

Election Watch X

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PRODUCING EFFECTIVE PARTY MANIFESTOS

As Namibia gears up for elections in November, parties are embarking on writing their respective election manifestos. Election manifestos could serve as an important communication tool for Namibian political parties to express their plans and agenda if they were to be elected into office. Past elections have, however, shown that several political parties have not taken advantage of this platform as a means to increase the percentage of votes in national elections.

An election manifesto is a written document which expresses the aims, programmes and policies of a particular political party. It is considered to be a very important part of the electoral process because it provides voters with the information they need to make informed decisions when electing a party into office. When a party has won the majority and has formed its government, a published document of intentions allows for the electorate to place pressure on that government to implement the programmes and policies expressed in the party's manifesto.

Parties sometimes publish vague and short manifestos which lack specific details on policies and programmes. Some may argue that election manifestos have very little influence on voters. Therefore few of them invest time and money in preparing them.

There are, however, benefits in preparing election manifestos. Setting out a comprehensive and well-argued policy document gives a political party a platform to campaign on the issues that it deems to be important. It also suggests that the party is aiming to either implement or influence policies in government.

As Namibia moves away from the struggle politics of the 1990s, political parties have the opportunity to influence young voters who have come of age to vote by presenting issues and policies. The electorate is also better educated and more literate and are therefore more likely to be influenced by coherent and comprehensive policies.

Another problem with manifestos is that they are often not accessible. They are not distributed widely, they are often 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, under-



standable, 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. 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.

HINTS ON WRITING MANIFESTOS:

- Parties should make use of policy research to formulate the plans and programmes set out in their manifestos. Research can also be sourced from think tanks or research units to investigate relevant policy options. It is also imperative that parties keep up to date with relevant research findings on both the national and international level.
- Drafters of the manifestos should make sure to consult party members. Election manifestos should not only reflect the aims and intentions of the top echelon of the party, but should also include those of its grassroots members.
- Parties should engage with the individuals outside of the party. Listening to their concerns and opinions could help guide the programmes and policies that are included in the manifesto. This could be achieved by holding focus group discussions with voters or using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Elections manifestos should be presented in a clear and concise manner. It should also be well-edited and proof read so that it is free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Parties should highlight the costs of policies and programmes that they have put forward and explain how they will be financed. A party that can show that it has the ability to deliver on its promises will have more credibility with the electorate.
- The parties should print pamphlets, translated in Namibia's official languages, which summarise the main points of the manifesto.
- A distribution strategy should be implemented so that the manifestos and the pamphlets can reach a wide audience.
- Party activists and candidates should be fully conversant with the contents of the election manifesto and be able to use it as a campaign tool. This can be achieved through training workshops.
- After the elections have taken place, parties should hold a manifesto review meeting as part of the party's post-election assessment. This meeting should focus on ways to improve the manifesto before the next elections.

ABOUT ELECTION WATCH

Election Watch is a bulletin containing electoral analysis and voter education, that 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 European Union, 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 Associate Nelago Amadhila.

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>

Writing a strong Manifesto

The party election manifesto is your chance to tell people why they should vote for you and what you would do if elected. Remember to:

Manifesto tip 1

Describe benefits

People want to know why your good idea is such a good idea, how will you make things better/cheaper/faster/bigger/whatever? If one of your policies might be to improve lighting in a certain area make sure you mention that this will make people feel safer and reduce the threat of crime (these are the benefits).

By describing the benefits of your ideas you're helping people understand why their lives would be better if you were elected, and why they should vote for you.

Manifesto tip 2

Stand out!

Every election parties put the same sort of things in their manifestos. Everybody wants to reduce poverty and increase employment. The trick is to come up with distinctive policies and ideas that will be convincing but also make your party stand out from the crowd.

Manifesto tip 3

Include something for everyone

You want to appeal to a broad range of the electorate – so think about the different sorts of people that might vote in the elections and try to include something for them in your manifesto.

Manifesto tip 4

Don't get carried away!

