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**The Significance of Civil Society for Development Cooperation with  
Namibia**

Report to the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development  
(abridged English version)

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## Executive Summary

Civil society in Namibia has a long and distinguished history dating back to the liberation struggle.

After independence, civil society was boosted by enthusiasm and foreign funding streaming in. With finance turning more difficult, as well as authoritarian tendencies in government, civil society activity in Namibia subsided considerably since about the mid-1990s.

Lately, leading civil society bodies themselves acknowledge constraints that force them to take up government work besides continuing to act as a counterweight to the state.

The tension between civil society acting as a subsidiary to the state on the one hand, and of civil society acting as a counterweight or functional opposition on the other, is pervasive in our study of Namibian civil society.

Our typology of civil society bodies in Namibia shows (1) a range of self-organising bodies, ranging from small informal, local groups articulating ad-hoc issues to larger consolidated organisations such as trade unions; (2) advocacy groups that take up social issues and mostly also provide advice to affected groups and carry out relevant research; (3) social and caritative service providers; (4) bodies that address specifically environmental issues and often are related to relevant CBOs; (5) umbrella organisations that under various premises bring together civil society bodies and/or provide specific assistance to them.

An important dimension concerns finance. With the significant exception of organisations that are largely made up by German speakers and fall under 'self-organisation', dependence on external finance is a pervasive problem for all civil society bodies that act on a more permanent basis. This issue is exacerbated by Namibia's status as a middle-income country which has caused donors to retract former support.

Looking at co-operation specifically with Germany, the role of German political foundations active in Namibia is highlighted.

Recommendations include

- the importance of advocacy and self-organisation;
- the further role of German political foundations working with a range of civil society actors in full cognizance of the paramount importance of Namibian ownership;
- the need to strengthen internal funding in Namibia, tackling the issues of extreme social inequality also from the side of responsibility of the privileged elite;
- the need for capacity building for civil society actors in the fields of organisation, administration, and finance.

*Preface: The present text is an abridged version of a report to the German Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development. It therefore reflects in some parts the perspective of German development co-operation. Relevant research was carried out mainly in the years of 2013-2015, and in some points, the text also reflects specifically this time period. We believe, however, that the trends and issues identified are still of great relevance today.*

## **1. Historical and political development**

Civil society activities in Namibia date back before independence. These included rising protest against Apartheid as well as aid for victims of racial discrimination. SWAPO also has its roots in civil society, but with the unfolding and militarisation of the liberation struggle, took on proto-state features. Especially after UN recognition as the sole representative of the Namibian people in 1978, SWAPO has been both a state in the making and a civil society coalition. It linked up with the burgeoning trade unions and women's movement.

While Eastern Bloc countries supported SWAPO directly, western states tended to channel aid through civil society bodies, in particular through the churches, which in their great majority, were friendly to SWAPO. This relationship was not without its contradictions, but for the churches, the experience of the Prophetic Church (Kameeta 1990) has remained a provocative spurn, also in the face of post-independence tendencies towards co-optation.

Before independence, civil society activities were not limited to the Northern 'war zone'. During the conflictual transition period of the 1980s, a broad range of civil society organisations sprang up (Strauss 1990). Social movement started in close alliance with SWAPO, think of the Walvis Bay strikes from 1971 onwards, which signalled a new departure in trade unionism for all of Southern Africa. In the 1980s, the women's movement came forward, partly as independent initiatives, partly closely aligned to SWAPO (Becker 1993: Kap. 5).

The independence process 1989/90, introducing a democratic regime and guaranteeing civic rights, signalled to civil society an untrammelled right of existence, opening a wide field of activity. Bodies that had been hindered under South African rule could now develop swiftly and were funded generously by international donors with a view to an exemplary experience of democratic development. During the first decade of independence, up to 600 civil society associations came into existence and were organised under the umbrella of NANGOF.

This post-independence flowering of civil society activities was followed closely by a palpable decline. This was caused by a step-by-step decrease of international funding, and also of the number of well-paid international advisers. Moreover, a lot of erstwhile activists were attracted by well-paid positions in the government apparatus and in parastatal and private enterprises. In addition, the SWAPO leadership, once having secured the reins of power, showed a pre-occupation with 'national unity' which went along with authoritarian tendencies. Thus, the first President, Sam Nujoma (1990-2005) responded harshly at times to criticism or to admonishments about Good Governance. A wide spread atmosphere of fear

and subservience also influenced civil society. The churches lost their former significance and in some quarters grappled only later to regain their Prophetic voice.

