



Ministry of Education



Women's Action for Development (WAD)  
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University of Namibia

**ADDRESS BY**

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**During the Official Opening of a workshop for Lifeskills Teachers on:  
*"Training and Creating Awareness in Namibian Secondary Schools  
to prevent Gender Based Violence"***

**Venue: "Roof of Africa", Windhoek - Thursday, 14 March 2013**

**Dear Workshop Facilitators; Dear Lifeskills Teachers and Ladies & Gentlemen:  
Good morning!**

On behalf of Women's Action for Development (WAD), It is my pleasure to welcome you all at this special 2-day workshop for Life Skills Teachers and School Counsellors, which will focus on the project entitled: *"Training and Creating Awareness in Namibian Secondary Schools to prevent Gender Based Violence."*

This workshop is a continuation of the training for Life Skills Teachers and School Counsellors in all secondary schools country-wide, in the causes and consequences of Gender Based Violence, which was officially launched in the capital by the late Minister of Education, Hon. Abraham Iyambo, already on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2011, and which is aimed at training Life Skills Teachers particularly on the issue of dramatically reducing violence against women and girls in the Namibian society.

It is further aimed that this training which you will receive during these 2 days will eventually resonate well with the learners in all secondary schools of the country, and which will afford learners new perspectives and insights into the causes and consequences of Gender Based Violence.

I therefore thank you for your presence and for your dedication and commitment to carry out the important contents of the training to your learners in your respective regions.

The funding which WAD received from the Spanish Government to implement this project, came at a time when the Namibian society finds itself in a serious crisis of Gender Based Violence, Passion Killing, Rape, Baby Dumping etc - and if we are honest, we will admit to ourselves that the degree of violence against women and girls has escalated so profoundly that we are compelled to find new avenues to tackle this scourge head on!

If one takes into consideration that countless voices, including **that** of the incumbent President, Faith Based Organisations, NGO's, Youth Movements etc, are continuously calling for this abnormality of violence against women and girls to be stopped, and yet it simply escalates, it is fair to conclude that **we have not done enough!**

This project is operating as a Tri-partnership and in accordance with a "Memorandum of Understanding" with -

- **Women's Action for Development**, being the Commissioning NGO and overall implementer of the project;
- **The Law Faculty of the University of Namibia**, who in turn, has operated as the Training institution and developer of the training manuals. Its training experts have, since 2011, conducted training for **Junior and Senior Secondary school Life Skills teachers and Teacher Counsellors** in all 13 regions of the country, on the causes and consequences of Gender Based Violence, which will eventually reach approx. 67 550 secondary school learners.

This training is the result of a lengthy research study which Women's Action for Development and the Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Namibia jointly conducted a few years ago in at least 8 prisons of the country, among convicted perpetrators, to determine the root causes of violence against women and girls, and to determine what goes on in the criminal mind of perpetrators when they commit these horrific deeds in society.

The findings identified, among others -

- **Alcoholism** as being the main cause for GBV; followed by
  - **Harmful cultural practices such as Labola**, which gives rise to the notion that men own women through this practice and therefore are at liberty to discipline them if they are “disobedient”;
  - **Low educational levels**
  - **Unemployment** among the perpetrators
- The third member of the Tri-partnership is **The Ministry of Education**, which has, since the Official Launch, acted as the supporting Ministry and assisted the Law Faculty in compiling the training manuals, through its “National Institute for Education Development” (NIED). The Ministry has further assisted in mobilizing Life Skills teachers and Teacher Counsellors in Secondary Schools in all 13 regions to attend the workshops; and will ensure that monitoring, evaluation and reporting take place through its identified regional officials. Additionally, it has sponsored the teachers’ Subsistence and Travelling allowances to and from workshop venues, with great appreciation.

Dear Teachers: The co-operation among the three parties, involved in this project, is an excellent example of how Government institutions and NGO’s can form synergies to achieve credible results and value for money invested - and I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the willingness and support of the Ministry of Education and the University of Namibia to put their weight behind the project.

The funding which we are fortunate to have received from the Spanish Government, is the result of the numerous GBV training interventions which WAD was rolling out during previous years to bring the findings of the aforementioned research study to the nation.

During this time, 214 workshops were conducted for all sectors of society in all 107 constituencies of the country, and at which time 8 000 people were reached. These meaningful interventions to reduce violent behavior among men, were once again made possible with the funding of the Government of Spain.

It was during these over-crowded workshops that people even sat on the floor to be more informed about the research findings.

In this context, I acknowledge, with great appreciation, the powerful inputs which were made by the Office of the Ombudsman and its trainers during the workshops, to sensitize women more particularly regarding the importance of “Protection Orders” - *for example: What is “Protection Orders”; how to apply for “Protection Orders”; and how “Protection Orders” are enforced.*

A significant experience during these workshops was that 1 300 abused women came forward for counseling. However, in attempting to assist these women, we came up against another problem, which is a severe shortage of social workers in the country to assist with this mammoth task. I trust that the University of Namibia; the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, will take note of this shortage.

Another challenge was that out of the 8 000 citizens that were reached, merely between 35% and 40% male attendance was observed. Many men stayed away because they ostensibly suffer from a guilt complex because of the numerous atrocities they commit against women, while it was further found that men view Gender Based Violence workshops as a “woman’s issue”.

