



## WHAT GETS YOUR VOTE? - A CRITICAL LOOK AT POLITICAL PARTY ELECTION MANIFESTOS



**N**amibians head to the polls on 27 November 2019 to cast their votes in the Presidential and National Assembly election. In an election climate where we have seen the addition of a new party for the National Assembly elections, a popular Independent Candidate with allegiance to the majority party running for Presidential office, and another court case challenging the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), there is no doubt that this election season bears all the elements of an exciting contest.

However, when voters get ready to cast their vote for one of the 15 political parties and 11 presidential candidates contesting the election<sup>1</sup>, what will inform which candidate and/or party they elect into power? What are the issues that voters most want to see addressed? And how do those on the ballot paper intend to address these issues?

This paper takes a look at the importance of manifestos, highlights what the key issues are for voters as they head to elections, and provides an overview – based on available political party manifestos – of how each party (and the Independent Candidate) plan to tackle them. The objective of this paper is to provide a greater understanding of the platform on which the different political parties are running, and to help Namibian citizens make an informed choice when they enter the polling station come November 27th. Furthermore, given that manifestos communicate a party's general position on key issues, the paper sheds light on the promises to which we can hold candidates and parties accountable.

<sup>1</sup> Electoral Commission of Namibia, 2019



## Election Manifestos – An Important Communication Tool

During the course of an election campaign, political parties generally produce manifestos to help voters decide who to vote for. A manifesto is the general term used to describe the published declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of an individual, group, political party or government. In some countries, the document may be referred to as the party platform, or programme for government.

- *Center for Government and Democracy, Knowledge Walk Institute*

An election manifesto essentially highlights a political party's position on and approach to various key issues. It outlines how a party (or candidate) would tackle the matters that it views as most pressing, with most manifestos reflecting how they would deal with the economic landscape, education, health, and a host of other issues.

Election manifestos provide political parties with an opportunity to appeal to the voters by outlining what they can expect from the party or candidates. The manifesto is also an important reference document after the election has taken place, in that citizens can hold political parties to their promises, and/or can appeal to party representatives who win seats in the National Assembly to push for change based on the promises made.

Some believe that the use of an election manifesto is an outdated practice, given that many voters will likely not read all the party positions (let alone that of the party to which they may feel the closest affinity)<sup>2</sup>. The question of the relevance of manifestos in the Namibian context has come up recently, with some arguing that parties place little effort in the write-up of their manifestos, that few new ideas are presented, that little substance is provided with respect to how parties will fund their large idealistic goals (particularly in today's economic climate), and that little real effort is made to convince voters why they should vote for said party. A recent editorial by *The Namibian* noted that "As it stands now, the publicised manifestos and the conspicuous silence of presidential candidates about their personal commitment to voters suggest that those aspiring to political office are taking the electorate for granted. They clearly believe they can sway the mood and temper of voters without having to convince them about their intentions once elected. Namibians should continue to be alert to politicians bearing gifts, until they show that they are putting in an effort for people's votes."<sup>3</sup>

However, research shows that there is still great value in the manifesto. Eder *et al* write that election manifestos serve three key functions<sup>4</sup>:

- Manifestos provide a compendium of valid party positions.
- Manifestos establish supremacy over all other policy positions that may be attributed to the party and thereby streamline the party's campaign.
- Manifestos are a useful campaign tool to directly inform voters.

Moreover, in the absence of other meaningful engagement with the electorate, it remains an essential tool for understanding political parties' positions on different issues. That said, given the need to appeal to the electorate, it is important that in communicating their positions, political parties supplement their manifestos with succinct messaging about their position on key issues.

Beyond political party manifestos, there are a number of other ways in which political parties can communicate their position. They may use traditional or new media to highlight their position or platform on various issues, they may conduct rallies to communicate their message and inspire their followers, they may participate in platforms created by the media and/or civil society to engage (the Presidential debate organized by *Eagle FM* on November 6th is a case in point), and so forth.

Social media has taken an increasingly central role in political party communications. This form of engaging with voters is especially key given Namibia's young voting population. According to the ECN, of the 1,358,468 registered voters eligible to cast their vote in the upcoming election, almost 52% are Millennials (born 1982 and after). Born Frees (i.e. born after Namibia's independence) make up almost 30% of the electorate, with 8,623 Post-Millennials (born after 2000 and also known as the iGeneration) voting for the first time in a general election. These young people are more engaged on social media than most other mediums, and get their news and inspiration on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and

<sup>2</sup> Beukes, J. 2019. Election manifesto model outdated – analysts. Namibian Sun, 3 October 2019. <https://www.namibiansun.com/news/election-manifesto-model-outdated-analysts2019-10-03>

<sup>3</sup> The Namibian Editorial Team. 2019. Editorial: Taking Voters for Granted. 18 October 2019. <https://www.namibian.com/na/84463/read/Taking-Voters-for-Granted>

<sup>4</sup> Eder, N., Jenny, M., & Muller, W. 2017. Manifesto functions: How party candidates view and use their party's central policy document. *Electoral Studies*, Volume 45, February 2017, Pages 75-87.

more frequently for direct communications, WhatsApp. Any political party that doesn't strive to engage young people where they are, can forget about gaining a significant youth vote.

Importantly, however, social media has also been opened up to a great deal of 'fake news', with various entities spreading falsities about various aspects of the electoral process. Facebook has also come under investigation in the United States for being lax in preventing manipulative election targeting, and allowing certain entities to interfere in voter messaging there. It is important that voters remain well-informed, cognizant of the issues that any type of media may present, and be vigilant in differentiating between the real and the fake.

Unfortunately, in the Namibian context, political parties often focus on elections as an event and focus their communications on the campaign period, rather than viewing their communications in line with the entire electoral cycle. This was evident in the late (or lack of) launch of party manifestos (for all political parties) for the 2019 election. The electorate, as part of its right to participate in political activity needs to be informed on how political parties and political candidates are addressing the key issues that come up in society and in parliament. They need to know that the party they voted for – win or lose – is dedicated to fighting for the issues they said they would fight for. They need to be engaged with earnestly, and on an ongoing basis. And they need promises to be coupled with action.

Party	Manifesto Launch Date
NDP	23.09.2019 - manifesto not easily accessible to public
PDM	25.09.2019
APP	01.10.2019
Swapo	05.10.2019
SWANU	12.10.2019
NUDO	13.10.2019
NEFF	20.10.2019 - manifesto not easily accessible to public
Independent Candidate	26.10.2019
LPM	09.11.2019
CDV	09.11.2019 - manifesto not easily accessible to public
RDP	31.10.2019 - manifesto not easily accessible to public
UDF	Noted in an interview that it would recycle its 2014 manifesto.
CoD, NPF, RP, WRP	No information on manifesto launches. Manifestos not (clearly) accessible to the public.

As noted earlier, for the upcoming elections, all the contesting political parties launched their manifestos within the two months preceding the election. One party, the United Democratic Front, simply stated that it would rehash its 2014 manifesto, because the problems remained the same, with the party's president Apius Auchab stating that "Poverty is still there, hunger is still there, and other problems are still there. The person who experienced poverty in 2014 is the same person experiencing poverty in 2019. In 2014, we had no economic recession, but now we have the most challenging economic situation, meaning the problems are even worse for the people. So, there is no need to change the manifesto."<sup>5</sup>

This late publication of manifestos – in some cases, less than 3 weeks before the election, or not at all – limits access to information for voters, as they are left with a limited amount of time to fully appraise themselves of the promises of the contesting political parties. The ACTION Coalition has decried this trend, stating that "Political parties have been slow to release their manifestos, which does not provide adequate time for voters to make informed choices as to the party they vote for. They also don't know where to access the manifestos."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in compiling this report, accessing the manifestos of the various political parties proved challenging. After a number of attempts to get the reports – both directly or via email – manifestos for only seven political parties could be accessed.

The manifestos that we were able to access (as provided by political parties in multiple requests made to them, or as available online) – APP, LPM, NUDO, PDM, SWANU, Swapo and UDF (2014) – form the basis of the manifesto comparisons made in the coming pages. We also include the manifesto of independent presidential candidate, Dr Panduleni Itula. (However, in the interest of capturing the voice of more political parties, the final pages of this report highlight the different parties' 'vision for Namibia', based on the publication *Spot the Difference* by NID, HSF and NMH).

