



**ADDRESS BY VERONICA DE KLERK
WAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
during the
WAD ERONGO FIELD DAY - 2012
of Women's Action for Development (WAD)
WALVIS BAY - THURSDAY, 28 JUNE 2012**

Director of Ceremonies;

The Hon. Bernhard Esau-----Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources;

Hon. Cleophas Mutjavikua-----Governor for the Erongo region;

Your Worship, Cllr Derek Klazen-----Mayor of Walvis Bay;

Hon. Cllr Hafeni Ndemula-----Regional Councillor for the Walvis Bay Constituency;

Rev. Phillip Strydom-----Chairperson of the WAD Board of Directors;

Mr Holger Haibach-----Res. Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung;

Mr Wilhelm Kapenambili-----Erongo Reg. Director of Health & Soc. Services;

Mr John Awaseb-----Erongo Regional Director of Education;

Ms Johanna Shatika-----Old Mutual Branch Manager – Group Schemes Coastal;

M-----Branch Manager of Nedbank Namibia;

Ms Ivonne Haukambe-----Principal Adjudicator and Co-adjudicators;

Spiritual leaders; Headmasters; Teachers; and Parents;

Friends from the Media; Chairperson and members of the “Erongo Community Voice”;

Cultural performers; and most importantly - dear Graduants:

Good morning!

I am greatly humbled to address you here at Walvis Bay today at the first Field Day and Graduation ceremony of unemployed young people and Walvis Bay prison Inmates!

As I am looking over this impressive audience, consisting of all sectors of society, I observe with much joy our distinguished leaders - and most importantly, our Graduants, among whom I welcome our Walvis Bay prison Inmates who have joined this development platform with us today to graduate in various fields, to improve their living standards.

“Field Days” were established and facilitated for the first time during 1997 by Women’s Action for Development, to serve as informative platforms for interaction between community members, decision-makers and community leaders on important issues, such as development, health, education, etc.

It is within this context that I take pleasure in acknowledging the presence of our Keynote Speaker for this programme, the Hon. Bernhard Esau, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

Thank you, Honourable Minister, for accepting our invitation to officiate at this occasion and for leaving your busy schedule in Windhoek to be part of this graduation ceremony of unemployed young people and Prison Inmates here at Walvis Bay.

This attests to your profound interest in the empowerment of unemployed young people, which is greatly appreciated.

I further welcome, and extend my appreciation towards the speakers at the Head Table for their valued presence. We are indeed looking forward to your informative words of wisdom.

Ladies & Gentlemen: the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has acted as the main Sponsor of WAD since the organisation’s establishment 18 years ago. I welcome Mr Holger Haibach, the Resident Representative of WAD. Incidentally, today on the 28th of June, it is exactly one year ago, that Mr Haibach arrived in Namibia to assume duties as Country Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

I therefore invite you to join me in congratulating Mr Haibach and in thanking the Foundation for its commitment towards the upliftment of the people of Namibia and for having sponsored all training subjects of the students which enabled them to graduate during this event.

Ladies and Gentlemen, focusing on equally important sponsors - Old Mutual Namibia and Nedbank Namibia, are trusted names in the country. This “Field Day” would not have been possible had it not been for their wonderful financial support towards WAD’s Field Days across the country, for the past 7 years. **Ladies & Gentlemen: Please join me in giving them a big hand!**

I therefore, welcome Ms Johanna Shatika from Old Mutual, as well as M_____ from Nedbank, who are present here today, to introduce to the audience, their products and services.

I trust that you will listen carefully to what Old Mutual and Nedbank have to offer rural communities. One important example is, that it is extremely important for parents, to acquire study insurance policies for their children already now, to enable them to advance to higher learning institutions, such as the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic, and Vocational Training Centres.

I would therefore advise you to plan timeously and wisely, and not to wait until it is too late.

***Most importantly – L & G: I wish to mention that all business which you will conclude with the Old Mutual or Nedbank today, is very important, because this will enable WAD to earn points for those businesses, which will eventually be converted into cash. These funds will immediately be ploughed back into community development.

I therefore, urge you to listen carefully to what the representatives of Old Mutual and Nedbank have to offer for your own benefit, when they address you, and to further deliberate and gather more information from their teams, at the end of the programme.

Focusing on the training which was conducted - I wish to announce that a total number of 113 students enrolled for the training courses which were presented by the WAD Trainers during the past months. Thus, a total of **143 certificates will be presented to 113 students** this morning, for having successfully completed their courses in: Computer Literacy; Office Administration; Hospitality training; training in the Contents of Gender-related laws; and lastly, the training of 24 Domestic workers in practical skills and in their rights.

Included among these students, are 16 prison inmates from the Walvis Bay prison, whom we have trained in Domestic work, consisting of 9 women and 7 men. This training was conducted to enhance the chances of the prison inmates finding jobs in the labour market once they have completed their respective prison terms.

I am particularly proud of a brilliant young man from this town, nl: **Eugene Strauss**, who attained **97% in Computer Literacy**, and **80% in Office Administration** – and I request him to stand. L & G – please give Eugene a big hand.....! Congratulations, Eugene, I am proud of you - well done!

Bearing in mind that WAD firmly believes in public-private partnerships, I respectfully appeal to the Honourable Governor and the Erongo Regional Council, to kindly take the students to the next level, and to connect them to public and private institutions within the region or in the capital, for “In-service training”, **OR** to provide the students with the necessary kick-start materials or equipment, to enable them to start own income-generating ventures, to reduce poverty and unemployment in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me now, to touch on a topic which is very close to my heart, namely **Poverty and Gender Inequality!** It is time that we should turn poverty inside-out, to get to the bottom of, **why** we are poor; **why** we are remaining poor; and how to reduce this serious social phenomenon.

