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mentations to the line Minister in relation to local authorities situated in the region; establishes, manages and controls settlement areas; and assists local authorities in carrying out their duties, to name but a few of the multiple tasks ascribed to the council.

The first Regional Council and Local Authority elections were held in 1992, and until 2010, these elections were set at 6-year intervals (i.e. 1992, 1998, 2004, 2010). Political changes subsequently allowed for these elections to take place every 5 years, hence this year's (2015) election.

Other changes to the policy framework that have affected elections since the first 1992 Local Authority and Regional Council election include:

- Instead of being nominated by their fellow elected regional councillors (as was the case before amendments to the Regional Councils Act in 2010), Regional Governors are now appointed by the President.

- Following the Fourth Delimitation Commission's report, Namibia is now made up of 14 Regions and 121 Constituencies. This is a change from the 13 Regions and 95 constituencies present in 1992 (after the 1st Delimitation Commission). (see the insert on the next page regarding IPPR's call for the release of the 4th Delimitation Report).
- Until the 2014 changes to the Constitution, (and subsequent amendments to the affected policies), two member of each Regional Council were nominated to represent their region in the National Council. Following the changes to the constitution, 3 members of each RC will now head to parliament, increasing the size of the National Council from the current 26, to 42 National Council MPs after the upcoming election.

Some of the changes in the way elections will be held this year, compared to previous years, include that there will only be one day for voting, and voters will cast their votes using

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) (and have their identities verified using handheld Voter Verification Devices).

During the Presidential and National Assembly Elections last year, several challenges were faced by the ECN, which resulted (by admission of the ECN itself) in many voters being disenfranchised. If the corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence of these problems have not been sufficient, these challenges could pose constraints in the upcoming election. These actions include:

- Training ECN officials to correctly use and operate the Voter Verification Devices;
- Improving logistical arrangements – particularly with respect to the mobile polling stations;
- Enhancing voter education on the use of the Electronic Voting Machine; and
- Improving the communication of results to the public.

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REGISTRATION UPDATE

From August 2nd to 22nd, the ECN held a Supplementary Voter Registration exercise to register eligible voters who had just turned 18, who needed to replace their voter ID cards, or who wanted to register for the RC and LA elections after not being allowed to do so in the general registration exercise last year (e.g. due to not having the necessary information required). Alongside the cleaning of the Voters Register (i.e. by removing duplicates and the names of those who have died since the last registration exercise, or who pass on between registration and polling day)), this activity is necessary for ensuring a complete voters' register.

During the supplementary registration, 74,034 voters registered. Of these, 10,322 (or 14%) were voters who had turned 18 since the last registration exercise.

The tables below provide the supplementary registration statistics, as issued by the ECN in a media statement on 29 September 2015, for the Provisional Voters' Register and the Local Authorities Register.

PROVISIONAL VOTERS' REGISTER

Total Voters – 2014 National Voters Register	1,238,309
Supplementary Registration (including duplicates)	74,034
Total Registered Voters (after 2015 supplementary registration)	1,312,343
Duplicates removed	-44,451
Total for Provisional National Voters' Register 2015	1,267,892

LOCAL AUTHORITY REGISTER

Total for 2014 Local Authority (LA) Register	392,239
Total 2015 Supplementary Registration of Voters	35,277
Total LA register after supplementary registration	427,516
Removals (fingerprints, change of address, etc)	-8,849
Total Local Authority Provisional Register 2015	418,667

REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS IN NUMBERS

14 Regions 121 Constituencies

57 Local Authorities 42 National Council MPs
(3 Regional Councillors per region)

27th November 2015 – Date of the next Regional Council & Local Authority Election

1,267,892 Total registered voters on the Provisional National Voters' Register

418,667 Total registered voters on the Provisional Local Authorities Register

PRESIDENTIAL & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS VS. REGIONAL COUNCIL AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS

PRESIDENTIAL & NA ELECTIONS	REGIONAL COUNCIL & LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country becomes one Constituency • Both elections are contested at all polling stations across the country and abroad • Same format of ballot paper (EVM) for both elections across the country • Allow for sea-going personnel to vote at designated points • Facilitate registration and voting abroad • Presidential – Majoritarian • National Assembly – PR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You vote in the Constituency where you are registered • You vote in the LA where you are registered • Different ballot papers (EVM) for all Constituencies and LA's • In parts of certain Constituencies, only the RC ballot paper will be available • No voting overseas • Regional Councils – First Past The Post (Winner Takes All) • Local Authorities - PR

Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia, Presentation to CSOs, 2015

VOTER TURNOUT IN RC & LA ELECTIONS – CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

At the end of November, Namibians will have the opportunity to cast their votes in the country's Local and Regional Government election. However, since the first of these elections back in 1992, the turnout to elect local and regional councillors has been much lower than that for National and Presidential elections.