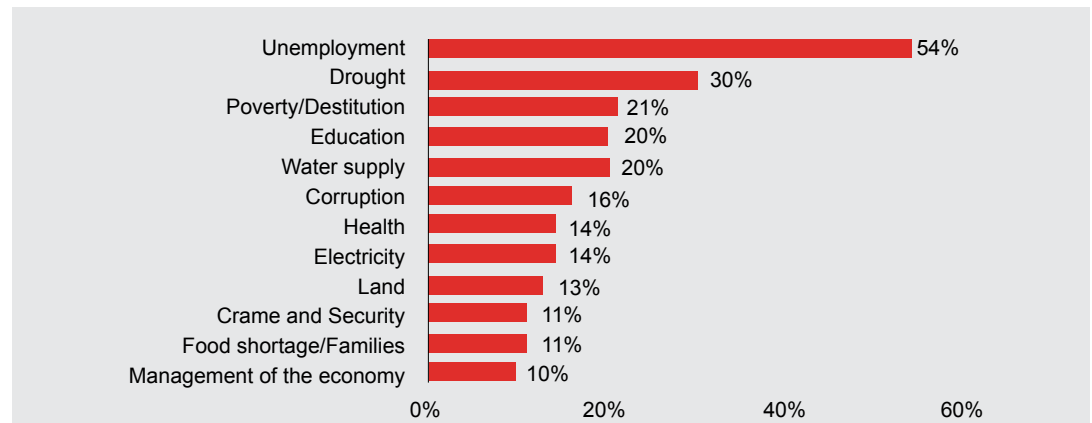
<sup>5</sup> likela, S. 2019. UDF repeats election promises. The Namibian, 29 October 2019. <https://www.namibian.com.na/192423/archive-read/UDF-repeats-election-promises>

<sup>6</sup> ACTION Coalition. 2019.

## What are the BIG 5 issues? *(Afrobarometer data)*

For the purpose of this analysis, we wanted to focus on how the political parties contesting the election promise to address the issues that matter most to the Namibian public. The latest Afrobarometer<sup>7</sup> survey – conducted in August 2019 – provides some insight on what the voting age population considers to be the most important problems facing the country.

According to the survey, the top 5 issues going into the elections include unemployment, the drought situation, poverty/destitution, education, water supply (which for the purpose of this analysis, we will couple with drought), and corruption. These are the five issues that will be explored in this analysis.



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person were recorded)

Before looking at these issues, however, it is worth mentioning that the management of the economy and the issue of land (and concomitantly housing), are critically important issues that have featured heavily in the public discourse over the past five years. In fact, these two topics featured in the top five issues in the 2017 Afrobarometer survey. The land issue has inspired movements such as the Affirmative Repositioning Movement, and the Landless People’s Movement (LPM), which has now become a political party with ‘poverty, land and agrarian reform’ at the top of its agenda.

The land issue is rooted in the dispossession of the land (including ancestral land) of the black population, and the resulting unfair distribution of land between the black and white populations. Commercial farmland – and generally the best farmland, is predominantly in the hands of white Namibians and sometimes foreigners. The willing buyer-willing seller approach, as well as the government’s resettlement programme have not brought about ‘meaningful restitution’; the political elite are perceived to have used their positions to benefit from the resettlement programme, in some cases leaving those who desperately need land for survival at the bottom of a never-ending list; and ancestral land rights and claims remain unaddressed.<sup>8</sup> On top of this, is the issue of urban land. Close to 1 million Namibians – predominantly young – live in the ever-mushrooming informal settlements in cities across the country in often deplorable conditions that are not healthy for their residents. The 2nd Land Conference was held in October 2018 to engage on many of these issues. 40 Resolutions emerged from the conference, but action on most of these resolutions remains to be seen.

The AR and LPM have been strong on placing and keeping these issues on the national agenda, and all the political party manifestos have addressed the issue in some way. Their promises are not captured in this paper, but are certainly worth reading.

A second topic that doesn’t make the Big 5 issues discussed in this paper, is that of the management of the economy. As Hopwood notes, “The last five years have been particularly grim. The economy went into negative growth in the second quarter of 2016 and has not emerged since. The level of public debt as a percentage of GDP has more than doubled since 2014, from 23% to 49%. In the face of this mounting debt, the government has introduced austerity measures rather than try to engineer an economic stimulus. It has washed its hands of responsibility for the troubles, blaming instead a triple whammy

<sup>7</sup> Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice with nationally representative samples. For Round 8 of the survey, the Afrobarometer team in Namibia interviewed 1,200 adult Namibians in August 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Namibia in 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Melber, H. 2018. Namibia’s long-standing land issue remains unresolved. News24, 1 November 2018. <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/namibias-long-standing-land-issue-remains-unresolved-20181101>

of global economic headwinds, declining commodity prices, and a persistent and severe drought.<sup>9</sup> Although we do not explore the economy in this paper, this is a topic with profound consequences on many other aspects of society. Many of the solutions provided on poverty and unemployment overlap with those generally proposed by parties for fixing the economy. It is worth reading the manifestos to see what new ways of thinking offered by the parties.

## A Comparison of Party Positions

### THE BIG ISSUES

- Unemployment
- Drought/Water Supply
  - Poverty
  - Education
  - Corruption

The following pages provide a brief overview of the current state of affairs for each of the 'BIG Issues' noted above, along with a comparison of the promises made by each party on the stated issue. On the whole, there are a number of good ideas collectively contained within the different manifestos, which, if properly implemented, could result in positive change for the country. It is clear that political parties are attuned to the key issues facing the country, as many of them touch - even if only slightly - on the 5 issues that Namibians consider the most important facing the country. However, some of the manifestos simply provide a wish list of changes the party wishes to make, without providing complete clarity on how they would fund their stated initiatives, particularly

in the context of the current economic situation. It is important that voters look out for how their party of choice plans to make the changes that they promise.

As noted earlier, this comparison only includes the manifestos that we were able to access after multiple requests for this information. These included email requests to all political parties, per a list provided by the ECN, as well as in-person requests to all the parties with an office at parliament. In addition to the 7 political party manifestos addressed herein, the manifesto of presidential candidate, Dr. Panduleni Itula, has also been included, due to the fact that other presidential candidates can rely on their political party manifesto to state their objectives.

### Unemployment

As the 2018 Labour Force Survey report notes, "the unemployment rate is widely regarded as one of the key labour market indicators and a good measure for employment creation and participation in economic activities in the country. A lower unemployment rate signifies an economy having the capacity to absorb available people of working age, while a higher rate signifies an economy that is unable to absorb available people of working age."<sup>10</sup> For almost all rounds of the Afrobarometer, unemployment has been rated consistently as the most important problem facing Namibia. Currently, the unemployment rate stands at 33.4%, with youth and women being disproportionately affected (46.1% unemployment for youth, 34.3% unemployment for women)<sup>11</sup>. By all measures, this is an incredibly high unemployment rate, despite variations that exist based on educational background, occupation, sector, employment status and so forth. Furthermore, with the youth so greatly affected by unemployment, and the fact that the youth (Namibians aged 18 to 35) make up just below 50% of voters, it is of vital importance that political parties provide clarity on how they plan to tackle the country's high level of unemployment.

Party	Manifesto Promises regarding UNEMPLOYMENT
APP	The APP manifesto does not have a section specifically dealing with unemployment. However, it does note in other sections that "Our central focus shall be on the youth, with the view of urgently tackling unemployment and radically developing our society"; highlights preferential treatment for children from poor households with regards to educational opportunities and work placements in the public sector upon completion of tertiary education; promises to "Revive and activate all agricultural projects which have been abandoned and neglected by the present government and make sure that they are once again productive and employ many of our people," including employment through the green schemes; and plans to 'secure sector based minimum wage across the board'.

<sup>9</sup> Hopwood, G. 2019. An interesting election in Namibia, at last. 21 November

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019. Labour Force Survey 2018.