Along with increasing control and de-politisation of civil society groups went a retreat towards the embracing of ethnic identities. The SWAPO government followed a policy of placing their own cadres into positions of power,<sup>1</sup> and this took on a clearly ethnic hue, since most of the trusted cadres and deserving members were Owambo.

In the face of this development, it was a moot question at best whether the forms of mobilisation that the leading cadres stood for or a western understanding of democracy were indeed viable in the Namibian situation. Moreover, youthful 'born frees' could not be expected as a matter of course to show commitment in the spirit of the liberation struggle and might be more susceptible to the exigencies of job hunting or the attractions of consumer culture.

In this way, the focus of civil society activities has shifted and been subject to a slow process of depoliticization. Most civil society associations had to come to terms with government policies, rather than continuing in their role as a critical counterpart. The field of social and caritative work has gained in importance, and much of civil society has re-emerged in the role of a subsidiary and complementary service provider, to relieve the state of some of its central tasks in the social field. In particular, NGOs in the health, welfare and training sectors (see list) are closely bound up with official government policy. This goes along with dependence on government which undermines self-determination and self-organisation as well as members' willingness for active participation. Nevertheless, small and active groups raise their voices in critical situations, such as in the debate on the government's Research Guidelines from 2014 onwards, The Guidelines were feared to stifle open debate and met dogged resistance under the leadership of LAC and IPPR. This experience underlines the presence of a small, but active and perseverant core of advocacy groups.

Further, a closer look suggests that the decline of organised civil society does not necessarily point to a lack of interest for civil society commitment. Such commitment seems focused more on informal activities below the threshold of registered organised bodies. This is true of economic self-help groups which carry on neighbourhood assistance along the lines of the Stockveld principle, but also for political protest in particular by young people on the basis of spontaneous action and ad hoc organisation.

- Civil society in Namibia  
*Networks and grassroots organisation*

From the end of 2013 onwards, Namibia has witnessed a row of dramatic social mobilisations. These include demonstrations against the plans of a new parliament building January 2014, sparked by the contrast between mass poverty and expensive government buildings. Here, mobilisation employed social networks, in particular SMS, i.e. an almost

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<sup>1</sup> Zur Funktionsweise des "deployment" s. Southall 2013: 134ff, 267ff.

intangible network which could attract considerable attention for a particular issue. To be sure, this is on the basis of continuous grassroots activity, and activists are groomed by the Young Leadership Programme under the auspices of FES.

Demonstrations in 2014/15 of grassroots organisations in Katutura and !Nami≠Nūs (Lüderitz) referred, in various ways, to formal politics – on the one hand with the idea of contesting the upcoming local elections, on the other by conspicuously burning voter registration cards. Both forms of unmistakable protest spurred strong responses with General Secretary Nangolo Mbumba threatening exclusion from SWAPO and President Hifikipunye Pohamba claiming that SWAPO was not in need of the votes of the protesters.

A much more sustained drive was signaled in late 2014 with the advent of Affirmative Repositioning (AR), stemming from a tendency within Swapo Youth League. Their demands revolve around the land question, which however is articulated not so much in terms of the still unresolved issue of agrarian reform, but as an urban issue with the quest for building plots at an affordable price. Initial mobilisation with the occupation of plots in the well-to-do Windhoek neighbourhood of Kleine Kuppe was enhanced, in 2015, with a campaign to apply for building sites. This mass action amounted to openly challenging the government. The impending confrontation was averted by an unprecedented move by President Hage Geingob to meet the leaders of the movement.

### *Self-organisation*

Self-organisation refers to the formation of an organisation with a view to convey members' own concerns to the public, and to reach a hearing and recognition. In Namibia, this applies in particular to combatting poverty. Groups of persons who intend to mutually support each other coalesce below the threshold of registration. Objectives are mostly of an economic and social nature. The group grants their members loans to cover costs for urgent needs or investments, for school fees and family events such as weddings and burials. This arrangement hinges on a fund which has been raised by the group through periodic membership payments and which is used as a revolving fund in support of members. Such an informal community project will only be viable so long as all members will profit from the loan in the order agreed upon, and when all loans are paid back according to a pre-ordained agreement. This requires considerable social pressure and control, which is why members, particularly in urban settings, tend to be from only one ethnic group. Women who usually are responsible for children and families are disproportionately represented.