Sometimes it can be easy to get carried away and start making promises left, right and centre. But don't forget that if you're elected, you're actually supposed to work on the things you included in your manifesto! Don't put things into your manifesto if you have no intention of or no idea on how to follow through on them.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND GENDER EQUALITY

In 2011, International IDEA commissioned an analysis of political parties' policy documents from a gender perspective. The review covered 36 countries in Africa and 3 in Asia. The results provided an important window onto how parties across the globe are supporting women's participation and empowerment and where this is deficient. The findings of the review project served as the basis for roundtable discussions held in 2012 as a side event to the 56th Session of the UN Commission on Status of Women, in New York.

The main conclusions of the roundtable included:

- Even though political parties promote women's political empowerment in their campaign manifestos, these promises are hardly ever met. This is because most political parties have not yet incorporated gender equality into their policy documents. They are lacking in party rules and regulations for identifying, selecting and nominating women candidates for leadership positions within the party and other positions of power and decision making.
 - Institutions such as constitutional courts, electoral management bodies and electoral tribunals, as well as political party registrars and monitoring agencies have a significant role to play in enforcing the legal and policy provisions related to political participation and the representation of women.
 - Public funding of political parties needs to be linked to the implementation of gender balance and gender-equality policies in parties. The political culture tends to be patriarchal in nature: one where hard power, the ability to attack and defeat opponents through aggressive rhetoric and actions, instead of intelligent arguments and deliberation, the lack of women power brokers and political leaders, all negatively affect the opportunity for women to pursue successful electoral campaigns.
 - Data on political parties' compliance with national and international commitments for gender-equality and women's empowerment should be publicised so that the electorate can take this information into account when deciding on their electoral choices.
- International IDEA



South African Political Parties' 2014 Promises to the Nation

As South Africa geared up for its general election in May, political parties released their party manifestos at rallies across the country. Election promises from political parties for 2014 and beyond are mainly rooted in dealing with South Africa's labour-related problems and the declining economy.

The African National Congress (ANC) premised its campaign on promising to create 6 million jobs by expanding existing programmes – of which 4 million have been targeted for the country's youth. The Helen Zille-led Democratic Alliance (DA) also promised to create 6 million "real and permanent" jobs, in addition to 7 million expanded works employment opportunities and 1 million internship opportunities for young graduates. New kids on the block, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) pledged to substantially increase the minimum wage for all full-time workers in all sectors, whilst Agang SA promised to create an improved economic environment for job creation in South Africa. Overall, the manifestos reflect the parties' aims to appeal to young South Africans born after the end of apartheid and the working class – specifically miners and farmers.

The promises contained in these parties' election manifestos have, however, sparked the debate about whether political parties are able to fulfil the promises that they make to their electorate. Manifestos read more like a wish list rather than feasible solutions for the various issues South Africa faces. They promise the creation of millions of jobs but fall short of providing how these initiatives will be implemented or funded. One therefore has to consider why South African political parties, even those with small support bases, invest their time and money in preparing and releasing election manifestos.

Ruling parties usually use the release of a manifesto to highlight the successes of the years that they have been in power. The ANC manifesto focuses more on what the party has achieved in the last 20 years, specifically under the leadership of the late Nelson Mandela, but focuses very little on what it wants to achieve in the next 5 years. This rhetoric is used as an instrument to remind those that have voted for them of its history of being a liberator, and instil a sense of nostalgia in the electorate. The policies contained in the manifesto are, however, similar to those of previous years and lack detail.

Indian Political Party to Release Braille Election Manifestos

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Tamil Nadu, India plans to release a copy of its state specific election manifesto in Braille so that it can be more accessible to the blind. This move has sparked a call for such inclusiveness in the entire electoral process from various disabled communities.

The Tamil Nadu Differently Aabled Federation approached the party to provide a Braille version of the manifesto. They are also trying to make a sign language representation of the manifesto via CDs and YouTube videos. Such a move could prompt other political parties to make their campaigns and manifestos disabled friendly.