Dr. Itula	Independent presidential candidate, Dr. Panduleni Itula, in his manifesto outlines unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, as an issue requiring serious redress. He notes, however, that rather than being too prescriptive about how to address the problem, he will engage youth more directly in order to benefit from their ideas on solving the unemployment crisis, with consultations to create a blueprint for youth empowerment. He also notes that his plans to “launch a major house-building Programme” will “provide employment instantly to many of our youths irrespective of their professions, but especially those emerging from relevant VTC’s courses such as bricklaying, electrician and plumbing. In addition, the unemployed citizenry shall be able to participate in the scheme appropriately remunerated”. Additionally, Itula says he will ensure that “local communities benefit from the local activities”, including through employment, by creating regional hubs. He also promises to revise the fish quota allocation system to allow more Namibians to participate in the sector and to create jobs “through the establishment of regional fish product factories.”
LPM	In its promise to ‘restore our people’s dignity’, LPM highlights addressing unemployment and creating jobs as one of the key points on its agenda. The party states that ‘growth without employment would be a disaster’, and highlights the potential of agricultural projects for job creation. It notes that “Agriculture employs 23% (160 000) of our productive citizens. LPM aims to create a further employment of over 50 000 in this sector by undertaking radical agricultural development strategy.” The party highlights the grape industry – ‘with a capacity to employ 60 000 fulltime and seasonal workers’ – as an area in which a LPM-led government would invest, by increasing domestic participation in the industry. With regards to job creation, the party also proposes an ‘injection into the informal market, development which considers recreation areas, informal markets, SMEs and mixed-use development’.
NUDO	NUDO also lists unemployment amongst its most pressing concerns, and promises to “look at redistribution of wealth and social and economic equity, by creating a welfare state to address health, education and unemployment.”
PDM	Addressing youth unemployment is one of the key promises in the PDM manifesto, which promises to reverse this issue, and ‘shrink unemployment from 28% to below 11%’ (note that current unemployment rate is 33.4%). Perhaps in the most extensive of all the manifestos on this issue, the PDM proposes a fiscal policy that will create a conducive environment for job creation, an economic plan for SMEs to ensure they are able to create more jobs, the introduction of an Unemployment Register in every constituency, and placing a strong focus on factors that will result in improved employability. The PDM also promises to curb youth unemployment by linking business needs and education to ensure that young people have the skills needed in the marketplace, reinstating an apprenticeship model, providing tax incentives for businesses that provide paid internships, easing ‘the transition of youth from school to the world of work’ through employment transition training centers, and addressing issues in the education system to increase the employability of young people – including in encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment. The PDM also highlights various initiatives to improve the employment of women, as well as their ability to create their own enterprises.
SWANU	SWANU highlights youth unemployment as a major issue that the party plans to tackle. It promises to “fast track employment and wealth-creation by creating opportunities for young people to enter the major sectors of the economy, such as the telecommunications, mining and quarrying, fishing, aquaculture, agriculture and other critical sectors,” and to “ensure that the youth take up substantial ownership and control over these economic sectors.” It also promises to create stronger links between educational (including vocational) institutions and industry. The party also notes that it will encourage the formation of cooperatives to address unemployment and spur entrepreneurship.
Swapo	The Swapo party, in a section on the economy and employment creation, commits to “strengthen and develop policies to ensure that capital allocation supports employment and wealth creation, as well as industrialization of the local economy.” With regards to specific interventions aimed at employment creation, amongst other things, Swapo commits to “promote specific youth enterprise development initiatives”, “introduce a sector-specific internship programme in partnership with public and private entities”, introduce incentive schemes for employers to employ young graduates”, strengthen SME development strategies and “encourage the relaxation of stringent work experience requirements for professionally trained youth to facilitate their entry into entry-level positions”. The party also highlights various areas

	– including agriculture, tourism, the blue economy and the mineral sectors – that present key opportunities for employment creation. In this regard, the party commits to support and encourage projects in these areas (e.g. through beneficiation), and to develop the associated infrastructure to allow for these industries to flourish in a way that creates employment and wealth. Importantly, the party also notes that it will develop targeted programmes for creating employment for people living with disabilities.
UDF	UDF's 2014 manifesto acknowledges unemployment as a major issue. It says little, however, about how it plans to address the issue. The only mention in this regard is that "UDF believes that Agriculture is the driving force of Namibia's economic growth and can become one of the largest employment (creators). For this reason, the UDF led government will commit its highest priority to agricultural growth, and create a conducive environment to increase in farming income and rural development to alleviate poverty.

### **Drought/Water Supply**

The ongoing drought has been wreaking havoc across the country, compromising food security for approximately 500,000 Namibians, and creating major challenges for water supply. The President has declared a state of emergency in this regard. Government officials have noted that this is, in fact, the worst drought in 90 years<sup>12</sup>, with "provisional crop harvest an estimated substantial reduction of at least 53% below last season's harvest and over 42% below the 20-year average production"<sup>13</sup>. A report by New Era noted that between October 2018 and July 2019, over 60,000 livestock (including 41,949 cattle, 10,377 sheep, 25,651 goats and 584 donkeys) had perished as a result of the drought, and more losses are still being experienced<sup>14</sup>. Over N\$595 million has been spent on various interventions to deal with the effects of the drought, including food provision, livestock support, and water services.

<b>Party</b>	<b>Manifesto Promises regarding DROUGHT/WATER SUPPLY</b>
APP	The APP states in its manifesto that it will "ensure adequate provisions of water to all areas of the country, including effective utilization of such natural sources such as the northern aquifers and the harvesting of water during peak rainy seasons."
Dr. Itula	With regards to tackling the drought and water supply situation, Dr. Itula states that "We should negotiate with our neighbours to share freshwater resources from, e.g., the Zambezi, the Okavango or the Orange," and that Namibia "should "learn from the development of desalination plants in other countries and plan an infrastructure to utilise efficiently the current resources from dams, boreholes and canals." He also notes the possibility of having to drill for water in the future, quoting research on Cartesian wells.
LPM	LPM states that climate change issues such as desertification, land degradation and drought cannot simply be treated as an emergency issue, given the broader impact for Namibians. The party notes that it will "provide a special Budget Allocation and treat climate change, and clean energy as a 'ministry' on its own and allocate N\$1 billion annually."
NUDO	NUDO highlights 4 key strategies it will adopt to address the water and/or drought situation. The party states that it pledges to "abolish water payment, no farmer under the NUDO government shall pay for water being used for agricultural purposes in order to promote self-sufficiency in Agricultural production." The party notes that it will "champion for climate smart agriculture", "drill boreholes in order to increase water supply", and "build desalination plants and established Green schemes in the Namib Desert."
PDM	PDM states in its manifesto that in order to ensure sustainable water supply, it's strategy will include developing desalination plants along the coast and pumping this water across the country; creating "a cross-water line to pump water into the interior for aggressive agricultural modernization and diversification". PDM also plans to eventually make Namibia a net exporter of water to other SADC countries, "to build dams in all villages to improve catchments and decrease the burden on farmers", and "to pursue the installation of water points not more than 100m from communities to ensure that potable water is within easy reach."

<sup>12</sup> Xinhua News. 2019. Namibia experiencing worst drought in 90 years, says official. 2 October 2019. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/02/c\\_138444404.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/02/c_138444404.htm)

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Nakale, A. 2019. Drought wreaks havoc – over 41 000 cattle perish. New Era Newspaper, 3 October 2019. <https://relief-web.int/report/namibia/drought-wreaks-havoc-over-41-000-cattle-perish>

SWANU	SWANU promises to “invest in constructing desalination plants in the coastal areas and channel purified oceanic water throughout the country.” The party also states that it will “try to reverse the effects of desertification by planting trees, drought resistant shrubs and expanding the green schemes”; and that it will set up a dedicated fund to provide assistance for issues related to natural disasters. SWANU goes on to say that it will “promote rural and urban agriculture to complement strategies aimed at achieving food security and commit resources to explore and invest in the development of new primary water sources.”
Swapo	Swapo’s election manifesto highlights a number of commitments that it will take in order to ensure food security and water supply, in light of the drought situation. Amongst commitments related to water supply, the party states that it will “safeguard Namibia’s ability to regulate in favour of producing its own food at all times”. The party promises to “rehabilitate aging water supply infrastructure” and “develop new national water infrastructure”. Providing some specifics, the party makes a number of commitments to dealing with water supply. These include, amongst others, to: “continue exploration of groundwater extraction from the Karst area to ensure enhanced water supply in the central part of Namibia”, “develop the Omdel and Kuiseb acquifers”, “rehabilitate the Calueque-Oshakati water transfer system”, and to “prioritise the implementation of water desalination projects.”
UDF	No mention is made in the UDF’s manifesto with regards to addressing the drought and/or water supply issues.

