

REFRESH YOUR ELECTION KNOWLEDGE

All you need to know about the
upcoming elections in 2019

GUIDE



PROLOGUE

The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) embarked on a project to compile essential information to guide the electorate in understanding the electoral process, the citizenry's rights and responsibilities in an election, and what is expected of the electorate during the upcoming Presidential and National Assembly elections.

The ECN has developed a comprehensive five-year strategic plan for the commission that it uses as the operational framework for its work programmes. One of its main objectives is to improve stakeholder relations and accordingly, the ECN is delighted for the opportunity to work with stakeholders in providing timely, relevant and crucial information to the electorate as the organisation prepares for the forthcoming Presidential and National Assembly elections to be held towards the end of 2019.

The HSF is committed to "democracy, peace and development. In addition, the foundation engages, in its focus, on standards of human dignity and tolerance, freedom and responsibility, solidary and sustainability, equality of opportunity and intergenerational justice amongst others.

The ECN would like to ensure that the forthcoming elections have an increased percentage of voter turnout and are conducted in a continued free, fair and credible manner by communicating the details of the electoral process in a timely manner.

The ECN continues to work towards greater openness and transparency in order to increase trust and confidence in the ECN amongst the electorate, political parties, civil society and the Namibian public at large, and would like to take this opportunity to encourage greater participation from all our stakeholders.

Information relating to the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections can also be found on the ECN website at www.ecn.na, alternatively you can find election related information on our social media pages or by sending your query to info@ecn.na



Theo Mujoro
Chief Electoral and Referenda Officer
Electoral Commission of Namibia

Imprint

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FOREWORD



Our Constitution guarantees inclusivity through the system of proportional representation and so far, we have held five parliamentary and presidential elections since we attained Independence in 1990. All these elections were accepted by both regional and international observers as free and fair. Next year, 2019, we will hold our sixth round of parliamentary and presidential elections, proving that Namibia is committed to regular and credible elections.

This is a period where citizens get a chance to choose their President, their members in the National Assembly, in Regional and Local Authorities as a right to all eligible citizens of the country. Article 17 of the Namibian Constitution writes and I quote:

“All citizens shall have the right to participate in peaceful activity intended to influence the composition and policies of Government. All citizens shall have the right to form and join political parties and, subject to such qualifications prescribed by law as necessary in a democratic society, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely chosen representative. Every citizen who has reached the age of eighteen (18) years shall have the right to vote and who has reached the age of twenty-one (21) years to be elected to public office, unless otherwise provided by herein.”

As one of the founding fathers of the Namibian Constitution and as the Speaker of the National Assembly, I can only reiterate the importance of citizens utilizing their right and mandate to participate in the democratic process. The Election process in particular, is an important process where inclusivity should be ensured so as to promote participatory democracy and good governance. Pre-independence Namibia did not have these opportunities and since then, we have relentlessly strived to make sure the country promotes peaceful co-existence in line with our policy of national reconciliation. This is important for the consolidation of our one-Namibia-one-nation concept. In 1990, the Constituent Assembly was transformed into the National Assembly and it was later joined by the National Council. Whereas National Assembly members are elected from the Party List, National Council members are elected from their regional constituencies. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN), Civil Society Organisations and political parties have the responsibility to ensure that all related electoral processes including bi-elections are free and fair and conducted as by the set guidelines. Indeed, I would like to highlight the fact that this year the Mo Ibrahim Index ranked Namibia fifth on the African continent in terms of good governance, and Transparency International ranked us third in Africa in transparency. So far, Namibia is a role model to the rest of the region and the international community.

Fellow citizens, come 2019, we are once again partaking in national elections. I therefore urge you all to vote wisely and peacefully, in line with the tradition of our country. By doing so you fulfill your right as stipulated in Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution.