The United Nations Convention of Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) mandates political parties to make election campaigns and communications accessible to the disabled. Specifically, the Convention provides that state parties shall take all appropriate measures

to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice. State parties, however, rarely comply with these provisions. The inclusive nature of the AAP's campaign therefore ensures that that disabled people, specifically the blind are informed voters and that their electoral rights are realised.

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/AAP-to-release-election-manifesto-in-Braille/article-show-31605257.cms>

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Registration of Political Parties in Namibia

Article 1 of the Constitution provides that Namibia as a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all. Article 17 of the Constitution provides for the right to political activity which guarantees all citizens the right to participate in peaceful political activity. This right also guarantees all citizens the right to form and join political parties of their choice.

The purpose of the Electoral Act of 1992 is to provide for the election of persons to the office of President, as members of the National Assembly, regional councils and local authority councils; the establishment of an electoral commission and its powers, duties and functions; the registration of voters and of political parties; the conduct of such elections; and to provide for matters incidental thereto.

All political parties that want to participate in national elections must register with the Electoral Commission of Namibia. All applications should be in writing and be directed to the ECN. Applications will only be approved by the ECN when:

- the main objective of the party is to participate in and promote elections;
- the aims of the party are not harmful to the safety of the State, public welfare, peace or to good order; and
- the party membership is open to all Namibian citizens regardless of sex, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, creed, social or economic status.

In addition to these requirements, an application for registration of a political party must include:

- The name of the party and the abbreviation and party symbol that is to appear on ballot papers;
- The full names and the signature of its authorized representative with the postal and physical address of the party's office from which the representative will operate;
- A list of office bearers with their full names and addresses;
- Payment of the required registration fee
- The constitution of the party; and
- The endorsement of the required number of members who are registered voters. This declaration must include the full names and voter registration numbers of the members as well as the details of the areas in

which they are registered. The Director of Elections is required by law to publish all the details of the party in the government Gazette before that party can be registered to allow for any registered party to lodge an objection to:

- the suggested name or;
- the abbreviation or symbol of the new political party if it is too close to that of

its own that it may confuse voters.

Any other political party may also lodge an objection to any of the names of the required endorsing members on the grounds that they are not registered voters. If registration is approved by the ECN, the party is issued with a certificate of registration by the Director of Elections.



Election Manifestos and Social Media Campaigns

Some political parties in India are drafting the election manifestos through social media websites as a way of attracting more voters, specifically the youth. Parties are taking advantage of greater internet accessibility to reach a wider audience in the country.

Such examples include the Indian National Congress (INC) which launched the "Your Voice Our Pledge" campaign, where supporters are asked to voice their ideas for the Congress Party's 2014 regional manifesto on a dedicated website. The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) has a web site named BJP Manifesto 2014, and a Facebook page titled, BJP Election Manifesto. The party calls for grassroots to voice their opinion in a "once in a lifetime opportunity". The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is setting up various online pages in various regions as part of its social media campaign. The party has also sought the help of economists, environmentalists, industry leaders and policymakers to prepare its national manifesto.

The online manifesto campaigns in India are the result of the growing public disaffection with the political system and the need for a major systemic reform in governance. Greater public support and acceptance is needed for the formulation of new policies. Most political parties are therefore trying to consult with the public for possible solutions through social media.

Source: <http://thefrontierpost.com/article/80690/Manifesting-the-future/>

The Namibian Constitution and the Election Process

The Namibian Constitution provides that Namibia is established as a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary state founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all.

Article 17 of the Constitution provides that:

- (1) All citizens shall have the right to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the Government. All citizens shall have the right to form and join political parties and; subject to such qualifications prescribed by law as are necessary in a democratic society to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Every citizen who has reached the age of 18 years shall have the right to vote and who has reached the age of 21 years to be elected to public office, unless otherwise provided herein.
- (3) The rights guaranteed by Sub-Article (2) hereof may only be abrogated, suspended or be impinged upon by Parliament in respect of specified categories of persons on such grounds of infirmity or on such grounds of public interest or morality as are necessary in a democratic society.