**Poverty**

Although Namibia is considered an upper middle income country – one of only eight countries in Africa with this status – it has one of the highest levels of wealth inequality in the world<sup>15</sup>. And although the country has seen major improvements since Independence, much remains to be done. “About 28.7% of the population is poor, while 15% are extremely poor. Poverty is higher in rural (37%) than in urban areas (15%). It is also higher among women (32%) than men (26%).”<sup>16</sup> These poverty statistics are also characterized by the fact that “typically, female headed households, the less educated, larger families, children and the elderly, and laborers in subsistence farming, are particularly prone to poverty.”<sup>17</sup> The high national unemployment rate of 33.4% only exacerbates the poverty situation, in a climate where the majority of those who are employed get by on very little.

The 2017 Namibia Financial Inclusion Survey, for example, shows that 32.5% of the eligible population earn less than N\$1,000 per month, another 29% earn between N\$1,000 and N\$2,000, and only 9.7% earn more than N\$11,000<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, in 2018, according to the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia, “995 000 people are living in shacks in the urban centres of the country. There are 308 informal settlements in Namibia’s urban areas, with about 228 000 shacks.”<sup>19</sup> This state of affairs also raises the issue of access to resources to help curb the poverty situation. The government has implemented a number of measures over the past few years. In fact, poverty reduction/eradication has been a top priority for the Geingob administration, as evident in the Harambee Prosperity Plan and other key documents. Notable efforts have included increases in the old age grant and other grants to vulnerable groups, the establishment of the Food Bank, etc. Tackling poverty remains a key issue on Namibia’s agenda, as is evident from the political party promises noted below.

Party	Manifesto Promises regarding POVERTY
APP	In its bid to eradicate poverty, the APP promises “The introduction of a targeted Basic Income Grant (TBIG) of N\$ 5000-00 for households to be identified, classified and certified as truly poor through established processes and procedures.” It also promises increased grants for orphans and vulnerable children, to streamline the grant distribution system, to support educational programmes and projects that target poor households to improve outcomes for children in poverty, and to subsidise or discount municipal rates for pensioner-led households.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Information Center. 2019. The dilemma of poverty and urban development in Namibia. <https://windhoek.sites.unicnetwork.org/2019/07/04/the-dilemma-of-poverty-and-urban-development-in-namibia/>

<sup>16</sup> UNIC. 2019.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank. 2019. Namibia Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview>

<sup>18</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency. 2018. 2017 Namibia Financial Inclusion Survey (NFIS). <http://finmark.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NFIS-2017-Report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Ngatjheue, C. 2019. Severe poverty still haunts Namibians. The Namibian, 2 August 2019. <https://www.namibian.com.na/191489/archive-read/Severe-poverty-still-haunts-Namibians>



Dr. Itula	Dr. Itula's manifesto does not make any specific promises with regards to poverty reduction, but it does touch on the general environment that needs to be created in order to alleviate poverty. In this regard, his focus lies in fixing the economy. Highlighting energy, water, finance, health, and education as 'the heartbeat of any economy', he states that "Change will require new mechanisms and new objectives. It requires a review of all the major sectors – mining, agriculture, fisheries, tourism and the services sector. It will require investment in infrastructure - roads, electricity, access to digital services, appreciating the Fourth Industrial Revolution and above all housing our people, on their land, with water, sanitation and electricity on hand." Dr. Itula places a strong emphasis on supporting the SME sector, protecting 'unskilled service delivery' (e.g. kapana vendors, taxis, salons) from foreign competition, creating the environment for entrepreneurs to thrive. Other notable points are that health, education and welfare would be identified "as social services to which all citizens are entitled and to which all citizens should have free and READY access."
LPM	LPM believes that "At the core of the under-development and poverty linkages is the role of agriculture in ensuring food self-sufficiency and poverty alleviation for the predominantly rural communities. Land is at the center of rural livelihoods and radical rural economic development." As such, its poverty alleviation approach is centered on land and, essentially, agrarian reform. The party states that an "LPM-led government will advance a radical agrarian reform programme in order to rapidly accelerate Namibia from extensive low productivity to intensive high productivity agriculture." This, it says, would address food security, create employment, promote agricultural entrepreneurship, and support SMEs. The LPM also states that it will "set up a sovereign wealth fund which would capture the bulk of the profits made from fish. This fund could then be used to finance social development or a basic economic right like a Basic Income Grant (BIG)."
NUDO	NUDO's manifesto strongly states that the party 'stands for a social welfare state'. In this regard, it states that the "economy would be centrally planned and essential services like health and education would be free for the citizens of the country." "The NUDO will engage in radical redirection of government spending to prioritise services that will alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities and prepare Namibian citizens for a better future."
PDM	PDM views poverty eradication through the lens of a 'strong, productive and prosperous economy'. The party states that "the development of an inclusive economy where job creation can be realized is an absolute priority. This is about human dignity. We need to get our nation working, to alleviate poverty, redress inequality, empower families and fulfil the rightful aspirations of all our people, especially our young people and future generations." The party proposes a number of important solutions with respect to job creation, land reform, addressing housing needs, ensuring an educational system that will lead to positive outcomes, and so forth. Other interventions on poverty include "supporting single mothers below the poverty line with stipends to give a fair start to children"; "resettling of urban poor on urban land to give equity to the poor and reduce land hunger"; and rolling out "a massive work for labour programme to help put in sewer lines to provide toilets for the urban and rural poor in their life me. We shall work to give every family a single toilet attached to a sewer line."
SWANU	SWANU states that "Only by taking bold and fearless decisions on behalf of our people can we hope to improve their living standards and to eradicate abject poverty." The party promises to tackle poverty by addressing unemployment, especially amongst the youth; ensuring Namibians get more from our natural resources; making 'investment in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) a compulsory pre-condition for all investors in the primary resource sector'; taking strong action on corruption. The party also promises to "undertake a deliberate and comprehensive programme to rehabilitate and to expand the national infrastructure to create a sustainable economy geared towards the delivery of social services to our people."
Swapo	In addressing poverty, the Swapo party recognizes a great need to revitalize the economy, and presents a number of commitments in this regard. It also highlights the importance of inclusive economic growth for employment creation, poverty reduction, reducing inequality and creating shared prosperity. To this end, the party commits to "review the New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF) to address structural weaknesses in the economy, facilitate greater economic empowerment and meaningful participation, and employment creation for our people." It also notes that it will continue to develop the financial sector in order to provide access to finance to the youth, vulnerable groups, women, and SMEs. Other measures include implementing lower electricity rates for low income earners and the elderly, accelerating efforts to supply affordable and decent housing.

UDF	“UDF believes that Agriculture is the driving force of Namibia’s economic growth and can become one of the largest employment (creators). As a result, the UDF led government will commit its highest priority to agricultural growth, and create a conducive environment to increase in farming income and rural development to alleviate poverty.” The party also notes a strong emphasis on the need for high quality education to curb poverty.
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**Education**

Education is key to development. This has been well recognized by government, to date, with education always, and deservedly, receiving a sizeable portion of the budget. According to a 2018 UNICEF report, “over the past decade, the average annual share of education spending of total government expenditure has been 23 per cent, which is slightly higher than the international standard of 20 per cent.”<sup>20</sup> With free education having been instituted at both primary and secondary school level, access to basic education, for the most part, is guaranteed. However, “the quality of education outcomes in Namibia continues to be low – evident in the high repetition rates at the senior-primary and secondary levels, as well as high drop-out rates. So investments are not being reflected in the teaching and learning outcomes, which suggests that there are inefficiencies in education spending.”