Hon. Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, MP

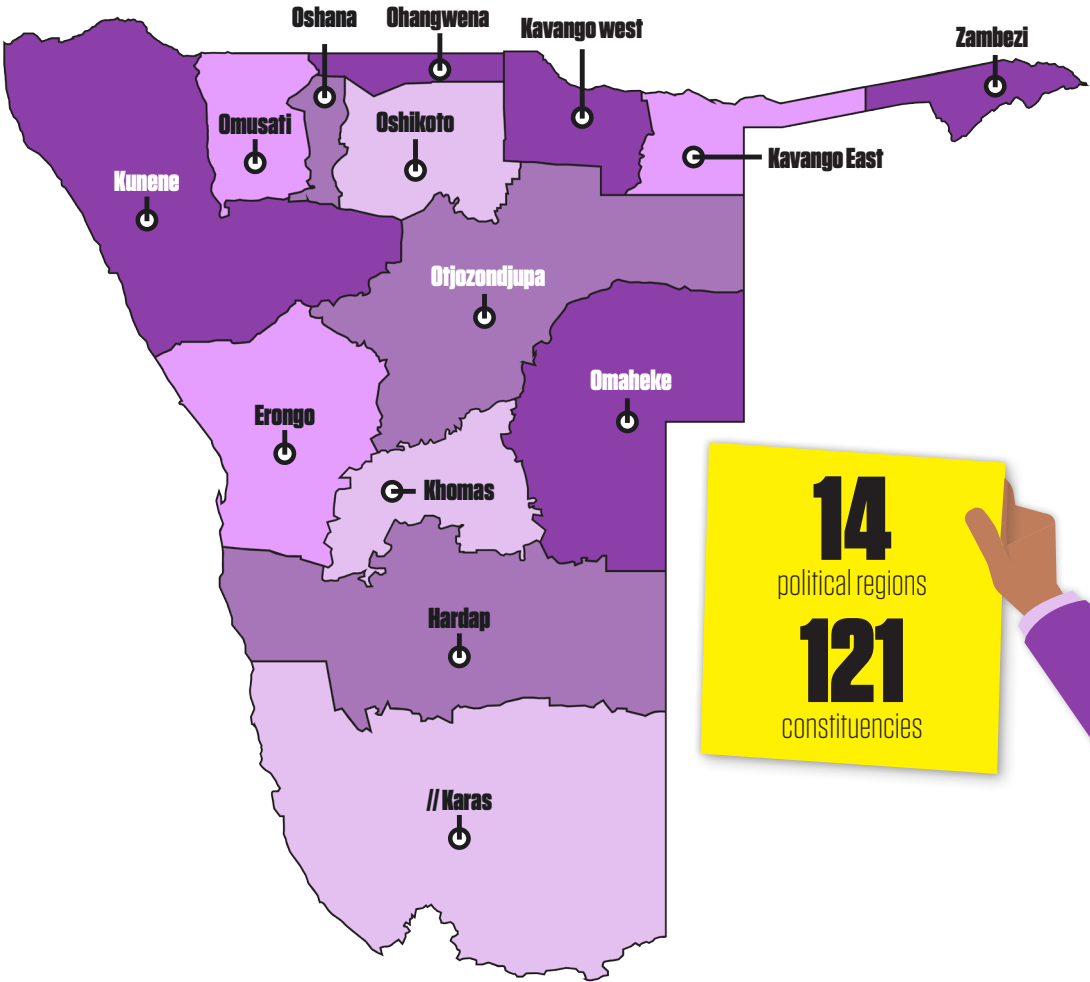
SPEAKER: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

ELECTIONS IN NAMIBIA

Definition: Elections are the process by which members of a community or country choose representatives to hold positions at various levels of government.

Regular elections ensure that government is answerable to the people. If the government does not perform to the satisfaction of the voters, they can vote for a different political party or candidate in the next election.

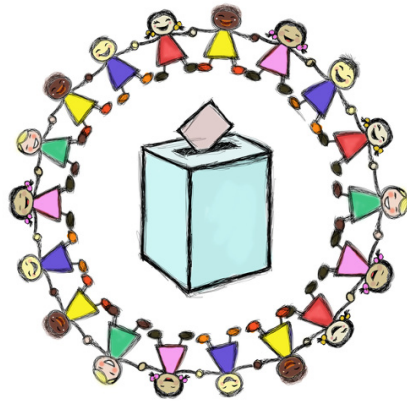
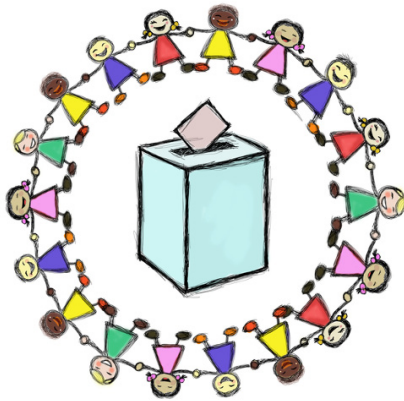
Elected representatives are responsible to the voters who elect them.



MANDATE OF ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF NAMIBIA (ECN)



The Electoral Act, (Act No.5 of 2014) mandates the Electoral Commission of Namibia to organize, direct, supervise, manage and control the conduct of elections and referenda in a free, fair, independent credible, transparent and impartial manner as well as to strengthen constitutional democracy and to promote democratic electoral and referenda processes.



THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY



Democracy is a system of government where supreme political power rests with the citizens of the country. In Namibia, our selected representatives, such as the president, members of parliament and councilors, are voted to make decisions on behalf of citizens. This mandate is reviewed and renewed after every five years through democratic election process.

MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY



A multiparty system of government is the arrangement in which political parties can operate freely and any party has the right and capacity to gain control of government separately or via a coalition with other parties.

ELECTIONS AND THE CONSTITUTION



Source: NID



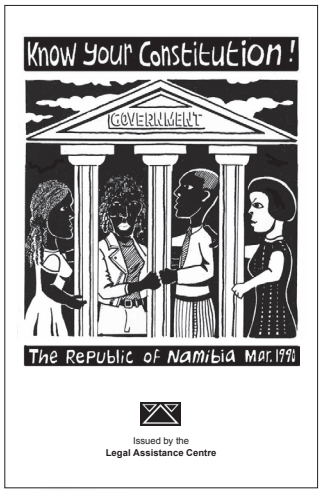
The right to vote and to political activity is entrenched in the Namibian Constitution:

- **The Relation between Elections and Fundamental Human Rights** – For an election to be free and fair, fundamental human rights and freedoms should be respected, protected and fulfilled. These rights are enshrined in the Namibian Constitution.
- **The Right to Peaceful Political Activity** – Article 17 of the Namibian Constitution provides for the right to political activity for all citizens. This right includes several other rights, such as the right to form and join any political party of

one's choice, the right to vote and the right to be elected into public office.

