



Electoral Commission of Namibia

“Enhancing Electoral Integrity through Innovation: The Namibian Experience”

**PRESENTATION BY
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16-17 February, 2016
Lopota Lake, Kakheti, Georgia

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- RELEVANT DEFINITIONS (MEANING) ELECTORAL INTEGRITY
- ECN'S APPROACH TO ENHANCING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY
- BIOMETRICS VOTERS REGISTRATION SYSTEM
- ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES
- VOTER VERIFICATION DEVICES
- INTERACTIVE RESULTS TRANSMISSION – ECN/MEDIA COLLABORATION
- ELECTORAL LAW REFORMS
- POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING
- MEDIA ACCESS
- PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ON DEMOCRACY
- VOTER EDUCATION
- CODE OF CONDUCT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES
- MANDATORY POST-ELECTION REPORT

Definitions for Electoral Integrity

- There is no generally accepted definition of ‘electoral integrity’, and it is not clear as yet, that it can serve as a comprehensive and independent concept, or as an overarching quality standard, or a synonym for a ‘good election’.
- The following three meanings or definitions of the word “integrity” are relevant to elections:
 - ❖ **Incorruptibility or a firm adherence to a code of moral values**
 - ❖ **Soundness or unimpaired condition**
 - ❖ **Completeness or state of being complete**

ECN approach to Enhancing Election Integrity

- To underscore the importance of electoral integrity as a guiding principle, the Electoral Commission of Namibia itself has further incorporated these aspects in its own **Mission Statement**, which *is to promote and deliver free, fair and credible elections, managed in a transparent, innovative and participatory manner to the Namibian people.*
- Thus, the Mission Statement further focuses the activities of the institution towards guaranteeing the integrity of the electoral process.

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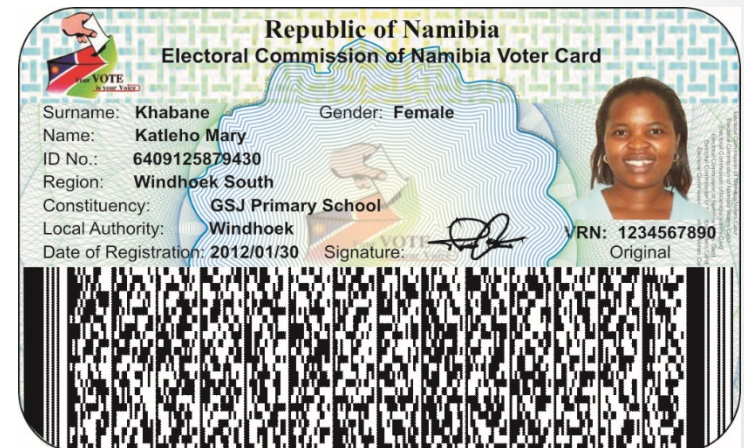
- In addition, the Electoral Commission itself as an institution has adopted the following five **Core Values**, including INTEGRITY, Accountability, Non-Partisanship, Professionalism, and the Secrecy of the Vote. In terms of the ECN Core Values, **INTEGRITY** is to uphold honesty and transparency in the electoral process; In practical terms, in order to enhance **integrity, transparency** and the **credibility** of elections, the ECN has taken a bold decision to make use of technological innovations and various electoral reforms in order to enhance electoral integrity at all levels of its electoral processes.

Biometrics Voters Registration System

- Introduced biometrics voters registration system for the first time during the 2014 General Voters Registration Exercise