With respect to basic education, NDP5 notes that:

“Namibia has made great progress in providing access to education to just over 95% of the student-age population. Nevertheless, the quality of instruction is often unsatisfactory, especially in schools serving poor communities. In 2015, only 45% of Grade 5 students achieved proficiency in English while 63% of Grade 5 students achieved proficiency in Mathematics. Grade 7 students fared even worse with just 48% and 41% achieving proficiency in English and Mathematics respectively. At the secondary level, there are unacceptably high rates of repetition. In Grade 8, 30% of the students repeat the grade. More than one-third of all students drop out by Grade 10.”<sup>21</sup>

Due to high failure rates at the Grade 12 level too, only 19% of Grade 12 students transition from secondary to tertiary institutions<sup>22</sup>.

At the tertiary level, positively, there has been renewed emphasis on Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This is especially important in the current economic climate, given the potential for TVET to respond to industry human resource needs, as well as the potential for graduate to become self-employed. However, both the quality of vocational education and the perception of its value require improvement.

At university level, “the quality and relevance of university education has been a serious concern of both private and public sector employers”<sup>23</sup>, with industry often complaining that university graduates are not well prepared for the workplace. NDP5 best summarises the challenges in tertiary education:

“Access to university education opportunities continues to be low, especially for poor, rural students from marginalised and special needs groups. High drop-out and low graduation rates leads to wasted investment. Access and drop-out rates are often linked to limited funding available to students and lack of student support systems. Further, there is limited infrastructure for quality teaching, research and innovation, including limited access to broadband. There are weak linkages with the labour market, including industry, impacting negatively on relevance of training programmes and employability.”<sup>24</sup>

Education forms an important part of all the party manifestos, which highlight a myriad of ways in which the parties will address the educational needs of the country

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF. 2018. Efficiencies in education spending.  
<sup>21</sup> Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2017. The Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5).  
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>23</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Party	Manifesto Promises regarding EDUCATION
APP	APP states that in addressing education, its approach will be centered on “urgently tackling unemployment and radically developing our society.” The party, which commits to ‘free quality public education system from pre-primary school up to first diploma or degree level at tertiary institutions (University & VTC), highlights a number of interventions it would make. These include: the rapid development of educational infrastructure (universities and schools) countrywide to ensure enough space for scholars and students, specialized locality colleges (e.g. agricultural colleges), investments in IT, communication and entrepreneurship training, the provision of school buses for children walking long distances to school, and attracting lecturers and educational specialists from across the continent to help in teaching and lecturing. The party also states that it would “write off all existing student debt owed to NSFAP by both former and current students.”
Dr. Itula	Dr. Itula highlights education as a service that should be free, readily accessible, and to which all Namibians should be entitled. He calls for a system that is flexible enough to cope with different capacities to learn, so that no one is kept from reaching their potential. His commitments in this regard include the ‘early introduction of subjects such as agriculture’; ‘identification of potential professional orientation of pupils’ being made compulsory across curricula; providing young people with both skills training and academic learning throughout their education; offering pupils opportunities to develop their talents in areas such as sports, music and the arts; and giving education priority in public funding. He also calls for the acceleration of “the development of our own health professionals through education and training”. Among his commitments to the youth, Itula also promises “Non-discriminatory education funding for eligible students to tertiary institutions including vocational institutions.”
LPM	LPM believes that “Quality education should be intensified to address skills shortages, but above all to harness the potentialities in youth social entrepreneurship.” In this regard, the party promises to make strong improvements in the education sector by: ‘re-equipping VTCs, retraining young Namibians who failed Grade 10 in ‘industries of the future’, training youth to become entrepreneurs rather than job-seekers, utilizing the NTA funding for youth training, narrowing skills mismatch, and building additional schools and hostels for primary and secondary schools.’
NUDO	NUDO pledges to “rebuild the Namibian education system” by providing “the right high quality education for every Namibian as a means to both personal growth, knowledge, and to participate in economic and human centred development”, and by “criminalis(ing) all parents who do not take their children to school.” With regards to Early Childhood Development, it promises to “develop a common ECD curriculum focusing on nutrition programmes, book reading and storytelling, and other land based activities to children’s understanding of their surrounding environment”, and to ensure “all ECD practitioners will be employed on a full time basis, with full pay and pension contribution by government.” Other promises include well-funded free Basic education, scholar transport for learners who live more than 5km from their schools, the building of vocational centers in each region, and granting interest-free educational loans to tertiary level students who qualify.
PDM	PDM presents a myriad of strategies for improving the quality and state of education at all levels, with a focus on “ensuring a global, scientific, outcome-focused, knowledge-oriented, accessible, inclusive and student-friendly education system.” (see the manifesto for more). The party promises to “focus on teacher training and capacity building as key factors in achieving the required learning outcomes”; to initiate a National Student Exchange Programme that brings talented young people together from across the country to “instill a culture of lateral thinking and innovation among them”; to establish National Institutes of Teachers Training as “quality teachers lay the foundation of quality learning”; and to better incorporate technology in the classroom. Through the party’s Etungo Komesho programme, it plans to build 100 new schools countrywide and renovate thousands more, as well as to build teachers’ homes for rural schools. PDM also commits to “reviewing and revising the education system, the salary structures associated with teaching staff and most importantly, address the shortfall of faculty and related issues in the country”, “universalizing secondary school education and skills development through functional schools with particular focus on rural and marginalized communities”; providing free tertiary education; providing every learner with a solar laptop; “raising the standard of education and research, so that Namibian universities become at par with the top global universities”; and a host of other initiatives.

SWANU	SWANU promises to invest heavily in early childhood education, which it states is currently 'severely underfunded'. "SWANU of Namibia undertakes to invest in ECD and to provide training to caregivers and parents, as well as offering remuneration to ECD teachers." The party also commits to "improve nutrition at primary schools and expand school feeding programmes through school gardens and expanded agricultural activities at schools"; "enhance health and life skills education"; and provide free sanitary pads to young girls to increase school attendance. At the TVET and tertiary level, the party will "promote an aggressive investment policy in research and development (R&D). It will also increase funding for a functional and well-resourced National Research Council with strong links to Higher Education and TVET." The party also commits to "eliminate all student debt and transform the current system into a formidable agency that administers free scholarships equitably"; to "establish and provide free access to after school centres and encourage adult-learning and life-long learning"; to invest in ICTs, and to "create an Innovation Fund for graduates to carry out post-graduate research in collaboration with industry and other educational institutions at home and abroad and to enable them to start their own businesses."
Swapo	The Swapo party makes nine key commitments to voters on the issue of education. It promises to further "invest in quality education and training at all levels; continue building new schools - including boarding facilities especially in the rural areas; accelerate the maintenance and renovation of school infrastructure in various Regions countrywide; prioritise the training of teachers, including in-service training to improve the quality and output of our education; retain the Scarce Skills and Remoteness Allowance to attract qualified teachers to schools in remote areas; strengthen and expand the National School Feeding Programme to cover more learners; and establish more schools of excellence in other Regions." It also promises to "dedicate more resources towards improving the quality of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) delivery in Namibia; and to pursue vigorous implementation and improvement of the Higher Education Funding Framework, for public Higher Education Institutions."
UDF	With regards to the education system, UDF's (2014) manifesto simply states that the party will ensure "the provision of universal free education from pre-primary to tertiary and vocational skills development. We shall provide accessible, quality education to all Namibians."

## Corruption

In early-November, just weeks before the Presidential and National Assembly elections, Namibia was rocked by an international corruption scandal in the fisheries sector, which saw the resignation of two Ministers – Minister of Justice, Sacky Shanghala and Minister of Fisheries, Bernard Esau<sup>25</sup>. Namibians were not as much surprised by the fact that corruption had taken place, as much as they were taken aback by the extent of it, the amount of money involved, the utter disrespect for the law, the audacity of those implicated, and the clear negative impact it had on the livelihoods of their fellow citizens as revealed in the investigation by *The Namibian* investigative unit, *WikiLeaks*, *Icelandic National Broadcasting Service* (RUV), *Al Jazeera* and the Icelandic daily newspaper *Stundin*.