This trend in voter turnout for these elections is not unique to Namibia. In many countries across the world, turnout for local elections has lagged behind, and for many, is getting worse. This is problematic for several reasons. For one, because voter turnout is seen as a measure of civic engagement in politics, low turnouts indicate voter disengagement. It also raises how democratic governance structures really are, when such a small percentage of the population turns out to vote for leadership in their local authorities and regions.

The low level of enthusiasm for these elections could be the result of a few factors:

1. Eligible voters are not well informed about the importance and purpose of the elections. Voter education is limited and of poor quality.
2. Potential voters feel that the election outcome is predictable, and that their vote won't make a difference in the resulting outcome or in public policy implementation.
3. Polling day is not a holiday, while voters have to be in their home constituencies and local authority areas to vote (whereas in national elections they can vote anywhere in the country)
4. Parties do little to attract voters by campaigning in a lacklustre manner and failing to provide alternatives that enable voters to make meaningful choices.
5. Voters feel that most key decisions affecting their lives are made remotely, i.e in Windhoek and not by locally-elected politicians and hence do not see the importance of voting for sub-national authorities.

In Namibia's case, all of the above are plausible reasons for low turnouts.

Election	Local Govt Election Turnout	Regional Govt Election Turnout
1992	Registered voters: 156,663 Votes cast: 128,973 Valid votes: 127,094 Votes rejected: 1879 (1%) Turnout: 82%	Registered voters: 470,006 Votes cast: 381,041 Valid votes: 373,457 Votes rejected: 7,584 (2%) Turnout: 81%
1998	Registered voters: 188,302 Votes cast: 63,545 Valid votes: 62,888 Votes rejected: 657 (1%) Turnout: 34%	Registered voters: 534,278 Votes cast: 213,789 Valid votes: 208,674 Votes rejected: 5,115 (2%) Turnout: 40%
2004	Registered voters: 359,152 Votes cast: 163,999 Valid votes: 161,656 Votes rejected: 2,343 Turnout: 45%	Registered Voters: 950,266 Votes cast: 523,450 Valid votes: 520,601 Votes rejected: 2,849 (0.5%) Turnout: 55%
2010	Registered Voters: 418,972 Votes cast: 140,313 Valid votes: 139,273 Votes rejected: 1,040 (0.7%) Turnout: 33%	Registered Voters: 1,180,925 Votes cast: 447,386 Valid votes: 443,299 Votes rejected: 4,087 (0.9%) Turnout: 38%
2015	?	?

Sources: *Guide to Namibian Politics, Electoral Commission of Namibia*

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE VOTING FOR?

Voter education with respect to the work of the Local Authority and Regional Council Elections, as well as the voting process for this level of governance is often limited.

While the ECN does well to inform eligible voters of the requirements to register for the elections, little information is provided on the roles and responsibilities of regional and local authority councillors, the modalities of how these councillors are selected and subsequently elected, and ways in which voters can hold them accountable. The councils and authorities, too, do not consistently and actively engage the public on the importance of their work. As such, voters are often unsure what they're voting for, and how their vote in these elections contributes to development in their regions, constituencies and local authorities. Graham Hopwood alluded to this issue ten years ago in his paper *Regional Councils and Decentralisation: At the Crossroads*. In that 2005 piece in which he made an assessment of the 2004 regional elections, he noted that "the lack of clarity about the role of Regional Councils and their limited powers was unlikely to convince the majority of voters that this was a tier of government worth supporting".

Furthermore, voters often feel that they are not consulted by their leaders at this level. In Namibia's 2014 Afrobarometer survey, a significant number of respondents felt that local councillors do not consult their communities sufficiently. When asked how much of the time they thought Local Authority and Regional Councillors listen to what they had to say, 33% responded "never" and 35% responded "only sometimes" with respect to Local Authority Councillors; while 28% responded "never" and 38% responded "only sometimes" regarding Regional Councillors.

The Afrobarometer survey also found that most respondents do not contact their councillors. 79% of respondents noted that in the past year, they had "never" contacted their Local Authority Councillor about an important problem or to share their views. 77% said they had "never" contacted their Regional Councillor.

These results reflect a strong disconnect between Local Authority or Regional Councillors, and the people they serve. This, in turn, disengages voters from this level of government, and highlights the need for comprehensive voter education.