- **Freedom of Speech** – Article 21 (1) (a) provides for all persons to have a right to freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media.
- **Freedom of Assembly** – Article 21 (1) (d) also guarantees to all persons the right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- **Freedom of Movement** – Article 21 (1) (g) of the Constitution guarantees to all persons the right to move freely throughout Namibia.

If you want to learn more about elections and the law, please contact NID.



You can get your free copy of "Know your Constitution!" at the LAC or HSF Offices.

TYPES OF ELECTION



There are four types of election in Namibia

Elections for President:

- The President is elected directly by the people of Namibia every 5 years together with National Assembly election
- Voters cast their ballots for the person they want as President from a predetermined list
- The President must get more than half of all votes to be elected
- If there are multiple candidates and no one gets more than half of all the votes cast, then there must be a run-off election between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes

Elections for National Assembly:

- Members of the National Assembly are elected on a proportional representation basis*
- Every five years together with Presidential election
- Voters cast their ballots for a party and not for a candidate
- After the election, parties will be represented in the National Assembly in proportion to the number of votes they received



Citizens can register and vote for the President and the National Assembly anywhere in the country.

* This is a system in which the number of seats held by a political party in the legislative body is determined by the number of popular votes received. Each political party submits a list of its preferred candidates before an election. After the elections, parties will be represented in the National Assembly in proportion to the percentage of votes they have received. Each party fills its seats from its list of candidates.

Elections for Regional Councils:

- Voters in each constituency elect one person from nominations to represent them on the Regional Council
- Regional Councils are elected every five years together with Local Authorities the year after the Presidential and National Assembly election
- Members of Regional Councils are directly elected by registered voters in that constituency
- Voters cast their ballots for individual candidates, not for political parties
- Candidates for regional council can be
 - people who are sponsored by political parties which are registered to take part in the election
 - independent candidates who are supported by at least 150 registered voters in the constituency where they want to stand for office
- A person who is elected to represent a constituency on the council must go to live in that constituency within three months after the election, if he or she is not already resident there



Citizens must register and vote for a regional council in the constituency where they live. All citizens are eligible to vote in the constituency where they live, no matter how long they have lived there.

Elections for Local Councils:

- Elections take place every 5 years together with Regional Council elections the year after the Presidential and National Assembly election
- Voters in each local authority select political parties which have put together a list of candidates
- Candidates on the list must have been living in that local authority for at least one year
- Each party will take people from its party list to fill the number of seats on the council which is proportional to the number of votes received by the party in that local authority
- Associations and organisations can also register to put forward candidates for local elections, if they can show that at least 250 members of their group are registered voters for that local authority and support their participation in the election



Citizens are eligible to vote for the council of a local authority if they have been living in that local authority for at least one year. When people register to vote in a local authority, they must bring proof of residence. This means that not every Namibian citizen will be eligible to vote for local authorities councils.

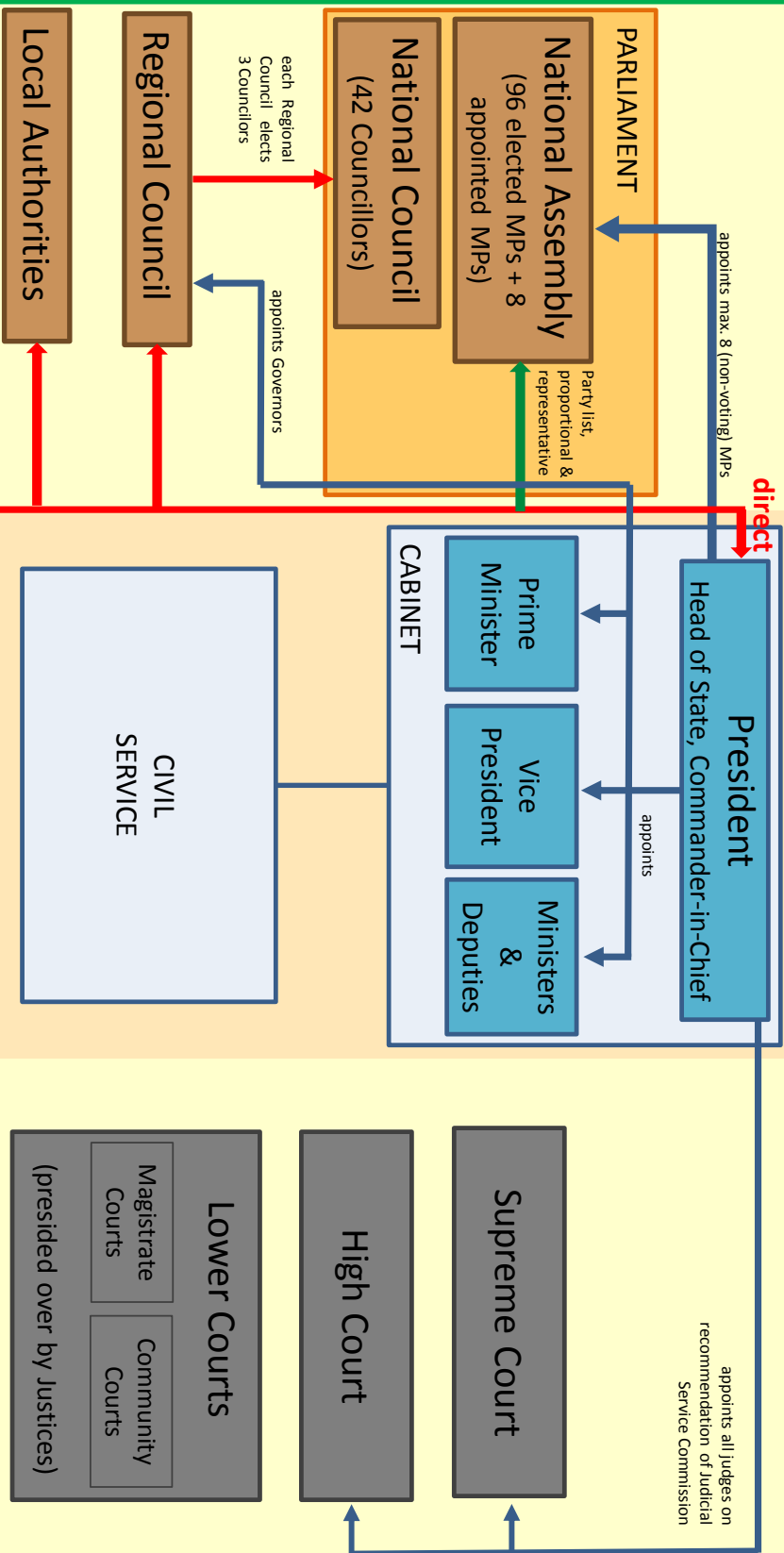
If you want to learn more about types of election, please visit LAC or HSF offices or download factsheets from their websites.

