



**OPENING ADDRESS BY VERONICA DE KLERK
WAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
during the
Official Launch of the project:
*“Wise Economy Partner Driven Cooperation”***

**Friday, 15 February 2013
Mutual Towers, Independence Avenue, Windhoek**

Director of Ceremonies:

Ms Carin Lann: Director of the “Lann Development Consultants” – Sweden;
Ms Evelyn Breuer: Board Member of the Namibian Employers’ Fed.;
Ms Claudine Mouton: Director of the “SMEs Compete”;
WAD BEE Partners: Old Mutual Namibia; Nedbank; and Mutual & Federal;
Businesswomen Associates;
Members of the Media; and
Ladies & Gentlemen:

Good morning!

Please allow me to extend a warm Namibian welcome, in particular to Ms Carin Lann, Director of the “**Lann Development Consultants” Sweden**, to our Capital, and indeed a warm welcome to her at this important Media Briefing.

I further welcome you, the members of the media, at this Briefing, while thanking you for your continuous interest and regular attendance at all WAD’s development programmes.

Focusing on the project which we are launching today, I am indeed very pleased to announce that after the Secretary-General of the Employers’ Federation, Mr Tim Parkhouse and myself, paid a visit to Sweden last year, an agreement was

concluded, out of which most exciting new opportunities for Namibian businesswomen are in the process of taking shape in the form of a project, namely - the ***“Wise Economy Partner Driven Cooperation”*** .

This project will be implemented as a quadruple partnership among the following institutions:

**Lann Development Consultants Sweden
The Chamber Trade Sweden (CTS)
Women’s Action for Development (WAD); and
The Namibian Employers’ Federation (NEF)**

The project, which seeks to train between 200 and 300 women during this year, to run their own businesses, is being funded by the “Swedish International Development Agency” (SIDA) and the Government of Sweden to the tune of N\$1,9 Million.

Given the foregoing, I wish to extend my most sincere gratitude towards the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the Government of Sweden, for their genuine commitment and support to assist Namibian business women in this exceptional manner.

Ladies & Gentlemen - For business women in Namibia, this is a dream come true because with this most welcome Swedish assistance, business women at the entry level will be developed and assisted to proceed to the mid-level of business expertise and activities, while those already there will be trained to progress to the advanced level.

However, women already operating at the advanced level will be pushed through training, to operate at the international level to take part in multi-lateral business operations and trade fairs in partnership with Botswana, South Africa and Sweden.

With regard to women starting at the entry level of business operations, for example hawkers etc, it came to our attention that some women at this level are so successful that they are even able to pay for their children’s university

expenses when they are unsuccessful in obtaining study bursaries. This proves the point that many women at this level indeed have exceptional business acumen which cannot be left without further training. The fact that some women are doing well, simply means that they would excel with proper training.

Other women at the entry level, are however often the victims of unscrupulous clients who cheat them because some of them may be semi-literate or even illiterate and thus, easy targets to be cheated. Training for such women will thus, have to start from the absolute basics, including training them on how to use calculators to assist them with calculations.

Some of the short term objectives are to enable WAD and the NEF to become promoters of Women's Economic Empowerment in Namibia and to enable WAD to improve its organisational development for the upliftment of women's entrepreneurship in Namibia, in cooperation with the "SMEs Compete Consultancy", which is a well established organisation, currently providing consultancy services to SMEs with a data base of well over 1 300 businesses.

The project further seeks to tap into networks on Women's Economic Empowerment with South Africa, through the NGO, "Mhani Gingi; as well as through the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, in Botswana and other countries in Southern Africa, where the Chamber Trade Sweden has networks.

This project implies the liberation of business women in Namibia to become an authoritative force in the economy of our country, not only by helping to establish more women entrepreneurs, but also to establish international business links and in so doing, attract foreign capital into our economy.

Obvious benefits for Namibia will be employment creation, the improvement of the disposable income situation of households, and therefore, poverty reduction.

Although there has all along been some economic activity in terms of business pursuits by women, it has been hamstrung by a host of disempowering curtailments such as a lack of knowledge, lack of access to markets and funding, male prejudice etc.

Business women in Namibia consequently never really dreamt BIG beyond the scope of their modest backyard businesses, with few exceptions. In the process Namibia was denied the explosive growth which women-initiated business ventures can manifest, based on hard work, zeal and perseverance which women are known for.

With the project, “Wise Economy-Namibia”, women will learn how to dream big and how to grow their businesses as big as they can dream, way beyond the small horizons which the local market can offer.

It remains an inbuilt impediment that if you can't dream big beyond all the obstacles which women have grown up with, the driving force of imagination and the will to make it real, cannot be unleashed.

For far too long, has the real muscle of the economic potential of the greater half of the Namibian population been subdued and shackled due to the well-known stone age oppressive obstructions that are put in the way of women's development.

The “Wise Economy – Namibia” project seeks to generate a momentum in women to over run all such obstacles and empower women to start driving their economic destiny themselves.

We are all aware of all the ends women currently are forced to go to, in order to earn a meagre living and to care for their children at home, including prostitution, albeit mostly against their will, humbling themselves and returning at their own peril, to abusive husbands or partners whose children they rear; selling kaperas and beer in wind and rain etc.

Others are forced to dump their babies like animals because of economic considerations and unwilling fathers who refuse to pay maintenance for raising their children.

Nobody can therefore, deny the devotion of Namibian women to pursue a cause that would generate some income for the family especially in light of the countless fathers who refuse to care for their children.

Women's Action for Development abhors such shocking slackness of deserting fathers and is fired up to empower women to work out their own salvation through training and economic upliftment and in the process, unbridle their business initiative.

Needless to say, Namibia is deeply appreciative of the Swedish taxpayer whose toil and hard earned money are assisting to develop Namibian women so generously, to enhance their business expertise and to rise up to economic freedom.

In closing, Ladies & Gentlemen - In view of this exceptional outreach and goodwill by Sweden, it is the moral obligation of all women who will be participating in this project, to seize this golden opportunity and to go the extra mile for the sake of their own empowerment, and to thoroughly sharpen their business skills.

Women, who are already running small businesses are therefore, called upon today to come forward to participate in this project.

It is the dream of WAD and its partners to see the ultimate growth of large women-driven business houses as a result of this initiative.

In this context, Ladies & Gentlemen - it will be a great oversight if I neglect to mention the exceptional role which Carin Lann played to secure funding for this project. She was the visionary driving force who so passionately believe in this project and who serves as a tower of strength to myself and our partners. Thank you so much Carin, we will surely see the fruits of our hard work.

Needless to say, it is this kind of goodwill which brings distant nations together and which will eliminate the dark holes of poverty and under-development on our planet.

It is thus, the sincere wish of WAD that this project will bear the fruit it is hoped for, through this exceptional Partner-Driver Cooperation of Sweden, Namibia, South Africa and Botswana.

Thank you!