- Integrity, Efficiency & Professionalism



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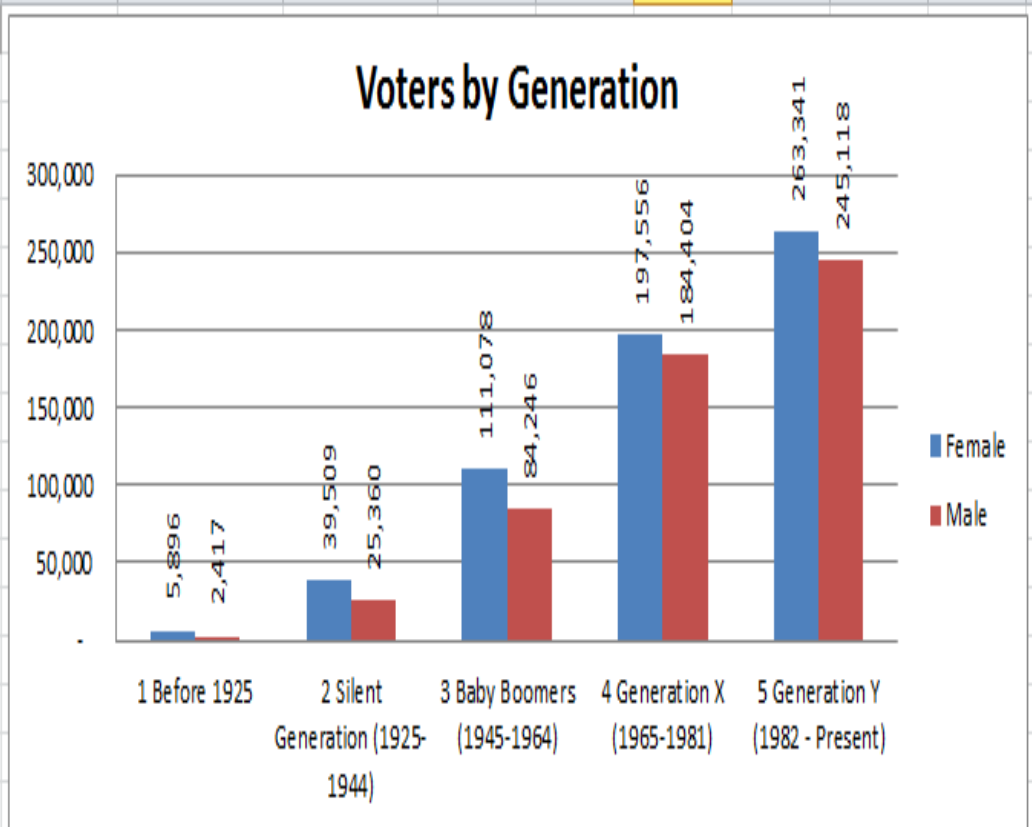
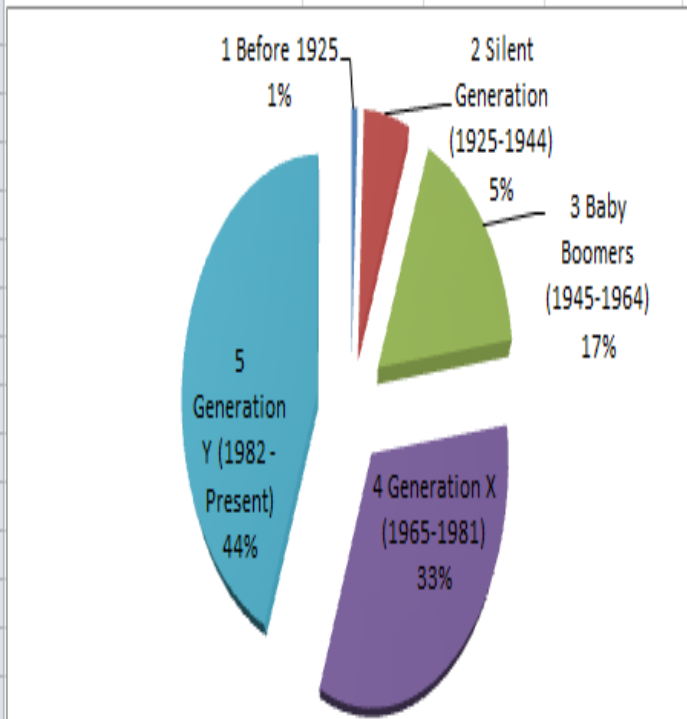
- ECN now has a distinct ability to instantly detect any duplicate entries appearing on the voters' register through the application of an **Automatic Finger Print Identification System (AFIS)** matching.
- With the introduction of this new technology, the ECN managed to register half the population within 54 days by capturing all 10 fingerprints of every voter including their digital images, signatures and full biographical data.
- The ECN also issued a new, more durable PVC type Voter Card with enhanced security features to each and every voter. This was a huge improvement on the previous paper based laminated Voter Card which could be easily reproduced by unscrupulous persons.