ELECTIONS AND THE NAMIBIAN GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Legislature

Executive

Judiciary



Namibian Citizens (18yrs and older)

elect

appoints all judges on
recommendation of Judicial
Service Commission

appoints max. 8 (non-voting) MPs

Party list,
proportional &
representative

appoints

appoints Governors

each Regional
Council elects
3 Councillors

Lower Courts

Magistrate
Courts

Community
Courts

(presided over by Justices)

Supreme Court

High Court

Regional Council

Local Authorities

National Council
(42 Councillors)

National Assembly
(96 elected MPs + 8
appointed MPs)

PARLIAMENT

direct

WHO IS A NAMIBIAN CITIZEN?



All citizens of Namibia have the right to participate in peaceful political activity as stipulated in Article 17 of the Namibian Constitution.

Namibians can form and join political parties, participate in elections if they

are 18 or older, and also stand for public office if they are above the age of 21 years.

Citizenship is a status that requires an individual to be loyal to a country.

In return he or she is entitled to the rights and protections provided by the government.

Persons born in Namibia are automatically citizens.

People from other countries can apply to become citizens of Namibia by naturalisation, if they meet all requirements for citizenship. All children born to Namibian parents are automatically citizens of Namibia.

Namibian citizenship is prescribed in Chapter 2 of the Constitution and supported by the Namibian Citizenship Act (Act No 14 of 1990) as amended.

A person can obtain Namibian citizenship by:

- birth
- decent
- marriage
- registration
- naturalisation
- conferment

Are you a good citizen?

- Do you know your rights, freedoms and obligations as a citizen, as contained in the Namibian Constitution?
- Do you adhere to your social contract between you and the State?
- Do you partake in the affairs of the State?
- Do you live peacefully with other citizens in Namibia?
- Do you exercise your right to vote?

CITIZEN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION



Source: NID



Democracy recognises that people are the highest authority. Namibians are therefore the source of power; all laws and rules and decisions must reflect the will of the people.

In a democracy, citizens have a primary responsibility and key role to influence and set the agenda of their country.

This can only happen when citizens are active in public affairs and when they make their demands known to their leaders, whom they have elected to make decisions on their behalf.

Peoples' participation is provided through elections. There is a strong relationship between democracy and elections. **Through elections, people choose their representatives and their leaders.** People who are governed have the right to freely decide how they want to be governed or led.

REGISTRATION OF VOTERS



Source: NID



In Namibia, people **who want to vote** in an election **must be registered as voters** in order to do so.

The quality of the registration process and the product – the voters' register – can determine the outcome of an election and consequently the stability of democratic institutions in the country.

Purpose of Voter's Registration:

- To ensure that all eligible applicants are registered and included in the voters' register
- To prevent ineligible persons from voting
- To guard against multiple voting by the same individual

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11

A sound voter registration process is therefore fundamental to a successful election. Voter registration is primarily intended to ensure that all eligible citizens can exercise their right to vote. An efficient voter registration system requires the population to be active in reporting changes of residency and other relevant aspects of their civil status. Voter registration is also important for planning purposes.



Source: ECN

WHO CAN REGISTER TO VOTE?



18 YEARS OR OLDER



NAMIBIAN CITIZEN



CAN YOU IDENTIFY
YOURSELF

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



Source: ECN

Who can register?

You must

- be a Namibian citizen
- be 18 years or older
- be able to identify yourself

Why should you register?

You **must be registered** as a voter in order **to vote in an election** – to exercise your democratic right to vote.

Where can you register?

- In your constituency (The ECN will shortly before elections announce where exactly in their constituencies the public can register).
- Temporary registration points outside the country at Namibian diplomatic missions (only applicable to presidential and National Assembly elections).

When can you register?

- General registration of every voter (GRV) after every 10 years.
- Supplementary registration of voters between the 10-year GRV period to update the voters' register or to register voters whose voter registration cards are reported lost or destroyed.
- Continuous registration of voters takes place throughout a calendar year at any time of request for voters who moved between constituencies, whose cards have been lost or destroyed.