There are four types of elections in Namibia:

Presidential Elections

Every citizen of Namibia by birth or descent over the age of 35 years and is eligible to be elected to office as a member of the National Assembly, is eligible for election as President. The requirements for nomination of candidates for presidential elections are provided for in Article 54 of the Electoral Act. The President is elected by direct, universal and equal suffrage. The Presidential race is won when that person has obtained more than 50% of the votes cast. In the event that no person has received 50% majority of the votes, a run-off election must be held until that majority is obtained.

National Assembly Elections

Members of the National Assembly are elected through general, direct and secret ballot. Every registered voter who meets the qualifications of Article 17 of the Constitution is entitled to vote for members of the national assembly. These elections are based on a proportional electoral system based on a party-list submitted by the contesting political parties. The party lists should include 72 names of prospective candidates for the available seats in the national assembly. The political party with the most votes gains the most seats.

Regional Council Elections

Regional Council elections are based on the "first-past-the post" electoral system where the candidate with the most votes is declared the winner. The candidate who receives the most votes per constituency is elected to the Regional Council. Voters can only vote in the constituency in which they are registered. During the first sitting of the Regional Council, members elect two Councillors to represent the region in the National Council, which consists of 26 members. The National Council is the second house of Parliament and essentially serves as the house of review for all Bills passed by the National Assembly before they become law or Acts of Parliament.

Local Authority Elections

Local Authority elections are based on the proportional representation system where registered voters vote for the political party, organisation or association of choice. The party, organisation or association then appoints its representatives to the local authority on the proportional list system. Seats are therefore allocated in proportion to the number of votes received so the more votes received by the party, organisation or association contesting in the elections, the more seats it will receive onto the local authority council.

THE END OF THE MANIFESTO?

Attempts over the last decade to emphasise the importance of clear policy platforms in Japanese elections seem to have come full circle.

Baffled voters in last year's Japanese upper house election campaign faced a bewildering array of candidates and a muddle of issues. With newspapers and Internet sites vying to give voters clearer ideas on which candidates to vote for, an independent political think tank judged the election manifestos of Japan's main parties to be the worst

in years.

In a study published on its website, Genron NPO dissected the election platforms of the nine national parties contending the election, as it has done for the last seven elections since 2003. In a thorough analysis, it graded each manifesto for elements such as clarity of goals, achievability, relevancy and presentation on 12 main issues, including fiscal, economic, social security, energy, diplomatic and agricultural policy.

The results were the equivalent of

straight F grades for all the parties. On a scale of 1 to 100, the best manifesto was judged to be the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's with 29 points. Its coalition partner New Komeito scored 21, Your Party came in at 21 points, and the Democratic Party of Japan placed fourth at 16 points.

"The overall scores for the nine parties were at an unprecedented low," the organization said in its report. "The biggest reason for it is that the political parties seem to be lacking the awareness or will to consider

their election platforms as issue resolution programmes. Instead they have returned to the abstract promises of past campaigns. This was especially evident among the opposition parties."

The dismal failure of the previous DPJ administration to stick to its bold pledges in the 2009 general election appears to have fueled a return to the familiar vague promises and a lack of specifics in Japanese election platforms.

Source - <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/07/18/end-of-the-manifesto-election/>

WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

Sometimes it is not clear why certain political parties form. Sometimes they seem to represent an individual's political ambitions. At other times they may seem to be linked to a particular community or ethnic group. However, successful political parties are usually broad-based and seek to appeal to the national electorate. Why do they do this? It is worth reminding ourselves of the conventional reasons for the existence of political parties.

- A political party is a group of people who share the same ideas about the way the country should be governed.
- They work together to introduce new laws, and/or alter old laws.
- Political parties try to control what happens in Parliament by securing a majority of seats in democratic elections.
- Political parties have policies which indicate how they would govern if they came to power in an election.
- Usually, when a political party wants to change laws and regulations they put their idea to Members of Parliament. A vote then takes place and if the majority of MPs vote 'YES' then the change to the law/regulation takes place.



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

The following principles guide legislation and practices regarding political parties and candidates. The first three derive directly from basic civil and political rights, while the other seven relate to what is needed in practice for a political system to function democratically.