The timing of the exposure of these Ministers – right before November's elections – ensured more decisive action than what we have seen in the past from the President and the Anti Corruption Commission, which said it had been investigating the matter for the past five years. But Namibians have long been disgruntled with what they perceive to be a lack of action on corruption. According to Afrobarometer and Transparency International (2019), 78% of Namibians think corruption increased in the previous 12 months, 11% who used public services said they had paid a bribe in the previous 12 months, and 65% think that government is doing a bad job of fighting corruption.<sup>26</sup>

Namibia is currently ranked 52nd in the World on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

<sup>25</sup> Kleinfeld, J. 2019. Two Namibian ministers resign following Al Jazeera investigation. Al Jazeera, 14 November 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/namibian-ministers-resign-al-jazeera-investigation-191113161947877.html>

<sup>26</sup> Pring, C., & Vrushi J. 2019. Afrobarometer & Transparency International. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer Africa 2019: Citizens' Views and Experiences of Corruption. [https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2019\\_GCB\\_Africa.pdf](https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2019_GCB_Africa.pdf)

Party	Manifesto Promises regarding CORRUPTION
APP	APP believes that the fight against corruption requires early intervention. The party states that “The conversations should include more of a focus on formal anti-corruption and integrity education issues. Given that almost 50% of the population is under the age of 25, the APP also sees anti-corruption as an issue that needs generational engagement. We propose working to integrate courses on ethics and responsible citizenship into curricula from the primary school level upwards, thereby creating a learning environment that fosters trust and understanding.”
Dr. Itula	Tackling corruption is a big priority in Itula’s manifesto: “Our first priority is to rid us of the incompetence of an administration soaked in corruption and cronyism by a reduction in Ministries and public organisations often duplicating work or not working at all.” He states that an immediate stop needs to be put to the abuse of power; and notes that in employing the public service, the Public Service Commission “must appoint an independent and impartial administration, not prone to cronyism and corruption.” He states that ministerial advisers and professional managers must be appointed on merit; that reforms to processes such as the allocation of fish quotas are needed – i.e. “Fish quotas...shall be revised to allow for the entire public in all regions to benefit from this natural resource through regional quota allocations.”
LPM	LPM’s manifesto states that the party will “dismantle ACC in its current form and establish a new Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) with a commensurate financing, human capital to fund its investigations and operations.” LPM further states that it will table laws “recommending for a life sentence in cases of economic crimes to those in positions responsible for administration and procurement in the public sector and those seconded to serve as board of directors in public enterprises, apart from assets forfeiture.” The party also noted that it will have a “No Revolving Door” policy, prohibiting cabinet members from doing active business. “Failure to declare assets, former business associates and being involved in corruption shall lead to summary dismissal.”
NUDO	“NUDO remains resolute to the zero-tolerance policy on corruption and state capture. NUDO will pass a new legislation that will create a robust Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption law, with hefty punitive measures replacing the toothless current Anti-Corruption Commission Act. Under the new legislation the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Prosecutor General shall report to parliament on a quarterly basis regarding graft and corruption cases.”
PDM	PDM states that action on corruption needs to be “decisive, bold and immediate”, and provides several interventions that the party will champion. Amongst others, the party will “strengthen the investigation and prosecution capacity of the police and increase the number of courts”; “Rationalize and streamline the mandates of anti-corruption institutions i.e. the ACC, remove overlaps and improve efficiency in their operations”; “implement lifestyle audits for senior public servants and employees of SoEs”; and “in addition to hefty sentences of imprisonment, ban politicians who are found guilty of bribery and corruption from standing as candidates in any subsequent election.” The party also states that it will put mechanisms in place to minimize under-expenditure by government, minimize project cost overruns, and to leverage the government’s buying power to get better deals.
SWANU	With regards to corruption, “SWANU of Namibia will overhaul the system by creating a truly independent, transparent and accountable anti-corruption body and provide it with the necessary resources to carry out its duties.” The party goes on to promise that “Under a SWANU of Namibia government those who are suspected of corruption shall be brought before an open and competent court, and if found guilty, will be given a sentence which will serve as a deterrent. Furthermore, if it is established beyond reasonable doubt that the culprit accumulated assets through corrupt practises, such assets shall be forfeited to the state.”
Swapo	In his message at the beginning of the manifesto, the president states “I pledge, on behalf of the leadership and rank and file of the SWAPO Party, that we will pursue a robust and result-oriented programme to fight corruption at all levels.” In this regard, the party promises to “support the implementation of the Strategic and Action Plan to fight corruption; increase human capacity and funding for the ACC; provide for the establishment of a whistleblower protection office that will provide disclosure of improper conduct and protection of whistleblowers; enforce stiffer bail conditions, fines, and sentences for corrupt practices; and ensure speedy finalisation of all pending cases at the ACC.

UDF	The UDF highlights corruption as one of the country’s major challenges, which, amongst other key issues, ‘threatens the peace and stability of the country and the progress of its people’. However, it provides little insight on how it would effectively tackle corruption, only promising ‘an open, transparent and systems-based government.’
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## The Gender Dimension

We would be remiss to discuss the different political party manifestos without shining a light on how gender features in the promises and proposals made by the contesting political parties. An insight on gender is important for a number of important reasons. Firstly, women make up over 50% of our population, and that in itself, is a key reason for broad inclusion. Secondly, in Namibia, and in the world at large, women have historically been left at the margins. Kanengoni describes this as a heritage of inequality and marginalization based on a history of colonization and dispossession in various forms, that has left women at the furthest margins of participation and benefiting from development processes.<sup>27</sup> Thirdly, as the UN notes, empowered girls and women mean healthier families. Empowering women means breaking the cycle of poverty; and it means strengthening economies. There is a high cost to not including women!

In the Namibian context, poverty and inequality is highly feminized. It has been said that the face of poverty in Namibia is that of a rural black woman. This is evident in much of the data. For example, poor and severely poor households are disproportionately headed by women. Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment – with the rate for women at 34.3%, compared to 32.5% for men<sup>28</sup>. More women are in vulnerable employment and informal employment than men. More women are underemployed than men. And on average, for the same work, women earn less than men. Women are also more often than men, disadvantaged when it comes to access to land and housing, finance, leadership positions, etc.

Gender mainstreaming has been stated as an important element of Namibia’s policymaking process – though not always fully considered as ‘gender neutral,’ policies often show themselves to be blind to how key issues differently affect men, women, girls and boys. It is, thus, important to consider how the different parties address gender in their manifestos.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

- UN Women

On the whole, all the political parties considered in this report make at least one mention of ‘women’ in their manifestos, though not all speak to the issue in the broad and detailed terms needed. Most touch on gender based violence as a key issue that needs to be tackled. And many look at the generalities around women’s economic empowerment. Inclusions by each of the parties being analysed follows below:

**APP** – Under its section on Safety and Security, the APP notes that “Women, men, girls and boys often have different safety, security and justice perceptions, experiences and needs that require targeted responses. For example, insecurity and injustice contribute to gender based discrimination and social exclusion as a result of women’s inadequate property rights, unequal access to assets, and discriminatory social norms and power structures.” To this end, the party promises reforms to ensure that both the structure of and the benefits derived from the country’s security institutions are representative and without discrimination. Elsewhere in its manifesto, the party also highlights the establishment of cooperatives to take an active role in value addition of Namibian resources, of which women’s trusts (amongst others) should have ownership. The party also states that it will “Promote gender equality and ethnic diversity in government and SOEs.” Importantly, the APP is the only party that provides a focused look at the LGB-

<sup>27</sup> Kanengoni, A.D. 2017. The State in Southern Africa: A Case for Placing Women at the Centre. In *Towards Democratic Development States in Southern Africa*. Kanyenze, G., & Jauch, H. (eds) (2017). Oxford: African Books Collective.

<sup>28</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency, 2018. Namibia Labour Force Survey 2018.

TIQ community. The party states that “The APP’s position is to champion the cause for gender equality, the rights of people with disability and the LGBTIQ community and supporting the LGBTIQ community to realize their constitutional and human rights.” In this regard, the party makes a number of commitments, including “Ensuring that the LGBTIQ community is protected and accorded the right to exist equally as members of society without discrimination”, and “Expedite the decriminalization process on laws criminalizing individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.”