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO REGISTER?



To register you need to prove identity, age and Namibian citizenship by providing the following documents:

- New Namibian Identity Document **OR**
- Valid Green Namibian Passport **OR**
- Namibian Birth Certificate and New Namibian Driver's License **OR**
- Namibian Birth Certificate and two registered deponents **OR**
- Namibian Citizenship Certificate and two registered deponents

2. Proof of residence by Defense Force, Police and Namibia Correctional Service Members

- Proof of membership **AND** an affidavit deposed by the commanding officer stating residence situated in a particular constituency or local authority area **OR**
- Accounts payable by the member to such force or to State

3. Proof of Residence and registration of persons at schools or higher education institutions

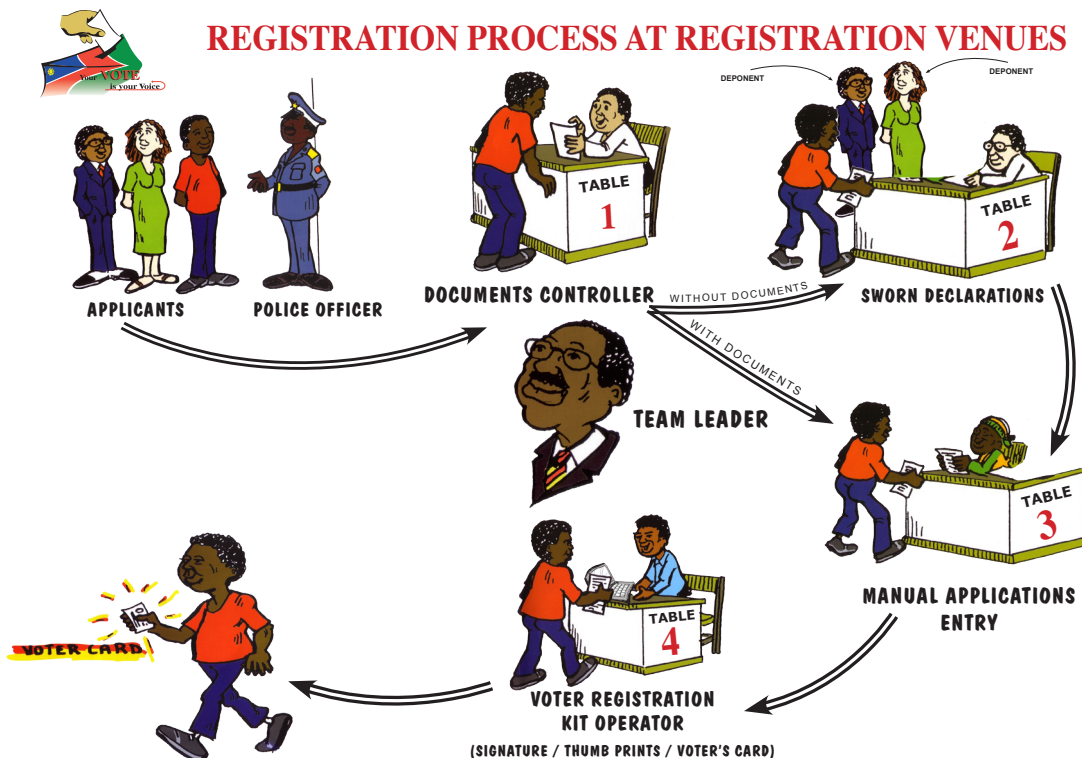
- Proof of registration **OR**
- Any statement of registration

Requirements to register for Local Authority Election:

1. In order to register for Local Authority Election you need to present proof of residency by means of the following:

- Municipal Bill **OR**
- Telephone Bill **OR**
- Lease agreement **OR**
- Statement under oath by applicant

REGISTRATION PROCESS AT REGISTRATION VENUES



THE VOTERS' REGISTER



A voters' register is a list containing the names of all the registered voters. The Electoral Act requires the ECN to compile and maintain two registers, namely:

- a National Voters' Register compiled on a constituency basis of all voters in the country
- a Local Authority Voters' Register of voters registered in a given local authority area.

PREPARATION AND PUBLICATION OF PROVISIONAL VOTERS' REGISTER

The chief electoral officer must prepare the voters register containing names, residential addresses and voter's registration numbers of all registered voters.

The voters' register has to be published at least 90 days before the presidential and National Assembly election or at least 30 days before regional council and local authority elections.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST NAMES INCLUDED IN A PROVISIONAL VOTERS' REGISTER

Registered persons, registered political parties or registered organisations may lodge, within 14 days after the publication of the provisional voters' register, an objection in writing to the Electoral Tribunal against the inclusion of the name of any other person on that register on the grounds that the person is not entitled or qualified to be registered as a voter or is not complying with the requirements in relation to residence.

*If you want to learn more about voters' register, please visit:
<http://www.ecn.na/web/ecn/how-to-register>*



Source: NID

IF YOU WANT TO BECOME POLITICALLY ACTIVE



The Constitution (article 17) entrenches the right to political activity which guarantees all citizens the right to participate in peaceful political activity. This right also guarantees **all citizens the right to form and join political parties of their choice.**



Source: NID

REGISTERING A POLITICAL PARTY

All political parties which want to participate in national elections must register with the ECN.