A formalised version of this self-help approach is **Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia** (SDFN). They aim for combatting the shortage of urban living space, and today span the whole of Namibia with a network of saving societies. In 1998, SDFN has aligned Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG) to offer cheap housing for low-income groups as a NGO. This organisation approach also forms an important reference for AR2. This special organisational form of a building cooperative stems from an informal settlement community. By now, Shack Dwellers Federations are found in several African states and with

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iied.org/namibias-women-lead-way-housing-development#.VfKrPxeRtWA.email> (13.10.2105)

international aid, has professionalised. In Namibia, there are over 10,000 members in 600 groups spread over the entire country.

An exemplary expression and result of *self-organisation* is the small feminist NGO *Sister Namibia* which was formed in 1989 by a group of women who saw the need for a feminist voice in the Namibian transition process. The springboard was formed by the still existing, evenly named journal (Becker 1993: 249-51). This is complemented by educational events and activities in schools. Issues such as information on sexual and reproductive health and related rights as well as conflict management figure prominently. In 2014, publicly recognised urgency of these problems had resulted in a coalition with UNAIDS, MISA and "victims to survivors" besides *Sister* at the core. In terms of violence, rights and problems faced by homosexuals play an important role, clearly at variance to the stance of the line ministry. Here also, work in schools, above all rural ones is important and is partnered with i.a. Catholic AIDS Action and Positive Vibes.

The small group *Breaking the Wall of Silence* (BSW) is a very specific example of self-organisation on the basis of joint concerns. These are survivors of the anti-spy campaign staged by SWAPO in the 1980s who were subjected to severe human rights violations. Founded in 1996, this NGO acts publicly only sporadically today, due to lack of finance. As is true of quite a few other NGOs as well, the continued existence of BSW is largely thanks to the efforts of a single person, national coordinator Pauline Dempers. At the same time, BSW has for some time pursued the project of a Namibian Coalition on Transitional Justice, which however got stuck after promising beginnings.

Trade unions represent a much higher degree of organisation (Delgado & Jauch 2014). Over the last few years, Namibian unions have seen considerable differentiation, with by now three competing federations. Of these, one body, NUNW, is closely aligned to SWAPO, while the other two stress their independence. After fission, new trade union formations have demonstrated the advantages of their newly secured autonomy. Further, waves of unofficial strikes have shown a considerable quest for self-organised articulation of interest by workers and an increasing unease about tutelage by the party and the dependent position of the NUNW.

In Namibia, a special form of self-organising NGO is of considerable importance, associations of German speakers which are under the umbrella of the German Cultural Council (*Deutscher Kulturrat*). A core component of the Kulturrat are the school societies which were organised shortly after the beginning of the South African mandate in the 1920s when the establishment of a new colonial power was seen as a menace for the identity of German speaking settlers (Eberhardt 2007: 62ff). To this day, the main issue remains language. For the passing on of language as well as of cultural values, school education is important, and from this perspective the strong commitment in these bodies seems understandable. Around school societies further activities have crystallised into an extensive network of associations (including e.g. carnival societies), which have in turn become hubs of an ethnically defined social life. One problematic consequence is the strong tendency to keep this life separate from the rest of society. Also here, language is important. In this way, the intense civil society activity to be observed among the great majority of German speakers

works to reproduce the divides which have not seriously changed since the times of Apartheid.

Self-organisation for advancing cultural interests is visible in the Scientific Societies (*Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaften*) in Windhoek and Swakopmund. While founded as a trilingual body in 1925, the German speaking element has always been strong and has gained in significance after World War II. This is also reflected in the international networks. The Scientific Society in Windhoek has opened up in recent years and today offers quite a few English language events. Historically, the Scientific Society as substituted important state functions, ranging from research and libraries through museums and public education, with an ambit that clearly reflected segregation under colonial and Apartheid dispensations. Some of these functions have been supplanted successively as state institutions have been created. Still, both societies enjoy considerable resource endowments, including libraries, museums, collections and buildings; they run extensive lecture programmes and considerable publishing ventures. The Windhoek society, in any case, is in a position to finance this work from membership fees, book selling and endowments. In addition, a number of donors continue to play important roles, and there have always been various forms of state funding. This has taken different forms and since independence, mainly consisted of project oriented grants