Complementing the need for voter education is the need for an Access to Information Law, to ensure that Namibians are able to get hold of information that affects the development of their local

authorities and regions. A case in point is the call for access to information regarding the Fourth Delimitation Commission's Report, which directly affects the upcoming election, in that it redefined Namibia's political map from 13 regions, to 14 regions and from 107 to 121 constituencies. (see the article on page 4 for IPPR's recent call for the release of the report).

IS PREDICTABILITY OVERRATED?

In many instances where a single party dominates (this being the Swapo party in Namibia's case), voters feel that the election outcome is predictable, that their vote won't make a difference in the resulting outcome, and that their vote will do nothing or little to change public policy. In line with this, (opposition) political parties often do not take the opportunity to effectively mobilise their supporters, and to encourage them to go to the polls to support their selected candidates.

However, with the low turnout levels seen in 2010, for example, there is no doubt that if voters were more engaged in these elections, election results would be a lot more interesting, and potentially disruptive to the status quo¹ if political parties mobilised their supporters on a greater scale. Higher turnout would also certainly more representative of the will of the people.

In a study on the electoral effect of voter turnout, Hansford and Gomez note that, "While one might argue that high turnout is preferable for purely expressive reasons, the typical normative claim asserts that increased levels of voter participation improve the quality of representation by reducing any bias that might result from dissimilarities between voters and non-voters."

They go on to state that, "Higher turnout might advantage one party over another, might advantage incumbents or perhaps their challengers, or might lead to greater volatility in the electorate. In turn, each of these electoral implications from higher turnout is likely to result in significant policy consequences."

In essence, predictability is overrated, and eligible voters shouldn't use this as an excuse not to vote.

ELECTORAL LAW & OTHER POLICY ISSUES

There are two aspects of the new Electoral Law and other recent legislation that may have an impact on turnout for local and regional governance.

These include the 2010 amendment to the Special Advisors and Regional Governors Appointment Act, and to the Regional Councils Act, which provided for the appointment of Governors to regions, as opposed to their election. It is clear that the regional governance structure, and particularly the role of Governors was in need of reform. However, having them appointed, rather than elected, is questionable, and has been contested on various levels.

In a 2010 analysis of Afrobarometer findings on public opinion with respect to elections, Professor Bill Lindeke wrote, "The removal of the governorship from regional control and the pending centralisation of staff decisions could weaken morale among voters at regional level"². Essentially, he posited that since the leading authority at the regional level (the Governor) is not accountable to voters themselves, voters' motivations to show up for these elections are diminished.

The second aspect that affects turnout within the Electoral Act is the absence of tendered votes for the Regional Council and Local Authority elections. Tendered ballots allow voters to cast their vote without physically being in the constituency where they are registered as voters. In the context of the old and new Electoral Act, tendered votes are only allowed for the Presidential and National Assembly elections. In many instances, voters have complained that they do not have the option to cast their vote for councillors in the region or local authority from which they come, rather than from that in which they live. The tendered vote can be an administrative nightmare, and can compromise the integrity of an election in several ways, particularly for the regional and local authority elections, where 121 constituencies and 57 local authorities are being contested. This year it has been confirmed that voting day will not be a public holiday in the upcoming election - making it difficult for voters to travel to their home areas to vote if they are working elsewhere.

BEYOND TURNOUT

Although the issues outlined above highlight some reasons for the low turnout figures in Regional and Local Government elections, these elections are incredibly important, as they are directly linked to service delivery at the grassroots level.

Local Authorities and Regional Councils are meant to bring government closer to the people. Local Authorities are tasked with "managing and maintaining the area for which they are established and which they represent. Their tasks include, for example, the provision of water and waste removal."³ And Regional Councils oversee "the development and administration of the region. Every Council must strive to promote development in the region to improve the living conditions of its residents. Their tasks include, for example, the establishment of industrial areas to create job opportunities and the provision of water, electricity and transport services."⁴

Because of these important responsibilities of these councils, it is not enough that voters turn out to vote. Beyond this, they should ensure that they hold their elected councillors accountable for effectively carrying out their mandate. There are a number of ways to do this, as outlined by the Legal Assistance Centre's Advocacy in Action manual. These include:

Planning an advocacy campaign, meeting with decision makers, writing letters, sending petitions, organising events and protests, and making use of the media and available ICTs.