Requirements for registration as a political party:

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

Registration process

1. Application for registration with ECN
2. Publication of all details of the party in the government Gazette to allow any registered party to lodge an objection to the suggested name or abbreviation/symbol.
3. If registration is approved by the ECN, the party is issued with a certificate of registration by the Chief Electoral Officer.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 15



Source: ECN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

REGISTERING AN ASSOCIATION OR ORGANISATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTION

Organisations or associations that are not political parties but who want to participate in local authority elections must register with the ECN, in order to participate in such elections

To qualify for registration:

- The aims of the association or organisation should not be harmful to the safety of the state, public welfare, peace or to good order.
- Membership to such organisations or associations should be open to all regardless of sex, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, creed or social or economic status. An association or organisation can only contest local authority elections in a city, town or village in which such an organisation or association is registered.
- The same application process applicable for political parties as explained above also applies to organisations or associations



REGISTERING AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE

To stand as an independent candidate in Presidential and Regional Council elections, such an independent candidate must meet various requirements. The following table shows some of the requirements.

Requirement	Presidential Elections	Regional Council Elections
1. Nationality	Namibian by birth or descent	Namibian by birth or descent
2. Age limit	35 years or older	21 years or older
3. Voter registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Registered voter; and▪ qualifies to be elected as a member of the National Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Registered as a voter for regional council elections; and▪ qualify to be elected as a member of the National Council; and▪ be ordinarily resident within the constituency for which she/he is standing
4. Support base	Required number of registered voters	Required number of registered voters
5. Nomination	To be signed by at least two persons on the supporters list	To be signed by at least two persons on the supporters list
6. Monetary deposit	Required amount (refundable in certain circumstances) N\$20 000	Required amount (refundable in certain circumstances) N\$2 500
7. Duration of session on nomination day	Presided over by the Chief Justice for a prescribed time frame on nomination day.	Presided over by the returning officer of the constituency for a prescribed timeframe on nomination day.

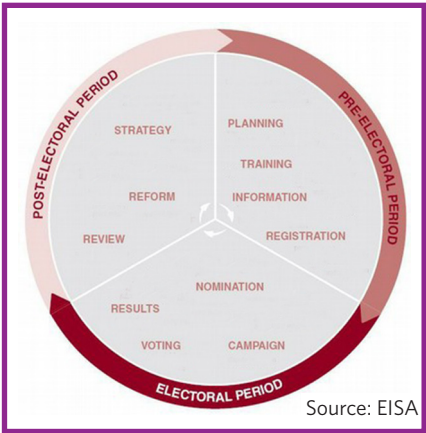
WHAT IS ELECTION OBSERVATION?



Election observation is the purposeful gathering of information regarding the election process. It also includes the informed judging on the conduct of the election process based on information collected by persons generally referred to as Election Observers. Election observers, as a general rule, are not authorized to intervene in the process. Their involvement in the election process should not jeopardise their main observation responsibilities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OBSERVE THE ELECTION?

- It is important to observe elections for the following reasons:
- To increase the integrity of the election process.
 - This in turn increases voter confidence in the process and encourages higher voter turnout and citizen's involvement.
 - To deter fraud, voting irregularities, violence and intimidation.
 - To verify the results.
 - To provide a basis for assessing and reporting on the fairness of the election.



Before the elections is after the elections.

OBSERVING THE PRE-ELECTION PHASE



• The Electoral Act of 2014 makes provision for the observation of the three phases of the election process: pre-election, election and post-election. During the pre-election phase election observers monitor registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, political party campaigning, voter education, delimitation of constituencies, and the conduct of media.

• **Observing Voter Registration** – Voter registration is the process of verifying potential voters, and entering their names and other information on a voters list. Voter registration establishes the eligibility of individuals to cast a vote.

• **Observing the registration of women** – The registration of women deserves special mention. Women are encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political life because women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination.

• **Observing the Registration and nomination of candidates and Political Parties** – The ECN, as the electoral management body, is responsible for registering candidates. All political parties should be able to nominate and field candidates freely and on equal terms.

• **Observing the Election Campaign** – The period between the conclusion of candidate nomination and Election Day is used by political parties to increase their political campaigns.

If you want to learn more about election observation, please visit: <https://www.nid.org.na>

OBSERVING THE ELECTION PHASE



Election Day observation covers all activities on the actual day of voting i.e. logistics, accreditation, the process of voting, conditions around the polling stations, the behaviour of electoral officials and party agents and their activities, counting, collation of votes and the recording of results.

• **Observing conditions and atmosphere around Polling Stations** – On the voting day, the observer monitors the general conditions of the station and draws the presiding officer's attention to any irregularities noticed. Before voting begins the observer should note whether the polling station is easily identifiable and accessible to all voters.

• **Observing the counting of Votes** – The counting of votes takes place immediately at the polling station after the poll closes. During the counting process the observers must verify whether counting is done by authorised officials only and the general attitude of the counting officials.

• **Recording of Results** – During the recording of results the observers must verify whether the correct figures are

read out and recorded, and whether the number of electronic votes tallies with the number of voters who voted at the station.



Source: NID



Source: NID

If you want to learn more about election observation, please visit: <https://www.nid.org.na>

OBSERVING THE POST-ELECTION PHASE



Observation of the post-election period includes monitoring all activities that occur after the actual elections; for instance, the resolution of election disputes, the announcement of results, petitions and the formation of the newly elected government.