- **Advocacy**

Organisations focusing on advocacy show a clearly different profile from self-organisation. One of the oldest and most vociferous advocacy groups is Namrights, an NGO that evolved from the Namibian Society of Human Rights. With its quite considerable means, Namrights has for many years played an important role in unravelling scandals that impacted upon human rights, such as after the discovery of mass graves in the North of the country. A further important topic, relentlessly pursued by Namrights has been the drawn out high treason trial against supposed secessionist from the Caprivi (Zambezi)-Region. This important work, however, cannot disguise the problem that most activities are centred on a single person. Unquestionably, Phil ya Nangholo, the ‘face‘ and main actor of Namrights, has again and again overcome, with commendable personal courage and huge commitment, many criticisms, not only from the ranks of SWAPO. In any case, the importance of the *muckraker* should not be underestimated as a necessary corrective in particular in the face of a ruling party that enjoys a tremendous parliamentary majority and has been seen as hard to control.

For the everyday dealings of many underprivileged, but also for vital developments in a public debate about norms and values, the most important *advocacy* NGO is arguably the *Legal Assistance Centre* (LAC). According to its self-representation,<sup>3</sup> LAC focuses on the areas of litigation; information and counselling; education and training; research; and law reform and advocacy. In this, LAC officially emphasises four projects: human rights and constitution; gender research and advocacy; land, environment and development; and legal issues connected with HIV/AIDS. Land and environment encompasses issues of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) as well as specific problems faced by San.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lac.org.na/> (29.1.2017)

For many years, LAC has been an important voice within a civil society which formed a counterweight to government and the state.

Due to its changed financial situation, LAC sees itself meanwhile in greater dependency from government assignments and thus as moved towards more co-operation with the state. Nevertheless, in 2014, LAC together with IPPR (*infra*) was instrumental to challenge the research regulations envisaged by the government, which were feared to greatly hamper scientific research. Together with NANGOF, the two NGOs have acted here as an effective counterweight to state and government. Also in, for instance, LAC's work in representing Hai//om in their fight for traditional rights in Etosha national park points towards a dual role as a service provider 'doing the work of the state' and further pursuing its advocacy and watchdog function.

The *Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR)* focuses on the continuous analysis of political key problems such as economic and financial policy or the on-going research associated with AfroBarometer, as a vital tool of public opinion research in Namibia. This is complemented by lively publication activities, including such important contributions as *Guide to the Namibian Economy* (Robin Sherbourne) or *Guide to Namibian Politics* (Graham Hopwood). Besides, IPPR intervenes quite regularly into political issues and attains presence in national media. Financially, IPPR relies mostly on external project funding. In contradistinction to LAC, IPPR does not engage in immediate counselling.

The trajectories of the last named NGOs underscores the dependency of vital areas of civil society from funding agencies – including these agencies' strategy – as well as from the presence and commitment of specific persons in decisive roles.

- ***Advocacy, research and advice***

A different profile again is found in *Labour Ressource and Research Institute (LaRRI)* which combines a clear commitment and public positioning especially in industrial relations and social policy with project based research in these areas. This basic profile has led to close connections with trade unions and also participation in the alliance for a basic income grant (*BIG Alliance*), where LaRRI contributed instrumentally to research into the BIG pilot project in Omitara-Otjivero. To this is added educational work aimed specifically at the needs of wage workers.

- ***Social and caritative services***

The largest sector of NGOs in Namibia (45%) is active in social and caritative work, mainly in the health sector. Inevitably, the dimension of service provision and subsidiarity to the state apparatus takes centre stage here, with much lesser emphasis on critical perspectives regarding state activities. Still, certain issues, such as HIV/AIDS also provoke such positioning.

The *Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments of Namibia (CLASH)* has a strong caritative orientation, serving children with hearing impairments. Activities include help in the provision of hearing aids, instruction in sign language as well as



other ways to integrate affected children. Besides a kindergarten in Khomasdal, these aims are pursued by tests administered in schools and by providing training for teachers and parents in particular in the Northern regions where hearing problems in children are more prevalent. The adaptation of hearing aids, often procured through connections in Germany, is secured by personal relationship with local firms.