In addition to this, the performance of regional and local authority councillors needs to be appraised, monitored, and evaluated, and the necessary capacity development carried out, to ensure that councillors effectively carry out the responsibilities mandated to them in bringing development to the regions

1 Hansford, T. & Gomez, B. 2010. Estimating the Electoral Effects of Voter Turnout. *American Political Science Review* (May, 2010)

2 Lindeke, B. 2010. *Regional and Local Government Issues in the Afrobarometer*. Institute for Public Policy Research, Briefing Paper No. 53

3 Electoral Commission of Namibia, 2015.

4 Ibid.

DELIMITATION & THE RIGHT TO KNOW

On International Right to Know Day - September 28th, 2015 – the IPPR issued this press statement calling for the release of the 2013 Delimitation Report Ahead of the Local and Regional Elections:

“This week the President, in a Government Gazette, is expected to confirm the date for the 2015 Local Authority and Regional Council elections (later confirmed as November 27). However, the 2013 Delimitation Report, which made a number of key boundary changes that fundamentally affect these elections, has never been released to the public.

The IPPR, through its Election Watch project, is respectfully calling on President Hage Geingob to authorise the publication of the 2013 Delimitation Report as soon as possible.

The public discussion of such reports is a normal practice in a democracy to ensure there has been no manipulation of boundaries to favour particular parties or candidates (otherwise known as gerrymandering) ahead of an election. This call is being made on September 28 - International Right to Know Day.

Former President Hifikepunye Pohamba announced on 8 August 2013 that a number of key changes would be made to constituency and regional boundaries based on the recommendations of the Fourth Delimitation Commission. These decisions included the creation of 14 new constituencies, the splitting of the Kavango region into two, and the renaming of several constituencies and regions. At the time, President Pohamba said the changes were part and parcel of the exercise of democracy in Namibia.

On September 3 2013, the ACTION Coalition, which comprises several groups campaigning for access to information legislation in Namibia, requested President Pohamba to release the report’s contents as it was clearly in the public interest to have the reasons for changing boundaries placed in the public domain.

Delimitation is a fundamental part of the democratic process in that it is inextricably linked to the election of representative local, regional and national authorities. The delimitation process was a public one, with citizens being called upon to make submissions both directly to the Commission and at public meetings. Hence, it is only logical that the final report of the Commission be a public document. The contents of this report are also highly relevant for the impending elections - since for the first time voters will be electing representatives from two Kavango regions and for 121 constituencies countrywide - 14 more than in 2010.

During his current visit to the US and the UN General Assembly, President Geingob has spoken repeatedly of leadership being about transparency and accountability. In 2013 the Office of the President advised the IPPR that the release of the delimitation report is the prerogative of the President.

The laws setting out the mandate of the Delimitation Commission – Section 104 of the Constitution and Section 5 of the Regional Councils Act – do not make reference to the manner in which the Commission’s findings should be released. According to the Office of the President, the report falls under the terms of the 1947 Commissions Act, which gives the President the responsibility for releasing reports produced by Presidential Commissions.

Without an access to information law, it is not possible to demand the publication of such documents. With this in mind we are respectfully requesting the President to release the report of the Fourth Delimitation Commission. If for some reason, some of the contents of the report are deemed sensitive then a redacted version could be released”.



Community meetings and consultations are a vital part of regional and local governance. Engaged members of the community are more likely to recognise the importance of sub-national elections and therefore go out and vote.



Members of the fourth Delimitation Commission, Dr. John Steytler, Judge Alfred Siboleka (chair), and Zed Ngavirue with former President Pohamba (second from right). The Commission handed over its report to President Pohamba in mid-2013.

Photo: Namibian Sun

REGIONAL COUNCIL VS. LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS

REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Regional Councils are responsible for the development and administration of the region. Every Council must strive to promote development in the region to improve the living conditions of its residents. Their tasks include, for example, the establishment of industrial areas to create job opportunities and the provision of water, electricity and transport services.

During the election, voters will vote for the candidate they believe will administer their constituency most capably and effectively. During the first sitting of the Regional Council, the members will elect three Councillors to represent the region in the National Council.

Voters can only vote in the constituency in which they are registered. The candidate who receives the most votes per constituency will be elected to the Regional Council.

LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS

Local Authority Councils include all municipalities, town councils and village councils. These councils are tasked with managing and maintaining the area for which they are established and which they represent. Their tasks include, for example, the provision of water and waste removal.

During the Local Authority election, you will vote for the political party of your choice. This party will appoint its representatives to the local authority on the proportional list system.

You can only vote in the election if you have lived in the jurisdiction of the local authority for more than one year. The party will receive seats in proportion to the number of votes it received.

Source: Electoral Commission Of Namibia (2015)

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), Graham Hopwood, Ndiitah Nghipondoka-Robiati, Daniel Motinga, Justin Ellis and Michael Humavindu.

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