- The Resolution of Election Disputes – Post-election disputes emerge when parties that have lost the elections do not accept the results. A party may be dissatisfied with the manner in which the votes were counted and may believe it deserves more seats. It is therefore very important that mechanisms be put in place to deal with these disputes as they have the potential to undermine the integrity of the electoral process and lead to social conflict. An Electoral

Tribunals and an Electoral Court carry out the speedy resolution of election disputes.

- Observing the Announcement of Final Results – The announcement of final results is clearly an important part of any election process. It should be observed by the election observation mission. The primary function of the observer is to assess the degree to which the election process is conducted in line with national and international standards and commitments.

If you want to learn more about election observation, please visit: <https://www.nid.org.na>

VOTING USING THE ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE (EVM)

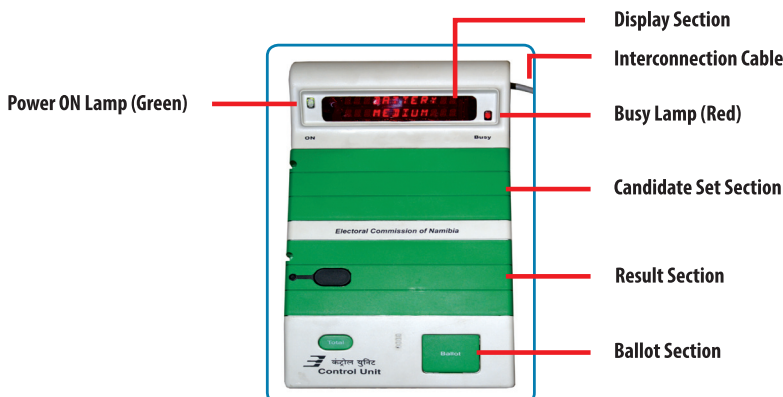


The Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is meant to enhance the conduct of fast, reliable, free, and fair elections in Namibia. In this regard, the EVM allows voters to cast their votes electronically, using the same principles applied in paper-based elections.

1. Control Unit (CU)

The Control Unit is the control section of the EVM and it is only operated by the polling official. This unit controls the polling process. The Control Unit consists of four sections; the display screen, candidate set, results and ballot button.

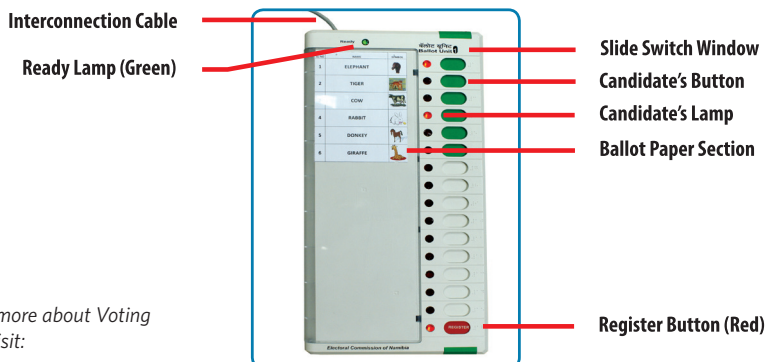
Control Unit - Front View



2. Ballot Unit (BU)

The Ballot Unit is the voter interface and voters only interact with this unit and not the Control Unit. It consists of a permanently fixed interconnecting cable which connects the Ballot Unit to the Control Unit, ready lamp buttons, one register lamp button, slide switch window, 15 candidate buttons. A ballot paper is inserted under the transparent screen of the Ballot Unit.

EVM - Balloting Unit - Details

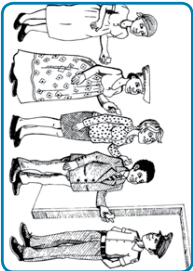




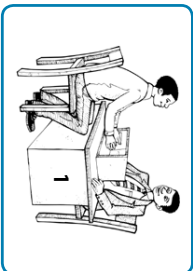
THE VOTING PROCEDURE

The voting procedure for using the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM):

Voters Queue



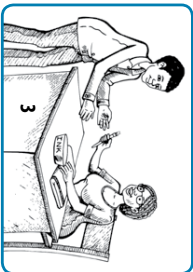
Ultra-Violet Light Controller



Voter Verifier



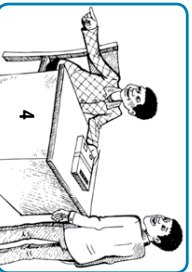
Inker



Presiding Officer



Ballot Issuer for Presidential Elections



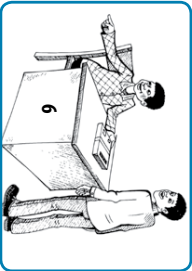
Voter leaving the Polling Station



Voter casting Vote for National Assembly Elections



Ballot Issuer for National Assembly Elections



Voter casting Vote for Presidential Elections



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EVM - Making Voting Easy For You!

SAFEGUARDS TO MAKE THE ELECTION PROCESS FREE AND FAIR



Before election:

- Anyone who is refused registration can appeal
- The **provisional voters' register must be made available to the public** before the election, and **individuals or political parties can object to the inclusion of specific names** if they believe that these people are not actually entitled to vote



An **Electoral Tribunal** will decide these questions before the election takes place

- Electoral Tribunals can also **address illegal conduct by political parties or election officials** which takes place before the polling day.