**LPM** – The LPM manifesto gives special credence to women in its bid for ‘poverty, land and agrarian reform’, with the party stating that and “LPM led government will undertake deliberate programmes targeting women to empower and prioritizing them for land redistribution. Gender equity in land reform is essential.” The party’s manifesto also touches strongly on GBV, noting the importance of education in dealing with GBV. “GBV is deeply rooted in a gender unequal society and LPM shall address the problem at its root. LPM will roll out and implement programmes, which focus on education around gender equality in schools, vocational training centers, and universities. LPM will ensure that GBV education permeates the curriculum at early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.” LPM’s additional interventions on GBV are stated as follows: “There is also evidence of inadequate policing and enforcement of existing laws. LPM shall train police, specializing in dealing with GBV crimes. LPM will build GBV safekeeping houses in all regions/provinces. Social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists will be specifically trained to counsel those affected by GBV and provide ongoing support at these safekeeping homes to minimize or prevent the lasting effects of trauma. Civil society organisations are deemed necessary partners in combating GBV and shall be accorded a leading role in a shared responsibility. LPM government shall allocate N\$1 billion towards the fight against GBV in the next five years.”

**NUDO** – In its section on ‘Women Empowerment and Gender’, NUDO promises four things: (1) Woman shall be appointed in executive positions on a 50-50 basis. (2) 20 % of the procurement budgets, products shall be sourced from woman owned businesses. (3) NUDO will provide collateral free microfinance for women entrepreneurs; and (4) NUDO government will strengthen woman, the disabled and orphans access to property and land rights. It worth mentioning that NUDO is the only party fielding a female candidate for the presidential election.

**PDM** – PDM dedicates 2.5 pages of its manifesto to discussing ‘Gender Equality and a Dignified, Fair System’, and recognizing that “women still bear the brunt of poverty, infringements of their rights as humans through violence and rape, remaining on the fringes of the economy” and that “Our country has become a dangerous space for women and children to live in”, the party lays out a number of solutions. Amongst others, the party promises to “roll-out free sanitary pads to vulnerable girls in all regions”; “increase financial support to Gender Equality Organizations and Commissions”; create special courts to deal with Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and have specially-trained police officers to deal with GBV to be available at all police stations; “a gender equality module as part of the school curriculum”; “educational programmes to address issues of corrective rape and the establishment of a task team on LGBTIQA as a new area of focus”; “the prioritization of rural women and youth in land redistribution and acquisition”; and “the creation and implementation of a Service Charter for Victims of Crime (Victims Charter)”. The party also presents a number of strategies with regards to how it will ‘accelerate women’s economic empowerment and social protection’ and ensure a dignified life for Namibia women. Under its section on health, PDM also promises to “provide 4-wheeled motorcycles to service rural villagers and transport pregnant women to clinics as is done successfully in Uganda and many parts of the world”; and under Agriculture, it touches on supporting women farmers.

**SWANU** – SWANU addresses the issue of GBV in its manifesto, and states that it “will undertake comprehensive reforms of the criminal justice system with a view to making Namibia a more humane society of equals.” It also promises tougher sentencing for these crimes. Under its education commitments, SWANU also promises to provide free sanitary pads to girls, as a means of increasing their school attendance.

**SWAPO** – The Swapo party manifesto also has a dedicated section on Women and Children. The party outlines several different commitments in this section, with the key theme being combating violence. Amongst them: “Consolidate programmes to accelerate equitable economic empowerment of women and the youth; Provide teenage-friendly environments at public health centres and clinics; Further roll out awareness campaigns and educational programmes regarding reproductive health, including teenage pregnancies and family planning in order to reduce teenage pregnancies by 30% by the year 2025; Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to respond timely and effectively to incidents of

GBV; Establish Gender Based Violence Protection Units in remaining urban centres; Establish more safe houses in the Regions and Magisterial Districts; Accelerate the review of the Combating of Domestic Violence Act of 2003 to improve the efficacy of the protection orders and strengthen the language of other provisions in the Act, especially those related to illicit drugs, alcohol abuse by underage children and teenage pregnancies.” The party also commits to “Introduce anger management and counselling programmes at schools and communities to reduce incidences of gender-based violence; Initiate identification and raise awareness of potentially harmful traditional and cultural practices, which impede the fight against gender-based violence and teenage pregnancies to inform future legislation; the improvement of policies and legislation to enable working mothers and their family to feel more protected in cases of maternity; and to foster a conducive environment for women empowerment.”

**UDF** – In its manifesto, UDF states that it “wants to change the political landscape of our country by transforming the relationship between government and people. It is here to build trust between the government and the electorate.” In this respect, UDF lists 13 pledges to the electorate, with one of them being “the involvement of women”.

**Dr. Itula** – The manifesto of the independent presidential candidate highlights the participation of women in the decision-making process, through the vote, as important. “For our women it is their defence against socio-economic violence and a pathway to socio-economic empowerment.” He states that the resources that will be freed up from his proposed reforms to the government’s administrative system will, amongst other things, go towards empowering the youth and women. “We will prioritise the development and opportunities of all citizens, including access to land, especially for the youth, women and veterans, development of enterprise and free access to health and education services.”

## Social media & Elections

As noted earlier, with such a large voting youth population (52% of the registered voters are Millennials, and almost 30% are Born Frees), it is important that political parties engage with them using the platforms that they most interact on. Importantly – especially for smaller opposition parties with fewer resources, social media can serve as a great platform to reach a broad, young audience. Beyond engaging the youth, however, social media provides political parties with a free/low cost medium to convey its message, and, if used creatively, to spur discourse on the issues that it considers important. LPM, PDM, Swapo, and the Independent Presidential Candidate Dr. Panduleni Itula all have a strong social media presence – keeping their followers updated on their activities and on their views, and directly engaging with Namibians (particularly young Namibians), on the whole. The excerpt below from an IPPR publication on the 2014 election, remains ever relevant in highlighting the opportunities that exist with social media<sup>29</sup>:

Opposition parties in Africa have struggled for decades in media environments that favour incumbents. In Namibia, this has often been a subject of contention, with complaints from opposition parties and civil society alike, of Swapo receiving greater media airtime and coverage than the opposition, particularly in the state-owned media.

With this state of affairs, it is important that in addition to advocating for a greater space in media coverage, opposition parties claim a voice of their own in other ways. Social media can serve as one of these mechanisms. At no cost (depending on the level of advertising chosen on the various social media platforms), parties can communicate their standpoints, their manifestos, and the ways in which they will address national challenges through social media. By keeping their websites active and up-to-date, they can also provide this critical information to facilitate voters’ decision-making. Using relatively (compared to print and broadcast) low-cost advertising techniques, they can also engage audiences beyond their followers, and may introduce topics that could be taken up by other mainstream media.

By being strategic and innovative in their use of social media (whilst remaining focused on increasing their media coverage in other media), parties can claim a stronger voice in communicating their positions with the electorate.

<sup>29</sup> Institute for Public Policy Research. 2014. Social Media and Namibian Elections: Is Namibian politics keeping up with the times? IPPR Election Watch, Issue No. 5, 2014.