Freedom of organisation

In this context, the freedom of organisation refers to the freedom to form and join political parties and other political organisations. It also refers to the legal rights of such parties and organisations to, for example, have their name and logo protected, to be legally registered and recognized by the government, and be treated fairly regardless of political conviction or the ethnicity, language, religion or gender of its members.

Freedom to stand for election

The freedom to stand for election refers to an individual's ability to stand for election and to be duly elected to office. This may be either as an independent candidate or as a candidate of a political party or other organisation. Principles to take into consideration when restricting individuals' freedom to stand for election include non-discrimination, relevance, reason, and objectivity. It is critical to ensure that the restrictions on and process of nomination are clearly stated in the electoral law.

Freedom of speech and assembly

Freedom of speech and assembly refers to the right of citizens to express their opinions freely, individually or with others. It also refers to the ability for political parties and candidates to hold meetings and rallies and to freely and openly conduct public election campaigns. If restrictions are imposed, they tend to address issues of protection from, for example, hate speech or incitement of hatred and violence.

Fair and peaceful competition

For the electoral competition to be fair and peaceful, political parties, candidates, and other electoral actors need to agree on

the rules of the game. Such rules may include refraining from practices of hate speech, electoral violence, and defamation. This agreement can be informal, through a voluntary Code of Conduct, and/or supported through a legal framework with enforceable sanctions and is usually contained with the Electoral Code.

Plurality

In order for voters to have a real and meaningful choice on election day, the political and legal system of a given country usually considers establishing and maintaining a multi-party electoral system. This system usually includes provision for independent candidates to stand for election – in order for voters to have a choice among several political parties and/or independent candidates.

Inclusion in the electoral process

In all aspects of an election – changes to electoral laws, election administration, codes of conduct, etc – countries need to decide what kind of involvement they want from political parties, candidates, voters, and other key stakeholders. The involvement can take different forms ranging from being informed to being consulted, part of decision-making, or free to observe voting, vote counting, and collation of results. In some countries, this may include active participation of political parties in the election cycle prior to Election Day when the Central Election Commission (CEC) or other electoral governing body is deliberating and determining the content and character of the electoral code.

Level playing field

Political, cultural, legal, and financial realities might lead to a situation where some political parties or candidates have (or are perceived to have) an unfair advantage over others. Equal access to media legislation can help to ensure that all candidates (and their respective parties) receive air time and press access. Additional measures such as party registration, freedom of assembly, ability to promote party platform

in the media, and quotas to enhance the participation of under-represented groups may also be applied.

Media access and reporting

The media are a key channel for voters, political parties, candidates, and other stakeholders to receive information related to an election. Legal frameworks should protect media freedom to report and scrutinize the workings of political parties and other actors in the electoral process, and should also address ways to ensure that parties and candidates receive an equitable access to and coverage in publicly owned media.

Transparent and accountable political finance

Money is a key element in modern political campaigning, and legal frameworks and administrative practices often regulate party and campaign finance. Regulations may cover possible access to public funds, restrictions on (mis-)use of public resources (by the incumbent party or candidate), provisions for the finances of political parties and candidates to be transparent, or prohibitions on certain sources of funds.

Internal party democracy

If a political party would like the democratic principles of electoral politics to be applied within the party, it may consider practices like internal information and consultation processes, internal (formal or informal) rules and structures for the organisation and decision-making within the party, and transparency in its functioning at all levels. Party members may also take on more formal roles in the decision-making like participating in internal elections for leadership positions or in selecting the party's candidate(s) for the upcoming elections. Many parties also work actively to enhance the role of traditionally under-represented groups in their parties.

From: 2013, ACE Project – The Electoral Knowledge Network; The ACE Encyclopedia: Parties and Candidates; <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/pdf/pc/view>

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 directors consisting of Monica Koep (chairperson), Bill Lindeke, Graham Hopwood, Ndiitah Nghipondoka-Robiat, Daniel Motinga and Justin Ellis.

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; 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>