly to interests — we could also see an increase in turnout among youth, and therefore an increase in democratic legitimacy.”

In the context of the Afrobarometer results on youth disillusionment with party politics in Namibia, these findings present an important wake-up call for Namibia’s political parties. They beg the question of why political parties seemingly do not appeal to young voters and demand that parties become more in tune with the issues affecting the youth (unemployment being the most profound — according to the Afrobarometer’s findings on economics and governance).

“If politicians decide in earnest to consider how to reach out to young people and construct a campaign that resonates with what young people care about, a campaign that leads youth to believe that ‘s/he stands for me,’ it will likely provide a reason to vote” (Bastedo, 2012). Given the composition of the youth vote (of born-frees and other youth below the age of 35) in the upcoming elections and what this could potentially mean for all the contending political parties, appealing to the needs and aspirations of young people in a way that aligns with their own values may provide a strong basis for young people to become less apathetic about politics in general, and elections in particular.

## KEY THEMES IN MOBILISING YOUNG VOTERS:

### Quality counts

Actual votes per contact will be higher when the contact is more personalised and interactive.

### Begin with the basics

Young people need nuts-and-bolts practical information about how to vote. And efforts that make voting more convenient are quite effective.

### The medium matters more than the message

To date, the growing body of experimental research has not found that any type of message works better than another. It is more about making a quality contact.

### Young people are easy to incorporate into your lists and turnout programmes

Excluding young voters from your turnout efforts is a mistake. The research findings all demonstrate that young people are just as responsive to voter contact as older voters.

### Initial mobilisation makes for repeat voters

Successful mobilisation in one election raises people’s propensity to vote in subsequent elections. Parties, candidates and interest groups should expect long-term benefits from mobilising youth today.

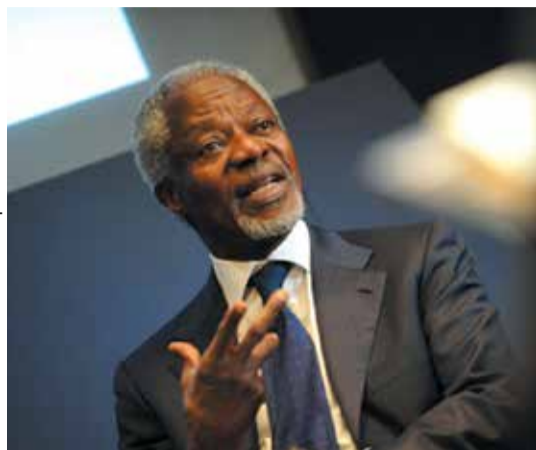
Source: *Young Voter Mobilisation Tactics*, The George Washington Graduate School of Political Management

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# KOFI ANNAN ON 'WHY ELECTIONS WITH INTEGRITY MATTER'

Photo: Simon Wilkinson/SWPix.com



Kofi A. Annan - Chair, Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security

**E**lections with integrity are the foundation of democracy. In a true democracy, our elected leaders are simply the temporary custodians of political power; the power ultimately rests with the people. We elect leaders to act on our behalf so that we can go about our lives, caring for our families, teaching at our schools, staffing our hospitals and running our businesses. At election time, the power returns to the people – and they in turn empower the elected.

Elections also provide people in each society with the opportunity to resolve political conflict peacefully. When citizens go to the polls and cast their votes – whether in Kenya, the United States or

Indonesia – they aspire not only to elect their leaders, but to choose a direction for their nation.

The Commission defines an election with integrity as one that is “based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements, and is professional, impartial and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle.” At its core, the ideal of electoral integrity means that all voters should have an equal opportunity to participate in public debate and cast their ballots, all votes are counted equally, and all candidates seeking election do so on a level playing field.

## THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

**T**he electoral cycle appreciates elections as continuous processes rather than isolated events. At the most general level, the electoral cycle is divided in three main periods: the pre-electoral period, the electoral period and the post-electoral period. Notably, the electoral cycle has no fixed starting or ending points, which is also true for the three periods and for the segments within the cycle. In theory, it may be said that one cycle ends when another begins. However, some post-electoral period activities may still be ongoing when activities related to the subsequent electoral cycle commence. Similarly, some segments, such as civic education and support to political parties, cut across the whole cycle and are therefore to be considered ongoing activities throughout all three periods.