The high prevalence of *HIV/AIDS* in Namibia, more than 30%, has fostered activity of many groups linked to diverse agencies and donors. German development co-operation treats *HIV/AIDS* as a general issue which should be addressed in all projects, with specific attention to the Northern regions. The main donor is the private Global Fund which works with a number of NGOs. *NANASO* is a large network which strives to raise awareness through public campaigning, to generate finance via donations, and to provide counselling for member organisations. On the government side, partners are the Ministry of Health (paying 60% of medication) and the Ministry of Youth, which addresses infected youth via youth centres.

- *CBO in environmental issues*

Activities related to the environment are highly dependent on civil society organisations. In this field, a specific tension between subsidiarity towards the state and occasional critical positioning by NGOs is observed. Here, initiatives that largely rely on expatriates still figure prominently. Up to the present, activists from privileged social strata have also played important roles. This corresponds to the more general finding that civil society activism depends decisively on available resources in terms of time, energy and frequently also money.

A classic environment is *Earthlife Namibia*. This small NGO combines in an effective way advocacy and various forms of applied research. It's very few active members have grappled for many years and with high intensity and commitment with vital ecological issues Namibia faces. These concern very controversial questions: the mass killing of seals at the coast; the projected Epupa dam; the industrial establishment of Ramatex in Windhoek which meanwhile has failed miserably and where environmental regulations have been systematically disregarded; last not least, various consequences of uranium mining.

A specific situation pertains to Community Based Organisations (CBO) and their co-operation with state agencies, mainly concerning the use of agricultural and forest zones, in particular in the context of community based conservancies. This involves government line ministries in forestry and agriculture, but also in environment and tourism, besides external NGOs such as WWF, and local activist groups concerned i.e. with the situation of San. The *Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)* has opened new paths and helped to implement in Namibia an internationally pioneering ecological tourism concept. Close cooperation with the Ministries of Environment and Tourism as well as Water and Forestry does not preclude difficult entanglements on account of overlapping claims of administrative competence, and also the NGO's continuing advocacy role in particular for resident San.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> s. also the exemplary study by J. Taylor 2013.

A similar approach is pursued by the *Community-based Wildlife Conservation Initiative* within the framework of Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC). This work addresses the needs of people who carry on agriculture in areas with numerous wildlife. As long as apposite measures from the official side are not forthcoming, the NGO is filling the gap.

- ***Umbrella bodies***

The last type of NGOs addressed here are umbrella bodies. NANGOF has the longest standing here. It is meant to represent and co-ordinate the entire Namibian NGO sector, i.e. to be more effective vis-à-vis donors. Success has been varying, and the effectiveness of NANGOF is questioned quite frequently. Consequently, the director saw activities of the eight sectors which bring together the various member bodies in a quite diverse light. He mainly points to the lack of resources to account for unmistakable shortcomings.

Another umbrella body, working in close co-operation and spatial proximity with NANGOF is the *Civil Society Federation of Namibia (CSFN)*, of rather recent vintage. CSFN has created a comprehensive overview of civil society activities in the country and is concerned to support particularly small CSO which find it difficult to garner assistance from the large donors. The importance of this work is obvious, since it is precisely smaller CSO which may be able to contribute innovative and creative initiatives. CSFN provides logistic assistance as well as access to EU funds not otherwise available for smaller organisations. In this way, CSFN may be considered, in important aspects of its work, as a subsidiary organisation of the EU mission.

In terms of this discussion, the *Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN)* may also be considered a NGO umbrella body. In its present set-up, CCN exists since 1978 and sees its mission both as a 'voice of the poor,' and as a social-caritative service provider. As mentioned, the churches have lost much of their weight in advocacy after independence, and the majority of their members remain aloof from politics. For years, churches have experienced a leadership crisis. Still, churches can build on considerable trust and loyalty amongst the population. They have played a very positive role during the latest drought emergency. This has shown that the significance and opportunities of the churches are largely within the field of draconic work, and in addressing massive socio-economic rifts and challenges. An important departure has been the leading role of the ELCRN in the BIG coalition, while the new government role of Bishop Kameeta has not resulted in too much tangible progress.