The aforementioned realities prompted the organisation to come up with a programme that would be strictly aimed at inspiring Namibian men and young boys to become **more** involved in the fight against Gender Based Violence - And on that basis, “**Men’s Action Against Violence**” or (**MAAV**) was established by WAD and its partners, which include: the Office of the Ombudsman; the Ministry of Gender Equality & Child Welfare; the Namibian Police; and the Law Faculty of the University of Namibia.

At this point, WAD was prompted to come up with an additional programme that would also be strictly aimed at inspiring young boys and girls, to become **more** involved in the fight against Gender Based Violence..... And on that basis, another application for funding was submitted by WAD to the Spanish Government to fund this project in which we are engaged today, with great success!

Dear Teachers: WAD came up with this project –

1. Because its vast experience has shown that there are insufficient programmes in Namibia, aimed at young girls and boys, to address cultural practices that impede the development of women, and which are in direct conflict with the Namibian Constitution.
2. Because there are insufficient programmes that are aimed at teaching young boys about the values associated with being a man - and the values associated with being a woman - and how the two can relate to each other throughout their lives.
3. Hence, to bridge these gaps, it is envisaged to create a new generation of boys who are interested in the advancement of women, to honor them, respect them as honorable human beings and to further inspire men to fight for the plight of women, well-knowing that the majority of crimes committed against women, are committed by men and who are labeled as the main culprits!
4. It is further envisaged to sensitize young boys at all levels, to become true Ambassadors for domestic peace and goodwill for the promotion of women's rights - and to effectively involve boys and girls in the mainstream of activities that are aimed at addressing the problem of Gender Based Violence.
5. Furthermore, it is imperative to equip Life Skills Teachers with knowledge of the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls, according to the findings of the research project, who in turn, will deal with these issues in their respective Life Skills classes; and
6. To enhance the participation of both boys and girls in programmes, aimed at protecting the rights of women in the country, through Life Skills;

Ladies & Gentlemen: The severity and extent of social problems, experienced by WAD as Community Developer in the Namibian society, leave no doubt that young people, starting adult life, a career or married life, do not know how to go about it in the best possible way.

And because of a lack of tested knowledge, they sadly stumble along the route of trial and error and in the process, many costly and painful mistakes are made, which could have been avoided if *“Life Skills” as a subject*, were viewed and taught with greater significance!

It is WAD’s view that Life Skills is the most appropriate subject at schools to prepare young people for life; how to behave as a civilized and respectable husband within the marital context; how to respect women, their families, their teachers and themselves, while the same applies to the female gender.

Although Life Skills as a subject, is crucial to cultivate disciplined citizens to respect moral values, integrity, discipline etc, WAD is greatly concerned that it has been seriously neglected in all schools country-wide, while Namibia has consequently become a country where Gender Based Violence continues unabated!

So, after having done a mini-survey among learners a year ago, WAD has ascertained that Life Skills is viewed by most learners as their “free period” - a subject that can be taught by any teacher, who would use this period to mark examination papers, or home work of learners, thereby losing a golden opportunity to prepare learners to cope with life!

Thus, dear Teachers: Given the great importance of the foregoing, Women’s Action for Development has respectfully appealed to the late Minister of Education and to the Ministry of Education in general –

1. To henceforth view Life Skills with the importance and respect which it deserves by all players, and to contribute towards research, together with the “National Institute for Educational Development” (NIED), and the University of Namibia, on the compilation of a separate syllabus for Life Skills for various grades at school level;
2. To pronounce “Life Skills as an examinable subject and to view Life Skills as a subject, crucial to prepare learners for life and to cultivate citizens to respect the core values of civilized cohabitation;
3. To appoint teachers who are **fully qualified** to teach Life Skills; and

4. To view Life Skills as a subject, crucial to give impetus to the commendable project, ***“Nation-building and National Pride”***, which was launched by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Namibia during 2012.

**WAD further appeals to the University of Namibia -**

1. To develop a syllabus for student teachers, containing appropriate and identifiable content for Life Skills and to pronounce it as a separate and examinable subject; and
2. To prepare teachers who are qualified to teach Life Skills at school level;

In conclusion, Ladies & Gentlemen: As Community Developer, gravely concerned about the serious social challenges which the organisation is forced to deal with on a daily basis, it is WAD’s conviction that if more emphasis is placed on “Life Skills” to prepare young learners how to deal with life, their careers, their marriages, their family lives....moral values, discipline, etc - and how to respect themselves and women and girls in general, we would not have to bow our heads in shame regarding all the atrocities which are committed within our society, every single day, including Passion Killing, Rape, Baby Dumping, Teenage Pregnancies, etc!

I trust that this project, which you are now a part of, will herald a new beginning in the Namibian society because, we have seen enough bloodshed; enough tears; enough suffering; enough loss of lives of our mothers and daughters.....!

Let us henceforth view “Life Skills” as the Golden Subject - the KEY towards establishing a moral society – one that is crucial to give impetus to the commendable project, ***“Nation-building and National Pride”***.

Let us, as educationalists, never stand accused of producing learned Hooligans, who eventually become criminals and are unable to deal with life; and who are unable to contribute towards a civilized society, because of the neglect of Life Skills.

Let us instead join hands to transform Namibia into a safe and peaceful country, for the benefit of our entire nation, but also for potential tourists and investors, because this in turn, will contribute greatly to the economic stability and well-being of our country.

**...And on that note, I wish you fruitful deliberations and gainful insights - and I now have the pleasure to declare this workshop officially open. Thank you!**