Party	Website	Social Media Presence
All People's Party (APP)	www.app.org.na	None
Christian Democratic Voice Party (CDV)	No website	None
Congress of Democrats (CoD)	No website	None
Landless People's Movement (LPM)	No website	<b>FB:</b> Landless People's Movement - Political Party <b>Twitter:</b> @lpm_namibia
Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF)	No website	<b>FB:</b> Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters
Namibia Patriotic Front (NPF)	No website	None
National Democratic Party of Namibia (NDP)	No website	None
National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO)	No website	<b>FB:</b> NUDO of Namibia Party <b>Twitter:</b> @NUDOParty
Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)	www.pdmnamibia.org	<b>Twitter:</b> @mvenaani <b>Twitter:</b> @PDMNamibia
Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP)	www.rdp.org.na	<b>FB:</b> @RallyForDemocracyAndProgress <b>Twitter:</b> @RDPNamibia
Republican Party of Namibia (RP)	No website	-
SWANU	No website	<b>FB:</b> SWANU of Namibia <b>Twitter:</b> @SWANU_Namibia (last updated in 2014)
SWAPO	www.swapoparty.org	<b>FB:</b> SWAPO Party of Namibia <b>Twitter:</b> @hagegeingob <b>Twitter:</b> @SWAPONamibia
United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)	No website	<b>FB:</b> UDF Party of Namibia <b>Twitter:</b> @UDFyouthleague
Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP)	No website	None
Dr Panduleni Itula – Independent Presidential Candidate	No website	<b>FB:</b> @DrItula <b>Twitter:</b> @dr_itula

## Political Parties' Vision for Namibia

The table below presents direct excerpts from *Spot the Difference* – a publication by NID, HSF and NMH. The publication compares the various contesting political parties' positions on various issues, and highlights their background, party principles, messages for voters (specifically the youth). This table highlights the different parties' Vision for Namibia. Note that CDV and RDP are not included in this table as they did not respond to the authors' requests for information. NPF is also not included.

Party	Vision for Namibia
All People's Party (APP)	Our resolve is to courageously and energetically address the central questions of our current time in history, seeking answers that will create a fair and just redistribution of wealth as well as fair and equal opportunities for all Namibians. These ends, we believe, can only be brought about by a total change and departure from the way our country is currently governed, towards a more radical, people-centred approach to governance.
Congress of Democrats (CoD)	National economic policy needs serious consideration and should prohibit the employment of foreign, unskilled workers. We will craft a free education policy that ensures free and compulsory education for all Namibian children below the age of 18. We will also advocate for an improved health and welfare system by introducing total and comprehensive access to health and medical facilities for all citizens, be they private or state-owned. We will also establish a comprehensive medical-aid and pension system that will include not only government employees, but also other public workers.
Landless People's Movement (LPM)	Unlike the National Development Plans, numbers 1 to 5, which did not establish much, the LPM will address and redress challenges confronting Namibian manufacturing and value-addition of exports in its first term of governance. LPM envisages young, capable leaders who will implement policies reworked by LPM strategists and economists that will enable a multi-pronged, state-led development of our people and economy. The days of suitcase tenderpreneurs and bailed out of SOEs are over in Namibia. LPM, through many caucuses, group-meetings, and discussion with consultants have decided to remove certain positions that interfere in the political process, such as the Ombudsman and the Public Protector.
Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF)	Our short-term vision is to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor by sharing Namibian wealth equally, burying corruption and self-enrichment and doing away with unemployment by creating more job opportunities. Our long-term vision is to grow Namibia's economy in order to meet the basic human needs of our people. Policies that are pro-economic growth will be put in place to raise the standard of living for all Namibians.
National Democratic Party of Namibia (NDP)	Our task is to present a clear vision of where we are, what we do, and what our target goals are. The long-term vision is to accomplish forestry plantation in the northern and southern parts of Namibia in order to save livestock and people, ensure food security and create jobs. The short-term vision is to create a developmental framework through our party manifesto.
National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO)	Due to a prevailing need for change, a window is open, making our party, NUDO, a viable alternative as the leading party for the masses. With a female leader, NUDO will ensure that youth will have top positions in our leadership structure, a fact that will set us apart from other parties. In addition, NUDO is the only party in Namibia that advocates on behalf of the genocide and repatriation issues, instilling hope in the descendants of affected communities and resurrecting the question of ancestral land. NUDO also entered the motion in Parliament that prompted the appointment of the Special Envoy, despite the party's strong reservations regarding the envoy's specific role. Our short-term vision entails tolerance of diversity, humanistic economic reform, quality healthcare and welfare for all, job creation and skills development, nationalisation of extractive industries, housing and restoration of family values, and respect for the rule of law. Our long term vision encompasses peace and stability, economic prosperity and industrialisation.

Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)	It is a well known fact that this country is semi-arid with very limited water resources, which also faces various climatic challenges influenced by climate change. Our task is to revolutionise Namibia by making our country a hub for renewable energy, harnessing solar and wind energy and by supporting the education of young scientists who will develop uniquely Namibian responses to its energy and water-supply related challenges. Home owners will be encouraged to sell unused energy to the grid at the same time providing storage facilities. It is our plan to fashion a stronger Namibia by building a stronger economy, stronger communities, cleaner environments and more modernised infrastructure.
Republican Party of Namibia (RP)	The RP's overarching vision for Namibia is to help Namibians believe in themselves, in the first instance, to see themselves as the only people who can develop this country. Although investors can assist the country to move forward, if we depend solely upon them to develop, they will easily turn us into "a schizophrenic nation that does not know whether it is coming or going." Putting it simply, our population is slightly over two million people; we could reach each and every Namibian within a span of five years with a single, powerful and uniting idea, that we are one nation, not a collection of communities quarrelling under party flags and symbols. In the short term, we should embrace the same symbols for the nation. In the medium term we should overhaul the education system and place it in trustworthy hands, ensuring that our children are properly prepared to enter the labour market, and are able to meet the challenges our country faces. Long-term focus should aim to transform Namibia into a distinct, economic-development hub, capable of stimulating growth in every region, so that people will not be compelled to leave their traditional homes and their families with the false hope that the capital city will offer them a better life.
SWANU	Our vision is to win both elections in the National Assembly and to secure seats in the National Council. Our short-term vision is to establish industries in order to reduce dependency on imports and to add value to our raw materials such as granite, timber, charcoal, salt, limestone, fishmeal, dairy products, minerals, meat and meat products by transporting them to other countries. Our long-term vision is to make Namibia a self-reliant welfare state with a socialised economy.
SWAPO	SWAPO has always had the development agenda of Namibia as its core focus, hence development plans such as Vision 2030. We have come a long way as a developing nation and our growth demonstrates that Namibia is on a trajectory that ranks us an upper-middle income country. Yes, inequality still exists on many levels, however this fact does not overshadow the reality that Namibia today is highly developed in comparison to the Namibia of 1990. Our vision as a party for the development of our country is best captured by our political ideology, which affirms 'socialism with Namibian characteristics'. It is important to understand that this means that socialism, as it is commonly understood, will now be customised to fit the Namibian context. We believe this goal will be possible to achieve as our 'Namibian characteristics' include open-market principles and techniques to develop the Namibian economy. Our ideology is underpinned by the principles of social justice, economic inclusion and shared prosperity and responsibility in which the state plays a significant role through the ownership of the means of production, such as land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. Therefore, our ideology is a means to advance political, economic and social empowerment of all Namibians as well as protect and sustain the environment and ecological systems of our country.
United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)	Firstly, we would mobilise, influence, inspire and convince the Namibian people, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion or economic status, to join the UDF Party as an alternative and independent political home in Namibia, and to vote to bring it to power. Secondly, we would fight for equal rights and equal treatment, socio-economic freedom, alleviation of poverty, reduction of unemployment and prevention of crime for all Namibians, regardless of their political affiliation, gender, ethnicity, religious denomination or economic status, as an independent political party in Namibia.
Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP)	If society cannot succeed in organising itself against the ravages of international capital introduced through this comprador state, it will socially disintegrate and face a deepening crisis of extreme poverty and human degradation.

Spot the Difference may be accessed on NID's website: <https://www.nid.org.na>

## About the Author

**Nangula Shejvali** is an IPPR Research Associate, whose work is focussed on democratic governance, elections and gender equality. She holds a Masters in Business from Virginia Commonwealth University.

## About Democracy Report

Democracy Report is a project of the IPPR which analyses and disseminates information relating to the legislative agenda of Namibia's Parliament. The project aims to promote public participation in debates concerning the work of Parliament by publishing regular analyses of legislation and other issues before the National Assembly and the National Council. Democracy Report is funded by the Embassy of Finland.

## About IPPR

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues that affect development in Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research.



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Directors: M M C Koep, D Motinga, N Nghipondoka-Robiati, J Ellis, G Hopwood (ex-officio)

PO Box 6566, Ausspannplatz, Windhoek, Namibia · Tel: +264 61 240514/5 Fax +264 61 240516  
info@ippr.org.na · www.ippr.org.na