## **5. Financial structure**

In our typology, we have already addressed issues of finance. The financial basis, or its deficiency, can result in serious constraints along the paths towards a sustainable civil society structure in Namibia. This applies, in particular, to dependence on external donors. From the German side, these are the political foundations (KAS, FES, Hanns Seidel, Heinrich Boell, Rosa Luxemburg and Friedrich Naumann Foundations, not all of them with offices in Namibia), the GIZ and to a certain extent the Embassy along with some funding by church

bodies. The financial difficulties of NGO are exacerbated by the ranking of Namibia as middle income country. As such, Namibia does no longer qualify for the financial instruments accorded to low income countries. On a governmental level, agreements have been reached for softening the impact middle-income status country. However, precisely in respect to support for civil society this has led some long-term donors (Nordic countries) to dramatically reduce their presence and activities in Namibia. In the HIV/AIDS area this was enhanced further by the ending of important support programmes from the US.

In this context, the extreme social inequality that exists in Namibia beckons questions about the civic commitment of the small economic elite. Sponsoring of sports clubs by certain enterprises or patronage for events such as the Windhoek Triennale in the field of arts contrast starkly with a virtually complete neglect of social work and commitment. One may understand this since it is not to be expected that economic enterprises support social criticism. Yet in Namibia this has, on account of the extent of inequality, particularly stringent consequences. It is much harder here for initiatives of self-organisation and advocacy to rely on their own funding or on membership fees.

In concrete terms, the formation of a more stable civil society, more apt to act independently, would be greatly helped by changes in attitude and behaviour of groups that dispose of the needed material resources. Stabilising civil society hinges in material redistribution. Inequality is a fundamental structural problem of Namibian society. Approaches such as BIG or the solidarity tax mooted during the early days of the Geingob administration could at least be first important steps to address this..

## **2. Bottlenecks in administration and organisation**

Without a doubt, scarce finance is of decisive importance when it comes to persistent pitfalls and weaknesses in the performance of many CBOs and NGOs. However, finance does by no means fully explain the limited lustre and impact may CBOs generate. Therefore, we would like to mention further bottlenecks:

- Even with sufficient financial endowment, proper administration and management are not always guaranteed. Foreign donors in particular are concerned for lack of financial transparency and accounting, and a lack of rigour in controlling implementation. This applies in particular to auditing and evaluation.
- These shortcomings are largely due to a lack of dedicated capacity. In many cases, only a single person has the necessary managerial capability to lead and administer a smaller group. Experts with management qualifications are hard to come by in Namibia and suitable persons are frequently recruited elsewhere and leave the civil society sector. In this way, few members of the younger generation join civil society bodies which require a high level of commitment with remuneration that is not frequently attractive.

- Frequently, weak leadership accounts for members and interested persons to commit only hesitantly to aims and programmes. These people are then hard mobilise. Again, such problems are deepened when some CBOs tend no longer to develop initiative on their own but rather work with external financing and on externally formulated projects and programmes. Lacking ownership makes sustainability very hard to secure.

## 5. Namibian-German co-operation in the civil society sector

While societal and personal contacts between the two countries are diverse and intensive, public support for these relations is limited. Direct institutional financing of Namibian NGOs is channelled through the EU. German state sponsored support reaches Namibian civil society through three channels: GIZ, the political foundations and the German Foreign Office.

Within bilateral co-operation, *GIZ* supports in particular projects within the health sector. This pertains to the identification of those infected by HIV/AIDS and their adequate care. Further projects are supported mainly in the fields of ecology and agriculture.

German *political foundations* have begun their activities in Namibia already during the liberation war. The *Friedrich Naumann Foundation* has worked inside the country even before 1991, through a local employee, and has supported activities of the group Namibia Peace Plan 435. This work was closely linked to the diplomacy of the Foreign Office under Hans-Dietrich Genscher. After independence, the Foundation has been active in Namibia until the mid-1990s through a media adviser.

During the political transition in Southern Africa, the *Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES)* has supported unequivocally the liberation struggles of ANC and SWAPO. A German representative of the Foundation arrived in Namibia, in a semi-official capacity at first, in 1989. Right after the independence elections, the FES office in Windhoek was officially opened. Ever since, FES has advised the ruling party, and these relations have known their ups and downs according to personal constellations and political conjunctures. Besides its political advisory role, FES supports trade union projects. More recently, the Foundation has been very successful in working with the Young Leadership Programme. In addition, FES has a strong and long standing commitment in media development and works closely with MISA.