Poverty, which is a social embarrassment in any country, is a shame; it is degrading and humiliating because it touches the very core of the human dignity of people.

It is an **urgent** call to action, to change this beautiful country of ours, so that many **more** may have enough to eat; or can have decent shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and to have a “voice” to address the injustices against the voiceless.

Therefore, Ladies & Gentlemen: The “Call to Action Against Poverty” is a call to justice!

...And since we are graduating 24 Domestic Workers today, another urgent call to Justice, is the “Call to Action Against the plight of Domestic Workers! Domestic Workers have, for generations, been looked down upon, as uneducated and of lesser importance in society.

In fact, Domestic Work has never been recognized as anything closely related to a career, and therefore only as recently as 2011, has a set of International labour standards been adopted by the ILO's International Labour Conference in Geneva for Domestic Work.

This Convention and recommendations are founded - and I quote - *"...on the fundamental premise that Domestic Workers are neither "servants" nor "members of the family" nor "second-class workers."*

I therefore, commend the Ministry of Labour for having established a Commission, of which I am proud to be a member with the mandate to determine a *"Minimum Wage for Domestic Workers"*, with the view to upgrade the profession and at the same time, to establish a respect for the profession.

Domestic work has forever been like a jewel, covered in mud - unrecognized and unappreciated, and yet without it a house can never be a family home. It is like a lifeless structure, without a sole.

For the very first time in the history of Domestic Work, has the realization dawned upon humanity that Domestic Work, which is being pursued by millions of mostly women and young girls across the world, is an indispensable activity.

Hardly any member of households or the wider society can fulfil their normal roles or pursue their careers without the results of the work performed by Domestic Workers.

Whether such work is performed by members of a family, or by a person specially appointed for it, domestic work forms an integral part of our daily routine and society.

As an example of how insignificant domestic work is regarded in our society, I wish to cite you the case of a housewife who slaves all day, and every day in the kitchen to prepare meals for the family and to shape order and comfort in the house, but when asked if she is employed, she would claim that she has "no work". Yet, without the unvalued domestic work put in by that housewife, the entire family would fall apart, and not be able to function properly!

This "Minimum Wage" Commission for Domestic Workers, therefore, has a mammoth task in front of them!

Just to determine a minimum wage and minimum basic living conditions for Domestic Workers, which may be regarded by employers as too stringent to meet, will therefore, be too one-sided, unless the importance of domestic Workers and the indispensable task they fulfill are put into perspective as well.

In the same breath, it should be said, that without potential employers who can pay, there wouldn't be Domestic Workers!

A fine balance should therefore, be struck, for which reorientation of employers towards the work of Domestic Workers on the one hand, and proper training and refinement regarding basic values of honesty, integrity, punctuality, cleanliness, etc on the other, are KEY ingredients!

Thus, Domestic work as a career, will never gain any recognition and respect, unless training to obtain minimum occupation standards and issues pertaining to moral values are addressed.

In light of the foregoing, employers have a justified appeal to call for a training facility in which the knowledge and skills standards of Domestic Workers can be upgraded to meet the needs of modern day households and public catering facilities.

Registration of such workers with records of qualifications, abilities and recommendations, will be in the best interest of both Domestic Workers, and employers.

I wish to take this opportunity to announce that the Erongo region has been selected by the "Minimum Wage Commission for Domestic Workers" as the first region in which interviews are being conducted, as we speak, and today the Commission is in Walvis Bay to hear views of both Domestic Workers and Employers, in order for the Commission to make an informed decision regarding its important assignment.

I therefore, as a Member of the "Minimum Wage Commission for Domestic Workers", wish to make an urgent appeal to all Domestic Workers and Employers across the country, to follow the country-wide programme of the Commission in the media and to participate in interviews granted by the Commission, in order to work out a win-win situation for both Domestic Workers and Employers.

Similarly, I wish to call upon all community members, community leaders and decision-makers, to attend the workshops for the EU-sponsored project: *“My Rights as a Woman and Namibian Citizen: Gender and Human Rights Awareness-raising for Namibian Citizens”*, in great numbers, which are currently being rolled out in all 107 constituencies country-wide by Women’s Action for Development and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

With this exciting project, it is intended to hold 400 workshops over a period of 3 years and to reach 9 000 people from all walks of life, and in the process, level the playing field for women and enhance their status in society.

So let us, as women, emerge with confidence **now**, by equipping ourselves with knowledge on how to run for public office to get into those decision-making positions of power, so as to contribute more profoundly towards the social and economic well-being of the nation!

And now, turning to you, dear Graduants: I am immensely proud of what you have achieved, because you have taken the first step towards finding a job or becoming self-employed. So, go out there now, and start marketing yourselves”.

Start immediately to create your own CV and don’t only mention what you were trained in - also mention all your strengths, such as being confident; energetic; reliable; able to work in a team; willing to work overtime; willing to learn, etc. Then find any job attachment within Government offices or the business sector to market yourselves and to gain ample experience. Perform brilliantly during this time, to make it difficult for them to let you go!

The next step is to set realistic goals with deadlines for yourselves; Concentrate on building your self-confidence; Be bold and take on opportunities; Be committed and persistent!

Never give up! Even if the outcome is not always what you had hoped for – **persevere**, because It is those who keep on living their dreams and who take actions accordingly - no matter what happens, who eventually realize their dreams.

May God bless the people and the leaders of the Erongo region and may you never give up, and abandon your dreams. **Thank you!**