Elections are composed of a number of integrated building blocks, with different stakeholders interacting and influencing each other. Electoral components and stakeholders do not stand alone. They are inter-dependent, and therefore the breakdown of one aspect (for example the collapse of a particular system of voter registration) can negatively impact on any other, including on the credibility of the election itself, and thus on the legitimacy of the elected government and the democratisation process of a partner country and its overall development objectives.

The fusion and cross-cutting of electoral related activities and the inter-dependence of the stakeholders highlights the cyclic nature of electoral processes and stress the need for long-term assistance and capacity-building as opposed to short-term event-based electoral assistance.

(Source: ACE Project – The Electoral Knowledge Network)

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRITY OF ELECTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- To promote and protect the integrity of elections, governments should:
  - build the rule of law in order to ensure that citizens, including political competitors and opposition, have legal redress to exercise their election-related rights;
  - create independent, professional and competent electoral management bodies with full independence of action, including the assurance of timely access to the necessary finances to conduct elections and mandates to organize transparent elections that merit public confidence;
  - develop institutions, processes, and networks that deter election-related violence and, should deterrence fail, hold perpetrators accountable;
  - reform and design electoral systems and pursue policies to diminish winner-take-all politics;
  - remove barriers to the participation of women, youth, minorities, people with disabilities and other traditionally

marginalised groups, and take affirmative steps to promote the leadership and broad participation of women, including through the judicious use of quotas; and

- control political finance by regulating donations and expenditures, public financing of political campaigns, disclosure and transparency of donations and expenditures, and sanctions and penalties for non-compliance.
- Citizen organisations should monitor government performance in meeting the challenges of electoral integrity through impartial and systematic election monitoring, in accordance with international principles; through civic action to prevent electoral violence; through monitoring media accountability, diversity, and independence; and through demanding that political parties are responsive to citizen needs.

Source: Global Commission on Elections, Democracy, and Security (The Kofi Annan Foundation and International IDEA)

# AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

**C**HAPTER 7 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, highlights the commitments made by members of the African Union (including Namibia) on the subject of democratic elections; and contains the following articles:

## DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

### Article 17

State Parties re-affirm their commitment to regularly holding transparent, free and fair elections in accordance with the Union's Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa.

### To this end, State Parties shall:

1. Establish and strengthen independent and impartial national electoral bodies responsible for the management of elections.
2. Establish and strengthen national mechanisms that redress election-related disputes in a timely manner.
3. Ensure fair and equitable access by contesting parties and candidates to state controlled media during elections.
4. Ensure that there is a binding code of con-

duct governing legally recognized political stakeholders, government and other political actors prior, during and after elections. The code shall include a commitment by political stakeholders to accept the results of the election or challenge them in through exclusively legal channels.

### Article 18

1. State Parties may request the Commission, through the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit and the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Fund, to provide advisory services or assistance for strengthening and developing their electoral institutions and processes.

2. The Commission may at any time, in consultation with the State Party concerned, send special advisory missions to provide assistance to that State Party for strengthening its electoral institutions and processes.

### Article 19

1. Each State Party shall inform the Commission of scheduled elections and invite it to

send an electoral observer mission.

2. Each State Party shall guarantee conditions of security, free access to information, non-interference, freedom of movement and full cooperation with the electoral observer mission.

### Article 20

The Chairperson of the Commission shall first send an exploratory mission during the period prior to elections. This mission shall obtain any useful information and documentation, and brief the Chairperson, stating whether the necessary conditions have been established and if the environment is conducive to the holding of transparent, free and fair elections in conformity with the principles of the Union governing democratic elections.

### Article 21

1. The Commission shall ensure that these missions are independent and shall provide them with the necessary resources for that purpose.
2. Electoral observer missions shall be conducted by appropriate and competent

experts in the area of election monitoring, drawn from continental and national institutions such as, but not limited to, the Pan-African Parliament, national electoral bodies, national legislatures and eminent persons taking due cognizance of the principles of regional representation and gender equality.

3. Electoral observer missions shall be conducted in an objective, impartial and transparent manner.

4. All electoral observer missions shall present the report of their activities to the Chairperson of the Commission within a reasonable time.

5. A copy of the report shall be submitted to the State Party concerned within a reasonable time.

### Article 22

State Parties shall create a conducive environment for independent and impartial national monitoring or observation mechanisms.

Source: African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

## 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 directors. Anyone can receive the IPPR's research free of charge by contacting the organisation at 14 Nachtigal Street, Windhoek; PO Box 6566, Windhoek; tel: (061) 240514; fax (061) 240516;

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