The *Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS)* opened its Windhoek office shortly after independence, and follows a multi-party approach. Repeatedly, KAS has taken up social and political issues of national and international importance. It has initiated debate across party divides. This has led to a whole series of noteworthy publications which address central political issues and bring together authors from Namibia as well as from other African countries. KAS has also worked for a long time with WAD (Women's Action for Development) which registered as an NGO in 2001. WAD works as a self-help organisation which assists Namibian women to master their economic and social situation. Lastly, KAS also has supported the Ombudsman office. .

The *Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSSt)* runs an office in Windhoek since the mid-1990s. It works in areas like Good Governance, Environmental Awareness, Socio-Political

Development and Sustainable Socioeconomic Development and focuses largely on Capacity Building. Besides supporting the Anti-Corruption Commission, HSt has emphasised lately Good Governance. This includes the House of Democracy mentioned above. Namibian partner organisations highlight the non-invasive and sensitive approach of this Foundation. The Namibia office of HSt reports to the Foundation's regional office in South Africa.

The *Heinrich Böll Foundation* is represented in Namibia through its regional office in Johannesburg. In Southern Africa, the Foundation covers a wide-ranging programme portfolio. Of importance are relations to partner bodies in the area of Gender & Sexual Diversity, in Namibia mainly Sister Namibia and Women's Leadership Centre.

The *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation* also runs a regional office Regionalbüro in Johannesburg. For many years, it has co-operated with LaRRI in the fields of training and capacity building..

German *foreign cultural policy* focuses mainly on the Goethe Institute in Windhoek, established in its present forms at the beginning of 2016. Its predecessor, the Goethe Centre occupied a special position by its close association with the Namibian-German Foundation for Cultural Co-operation (NaDS). The consequences of the institutional changeover are still not very evident. However, in the past, the centre has focused on German language training, as well as a broad, decidedly German cultural programme. It remains to be seen whether there will be more reach-out to Namibian cultural activities at large.

The *German-Namibian Society* (DNG) is a private, non-profit organisation which endeavours to foster relations between Germany and Namibia on a non-state level in a whole range of ways. It has done so since 1977, working with the successive power holders in Namibia. DNG supports small projects in Namibia, works in the field of youth and cultural exchange and organises seminars and conferences. Partners in Namibia are, i.e., the Foundation for Desert Research in Namibia, the Swakopmund Museum and the Sam Cohen Library, NaDS, The University Centre for Studies in Namibia (TUCSIN), the Hoachanas Children Fund, and Welwitschia – Educational Initiative for Namibia.

## **7. Recommendations**

1. Civil society activities are above all a Namibian matter. The problems and challenges that have emerged also from this study cannot be solved by the instruments of development co-operation. Still, given its own value system, Germany would be well advised to enhance the further democratic development of the country, mainly in the fields of human and civic rights, participation and social justice, and support civil society actors who pursue these aims. This presupposes sensitivity for and thorough knowledge of local conditions. Given the institutional architecture of German development co-operation and foreign relations, this field falls primarily in the purview of the political foundations. Precisely because they represent the political width of debate in Germany, they are apt to work with a broad range of civil society partners outside the realm of authoritarian structures.

2. Against this backdrop, fields such as *advocacy* and social service provision, as well as ecological sustainability take on particular importance. Here, intensified and sustained efforts are highly desirable.

3. An important and desirable turn would be the strengthening of smaller organisations and innovative approaches. This might involve more use of suitable instruments such as seed finance, but also the lowering of sometimes prohibitive thresholds in terms of budgetary volumes, administrative apparatus and past experience, all of which bias in favour of established players. Obviously, concrete measures can only be based on case specific decision making and study of concrete cases.

4. Support for young leadership personalities (Young Leadership Programme) should be continued and if possible, expanded and strengthened. This ought to be complemented urgently by *capacity building* in the fields of organisation and administration, including finance.

5. It is desirable to help foster a debate, rooted in civil society, on the consequences of an extremely unequal social structure within a middle-income country. This debate could address also the perspective of improving internal support for civil society organisations. Such an approach would include sensitising the Namibian public to the opportunities and risks that go with such change. Very obviously, outside initiatives, particularly emanating from Germany, should respect the narrow boundaries for participation in such undertakings which in essence are a strictly Namibian affair.