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- The ECN also issued a new, more durable PVC type Voter Card with enhanced security features to each and every voter. This was a huge improvement on the previous paper based laminated Voter Card which could be easily reproduced by unscrupulous persons.
- There is also increased potential for system interface with databases of other government institutions for example, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration for purposes of removing names of deceased persons.
- The new system of voter's registration is based on a sophisticated data base which allows for generation of reports and the disaggregation of voters' information in different data sets as may be required.
- The new system also give us the capability to retrieve statistical information both for analysis and observing trends and patterns necessary for use in planning electoral operations. (See Figure 1 below)

Figure 1

DESCRIPTION	Female	Male	Grand Total	% of total voters
1 Before 1925	5,896	2,417	8,313	0.72%
2 Silent Generation (1925-1944)	39,509	25,360	64,869	5.60%
3 Baby Boomers (1945-1964)	111,078	84,246	195,324	16.85%
4 Generation X (1965-1981)	197,556	184,404	381,960	32.96%
5 Generation Y (1982 - Present)	263,341	245,118	508,459	43.87%
Grand Total	617,380	541,545	1,158,925	100.00%



Born Frees	Registered voters	% of total voters
Female	118,413	10.22%
Male	110,290	9.52%
TOTAL	228,703	19.73%

Electronic Voting Machines

- The ECN took a bold step of faith by introducing the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the electoral process. In a historical first in the history of the African Continent, Namibia managed to successfully introduce and implement electronic balloting without any major problem



How did the EVM's enhance integrity?

- Increased efficiency in terms of vote casting
- Increased speed and accuracy in the counting and tabulation of results
- Total elimination of human error
- Zero spoilt ballots
- Quicker and seamless process of announcing election results
- Generation of results printouts for record keeping

Possible challenges to EVM implementation

- The objective of introducing electronic voting may be undermined if other polling day processes are not prepared for in a manner that allows for a seamless operation.
- Namibia experienced some bottlenecks at the point of voter verification due to malfunctioning devices and/or operator errors.
- This situation caused delays and led to suspicions and doubts amongst some of the voters regarding the efficiency of the EVM's – which had nothing to do with those delays

Voter Verification Devices

- In the quest to improve the voter verification during the polling process, the ECN acquired electronic Handheld Voter Verification Devices (VVDs), which were used throughout the country to verify whether a voter was eligible to vote and that he/she is on the voters' roll. In other words, the VVDs were used to verify the validity of the voter's cards and for physical authentication of the voter



How do VVD's increase efficiency?

- Ability to deploy multiple digital voters registers with increased efficiency
- Faster voter verification and authentication
- More economical and save cost– drastic reduction in the number of paper based voters registers to be printed
- Better management of “Unrecovered Voter Registration Cards List” – to eliminate possibility of voters using two different voters cards

VVD Roll-out Challenges

- There were unnecessary delays due to technical problems and human errors committed by the officials operating the devices
- Most delays were caused by the operators of the devices due to lack of adequate training
- Short lead times for manufacturing and delivery of VVD's had a negative domino effect on the deployment plan
- It should be emphasised that the human factor played a role in the problems

Results Transmission , ECN/MEDIA Collaboration

- The Namibian electoral law makes provision for election results from various collation centers located in constituencies across the country, to be certified as correct at the Central Election Results Centre by the Chief Electoral Officer after auditing of results.
- Thereafter, the election results are endorsed/signed off by the Chairperson. As soon as the results are endorsed by the Chairperson, they are made public, meaning they are shared with stakeholders such as the media and political parties.

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- The results are also displayed on a large screen in the ECN where the public could follow as results came in. A dedicated website is also created with election results for the public viewing.
- All these measurements contributes towards **transparency** and **confidence building**, and ultimately, to the enhancement of electoral integrity of the election process

Electoral Law Reforms

- The ECN partnered with other stakeholders to embark on the Electoral Law Reform Project
- The ELRP culminated in the complete overhaul of the Electoral Act and the enactment of the new *Electoral Act, Act No. 5 of 2014*. The Electoral Act, Act 5 of 2014, was promulgated on 8 October 2014 and it came into operation on 17 October 2014.
- The new Electoral Act, Act No.5 of 2014 provides for the **code of conduct** of political parties which is enforceable. This is a new development which enhances **accountability**.
- It is important to note that the **Third Amendment Act of the Constitution** which was passed simultaneously with the new Electoral Act, has elevated the Electoral Commission to a **Constitutional body** answerable and subject to the Constitution of Namibia and the laws governing the ECN's activities and procedures.

Political Party Financing

- In Namibia, funding of political parties is regulated in terms of the Electoral Act (2014). There is no one single Political Finance Regulator. The regulatory functions of the PFR are distributed between the National Assembly (Parliament), the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Auditor-General to ensure compliance.
- With regard to the funding formula, the funding of political parties is done on the basis of **proportional representation** in the National Assembly. This formula of proportional representation (as contained in Article 49 of the Namibian Constitution) serves to contribute to the fairness of distributing the funds.
- In order to enhance electoral integrity, there is first and foremost, the need to adopt political finance laws through the legislative process. The entire process must be transparent and all the relevant stakeholders must be sufficiently consulted for their inputs before the laws are passed by the legislative body.

