



ELECTIONS SUPPORT CONSORTIUM

The Elections Support Consortium (ESC) was formed in December 2002 by a civic and voter education campaign partnership. Implemented by the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN), the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) and the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), the partners are committed to strengthening the democratic political culture in Namibia and promoting acceptance of a shared system of democratic norms and values.
e-mail: info@democracy.org.na



NAMIBIA INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY

Namibia Institute for Democracy
PO Box 11956, Klein Windhoek
Tel: (061) 229117/8 · Fax: (061) 229119
e-mail: nid@nid.org.na



V O T E D E M O C R A C Y

on the involvement and participation of its people. This is called citizen participation.

- In a democracy citizens are entitled - and expected - to express their opinions, participate in the democratic process and to exercise their constitutional right to vote.
- By taking part, citizens ensure that leaders do not abuse their powers and that they deliver on the promises they made when they were elected.
- By making yourself heard, you keep government informed of your wishes so that it can make better decisions that will benefit you.
- By participating, you are involved in governing the country. By voting you can make a difference!

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE. SPEAK OUT AND BE HEARD.

affect your life by campaigning for your concerns and trying to gain support.

- You should respect the Constitution and know what it says. This will allow you to recognise when your rights have been violated and to know what can be done to rectify these.
- You should also respect the rights and freedoms of others and live according to the laws of Namibia.
- You should register as a voter and vote in the elections. By voting, you show your support for a candidate or party and have a say in government. Every vote can make a difference.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRACY?

There are many ways in which you can and should participate in our democracy every day.

- Participating means that you should be involved. This includes becoming informed about issues, debating them in community and civic meetings, organising and attending discussions and debates, talking and writing letters to your representatives, using the newspapers and radio to make your views

To LEARN MORE ABOUT DEMOCRACY...

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.democracy.org.na

WHY IS DEMOCRACY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

DEMOCRACY AND YOU!

A BASIC GUIDE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY



V O T E D E M O C R A C Y

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

- Democracy means 'rule by the people'. It is the form of government in which power is held by the people.
- Democracy is the system in which ordinary citizens appoint representatives to the legislative branch of government to rule the country on their behalf.
- Democracy gives the people the power to change their representatives in a peaceful manner - through elections - on a regular basis. This means that the citizens have the power to remove representatives from positions of power if they don't perform.
- Democracy is the system that guarantees equal rights and freedoms for all citizens. It also protects the citizens against unfair treatment by the state.

**YOUR VOTE
ENSURES THAT
OUR LEADERS
DELIVER.**

with dignity and respect, to participate in public life, to join and form organisations and political parties, to marry and have a family, to express your thoughts and beliefs and many more. The Constitution guarantees that the government cannot easily interfere with or change these rights.

- The Constitution also sets out the structure and function of the government. Namibia is known as a constitutional democracy because it functions according to its written constitution.
- Our constitutional democracy ensures that there are equal rights for all and that the government is accountable to the people.

WHAT IS A MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY?

- Namibia's democracy came about as the result of a long liberation struggle against colonial oppression. The Namibian people chose the system of democracy because it would ensure and protect the equal freedoms and rights of all Namibians.
- The strength of any democracy depends on certain fundamental rights and freedoms, which must be protected to ensure that the democracy will succeed. Rights and freedoms in Namibia are listed in and protected by Chapter 3 of the Namibian Constitution.
- Democratic rights and freedoms protected by the Constitution include the right to vote, to be treated

- This is when there are more than two political parties who compete for the votes of the citizens during the elections.
- In a multi-party democracy all citizens are free to form and join the political party of their choice. Every citizen is also free to stand as a candidate during an election and to express his or her preference as a voter.
- In a multi-party democracy all political parties have the right to compete equally. This means that they are equally free to mobilise support, recruit candidates, use the media, hold meetings and to

- organise their activities and election campaigns.
- A multi-party democracy allows ongoing opposition, a variety of views to be expressed in Parliament and is a constant reminder that representatives must answer to the citizens.

WHAT IS A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY?

- The most common type of democracy today is the representative democracy in which representatives are elected for a specific term of office during which they represent the people and make decisions on their behalf.
- Under representative democracy a country is divided into constituencies. Political parties in these constituencies will nominate specific individuals to represent them as candidates for that constituency. During the elections, citizens vote for the party or candidate of their choice. The elected candidates or representatives become the government of the country.
- Representatives therefore express the will of the people and are held accountable at regular elections during which the citizens can express their approval or disapproval by voting for or against them. The political party holding the majority, or more than half the representatives in government, is the party that usually gets its way.

**EVERY
SINGLE VOTE
CAN HELP MAKE
A CHANGE!**

WHAT IS PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

- Proportional representation is an electoral system that is used to convert votes into seats in a proportional manner. This means that each party obtains a number of seats that is in proportion to the number of votes it received. This makes it easier for small parties to win seats in government. Usually with a proportional representation system, there are more parties that represent the many different views of the citizens in the country. This means that government can make better decisions that will benefit the people.
- With proportional representation, each political party submits a list of its chosen candidates - known as a party list - before an election. Voters vote for a party and not for the individual candidate during the election.
- After the election when the votes have been counted, parties receive seats in proportion to the support they received. This means that if a party received 20% of all the votes, then that party should receive 20% of the seats. The candidates to fill the seats in the representative government will be taken from the party list supplied by each party before the election.

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN OUR DEMOCRACY?

- You, the citizen are the most important part of our democracy. The strength of any democracy depends