After election:

- **Challenges to the election** on the grounds that **the law was not properly followed** will in most cases go directly to the Electoral Court



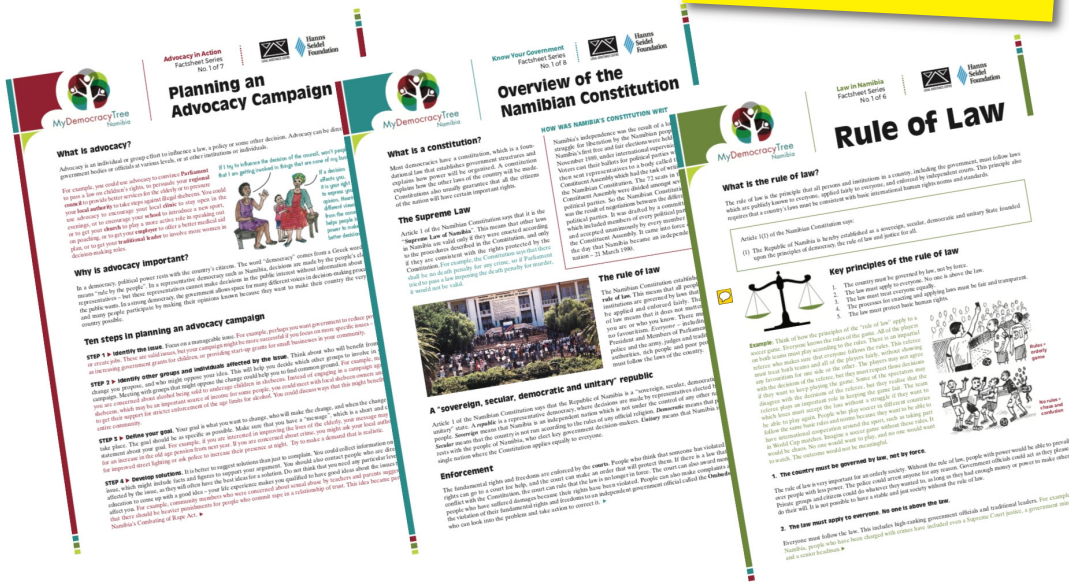
Electoral Court must make a decision before the elected officials in question take office.



Exception for elections for President: Challenges go directly to the Supreme Court for decision

If you want to learn more about safeguards before and after election, please visit LAC or HSF offices or download factsheets from their websites.

You can get your free copy of the factsheets (21 factsheets in 3 series: Advocacy in Action, Know Your Government, Law in Namibia) at the LAC or HSF Office



WHY VOTE?



Voting connects citizens with the political process. It helps us choose our leaders (those who share our views or those who may inspire us). The simple act of pressing the button on the EVM tells our leaders what we think about decisions that affect our lives, such as how much taxation we think is fair or what issues such as healthcare, education, housing, water and sanitation, we think are most important.

Voting also connects citizens with each other as citizens. By taking part in an election and by expressing our point of view, **we help our democracy work.** By agreeing or disagreeing with our leaders we show that the political system can accept different points of view. By not voting, we break the connection between individual Namibians and their community.

Voting helps to safeguard the freedoms we hold dear.

A democratic community can only survive if its citizens see participation in the political process as a duty and a responsibility.



EPILOGUE

On 9 February 1990, shortly prior to Namibia's independence, the 72 members of the Constituent Assembly of Namibia adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. To date, it still represents one of the most progressive basic laws around the world, with Article 95(I) even encompassing the maintenance of the biological diversity and ecosystems of Namibia, as well as the utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.

More crucially, the 72 members agreed that the Republic of Namibia is founded on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all.

The Preamble emphasises this in stating that the government is responsible to freely elected representatives of the people, operating under a sovereign constitution and a free and independent judiciary.

However, establishing and maintaining a system of free and fair elections is always a delicate and complex process. Although elections represent only a snapshot of a national political culture, they constitute one of the most sensitive and critical times in the political life of a nation.

Exercising this right allows the people to decide collectively about the direction in which a country is developing. In more than 20 countries around the world casting your vote is not only a civic duty, but mandatory. This includes several countries in Latin America, as well as Egypt, Thailand, Singapore, Belgium or Lebanon. In many of them, failure to vote results in a fine. In Australia, for instance, a no-vote results in a \$20 fine (around NAD 200). Altogether, an estimated 744 million people live in nations with compulsory voting laws.

With the presidential and parliamentary elections less than a year from now, Namibians are being reminded to register and to cast their vote on election day.

Access to accurate voter education is imperative to nurture informed voters who are aware of their rights, freedoms and responsibilities in a democracy.

We as HSF are delighted to support this publication which aims to support the Namibian democratic process by providing citizens with accurate information about exercising their constitutional right to vote. It touches on the key aspects in the electoral process and can be a key information source for a variety of election stakeholders in-

cluding civil society activists, media, election observers, election management bodies, development agencies and democracy assistance organisations. We would like to encourage all stakeholders to utilise this information as informed citizens are the core of any democratic society.

We hope this publication will encourage to actively engage in the democratic process. HSF is looking forward to contribute to a subsequent publication jointly with ECN and NID, providing further insights to the upcoming elections in 2019.

Dr Clemens von Doderer
HSF, Country Representative