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- ECN is in the process of introducing regulations that would further enhance transparency and provide for enforcement and procedures on how violators of the law would be sanctioned. A Stakeholders Workshop will be conducted early March to engage all political parties on their obligations in terms of political party funding.

MEDIA ACCESS

- During the holding of elections airtime allocation to political parties is governed and managed through the Namibia Broadcasting Policy on Election Coverage and Guidelines.
- The Policy intends to facilitate fair and equitable coverage of all political parties and/or candidates prior to/during/after elections on NBC Television and Radio.
- In Namibia, the expectation is more on the public broadcasters than their private sector counterparts, to avail free airtime to political parties for political parties and candidates messages. This policy was therefore adopted in order to regulate the coverage of political activities and the allocation of airtime.

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- Over and above the free airtime being provided, political parties may purchase additional airtime on their own accord using their own resources. The rate at which such additional airtime is sold is consistent with what is provided for in the corporate rate card. No live reads on Radio and TV are permitted.
- It is gratifying to note that the process of airtime allocation have been managed in an equitable and transparent manner.
- No complaints were noted from political parties, associations or independent candidates during the past national elections whatsoever. This has contributed immensely to entrenching integrity in the electoral process.

Public Perceptions on Elections

- The 2009 national elections left a big legacy of controversy for Namibia's young democracy.
- In addition to the prolonged court case that bounced between the High Court and the Supreme Court, some opposition parties refused to take their seats until the legal challenge was addressed by the High Court.
- Survey conducted by the IPPR revealed that although there is a slight decline of 6% after the national elections of 2009, the 2012 responses were in line with the overall trend since 1999 of Namibians seeing their elections as generally free and fair.

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- Namibians also retained trust in the Electoral Commission of Namibia in 2012, though this number was also down slightly against previous surveys. The 2009 election challenge did not dramatically erode public confidence in the Namibian election process.
- Finally, actual voting behavior is important for democratic consolidation. When asked if they voted in the last national election (2009), 69% indicated that they had voted, up from 63% saying so in 2008. Removing the number of respondents who were too young to vote at that time, the rate climbs to 80% turnout. This is in line with international and national estimates.
- Surveys are currently being conducted to gauge the level of public confidence in the election process following the 2014 and 2015 National and local elections respectively

Voter Education Programs

- At its core, the ECN voter education program is designed to ensure that all eligible voters are informed, ready, willing, and able to participate freely in all electoral activities. Thus, the voter education program encompasses various issues that contributes to the maintenance of integrity in the electoral processes such as transparency, accuracy and accountability.
- In essence, voter education program contributes immensely to political tolerance in the country among all the participating political parties, voters and other key stakeholders.

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- All stakeholders such as political parties, civil society organizations, members of the public are included in the various training sessions conducted by the Division: Democracy Building aimed at enhancing integrity, better understanding of the electoral activities, the political and legal framework in which the elections are conducted.
- The voter education program educates stakeholders about the principles and tenets of democratic elections which subsequently will make them accept the election results with self-confidence, and if there were some irregularities transpired during the electoral process they can follow the right procedures to remedy the situation via prescribed laws or measures.
- Voter education on the EVM's was extensive and ECN managed to reach approximately 90% of the electorate.

Code of Conduct for Political Parties

- The ECN also used this significant platform to, amongst others, promote awareness and commitment to the Code of Conduct for Political Parties. One crucial tenet of free fair and credible elections is freedom of political campaigning by all contestants and all contestants must be guided and bound by agreed rules which are commonly known as the Code of Conduct.
- The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to promote conditions that are conducive to a free and fair election that include tolerance for democratic debate and political activity and for free expression of individual opinions and beliefs. Central to this purpose is the promotion of political tolerance all stakeholders which, in turn, contribute towards the enhancement of electoral integrity in Namibia.

Performance Assessment Report

- The **accountability** of the ECN is one of the important aspects of the ECN legal mandate. ECN is obliged to produce a performance assessment and post-election report in accordance with section 116 of the Electoral Act.
- In terms of the latest Constitutional Amendment, the ECN has become an independent constitutional body only accountable to Parliament.
- The ECN compiled the Performance Assessment and Post-Election Report on the 2014 Presidential and National Assembly Elections which it has been presented to the Hon Speaker of the National Assembly for presentation to the National Assembly. The performance assessment and post-election report is another example of the ECN living its Core Values, including transparency and integrity.

THANK YOU