# THE ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION REGARDING RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE OSHANA REGION OF NAMIBIA

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**A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Administration in the School of Government, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape.**

**October 2005**

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# DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to the memory of my late grandmother, Susanna Mhingana Iiyambo; for her courage and advice from my childhood. Her departure on the 24th October 2004 has left a vacuum in the family, and indeed, in me, a memory which will never faint for the rest of my life. That is why I am saying: '*Hambelela Nyokokulu, Nyoko ngeno ina dalwa*', if loosely translated it means; Praise your grandmother otherwise your mother could not have been born". Thank you grandmother!

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# DECLARATION

I declare that *The Role of Regional Councillors in Consultation and Communication regarding Rural Service Delivery in the Oshana Region of Namibia* is my own unaided work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Tuhafeni Helao                                                    October 2005

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Signature

# KEY WORDS

Accountability

Community members

Constituency

Consultation by Regional Councillors

Decentralization

Oshana region

Namibia

Regional Councillor

Service delivery

# ABSTRACT

The study examines the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in Namibia, with specific reference to the Oshana region. The research problem of this study is that inadequate consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members in the Oshana region takes place. The research includes a case study that assesses the degree and the extent to which consultation and communication takes place between Regional Councillors and community members at constituency level in the region. It also examines the inevitability of consultation and communication concerning basic services provision such as water and electricity in the Oshana region.

The primary focus of this study is to examine and assess the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region. The secondary objectives are: to establish theoretical framework for consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in regional governance, to develop findings by interpreting data collected in the case study. Finally, to draw conclusions and provide recommendations that could help readers, Regional Councillors and community members in understanding the situation in the Oshana region.

The research is literature-based and drew on both primary and secondary sources to address the research problem. Primary sources such as the Constitution of Namibia, Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992, Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992 Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995 and Council of Traditional Leaders Act 13 of 1997 were reviewed. Secondary sources which include academic books, reports and newspaper reports were used to support the above-mentioned statement. Structured interviews and informal discussions with community members, observation of community meetings where Regional Councillors were present and research schedules in an interview situation with community leaders were conducted. Questionnaires were handed and completed by Regional Councillors.

The study revealed that inadequate consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members in the Oshana region indeed exist. The findings of the research indicate that a great effort has been made by the Oshana Regional Council to address the problem. However, the slow pace under which decentralization process takes place hinders the effort of the Council and, in fact, service delivery in the region. This showed that success in the service delivery lies in an adequate consultation and effective communication with community members. Instruments for consultation and communication, resources and significant autonomy should be given to the Regional Council. Furthermore, it is argued in this study that, adequate consultation and communication could not be realized unless community participation and involvement in the development activities of the respective constituencies is mobilized.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    BACKGROUND

The post-1990 period saw the Namibian Parliament enacted the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992.  The enactment and ultimately the promulgation of this piece of legislation paved the way for the establishment of regional government and, subsequently, the elections of Regional Councillors in all thirteen political and administrative regions. In 1992 the first Regional Council elections were held and resulted into every region in Namibia got its own Regional Governor and Regional Councillors as elected representatives of the people.

It is worth noting that prior to the Regional Councils elections; in 1991 the President of the Republic of Namibia has appointed a Delimitation Commission which demarcated Namibia into thirteen regions. Every region was further demarcated into constituencies. The exercise was conducted to make sure that the regional leaderships know precisely where their jurisdiction starts and ends. Accordingly, the 1992 Regional Councillors elections put forward political leadership to ensure that government programmes and functions are brought closer to the grassroots communities to whom services have been denied for long time. Instantly, this promoted participatory democracy and afforded the community members the opportunity to participate in decision making pertaining to service delivery in their respective regions. It also allowed the community members the opportunity to play a fundamental role in matters that are affecting their daily lives.

Although there are no policy making forum at regional level in Namibia as yet, Regional Councillors are very instrumental in the policy making process due to the fact that they constitute a second house (National Council) of parliament that reviews bills passed by the National Assembly. Regional Councillors are crucial to the

development of the regions in Namibia in the sense that they are strategically positioned in a manner that allow them to interact with the grassroots communities on a daily basis. As stipulated in the Regional Councils Act 1992, the responsibilities of Regional Councillors, amongst others, are to plan, co-ordinate and facilitate services in order to enhance the social and economic development of the regions.

For that reason, significant autonomous and 'independence' of the Regional Councillors is essential to enable them to function effectively and render satisfactory public services. Jones and Stewart (King & Pierre, 1990) state that the independence of regional government …lies in its being local. This implies that the Regional Councillors take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the people they are serving. Moreover, this can be realized (and this is the main focus of this study) if there is appropriate mechanisms in place for adequate consultation and effective communication between Regional Councillors and community members at the grassroots echelons.

The Oshana region (which is the case study in this research) is the smallest of Namibia's thirteen regions in terms of geographical size. The name Oshana lends it well to this region as it describes the most prominent landscape feature in the area, namely the shallow, seasonally inundated depressions which underpin the local agro ecological system. The region is highly populated especially in the northern part of the region. The region has a surface area of 5 291 km² (Government of the Republic of Namibia: SDC[1], 1998). In terms of geographical location, the Oshana region is bordered by Ohangwena region to the north, to the east by Oshikoto region, to the south by Kunene region and Omusati region to the west (See Appendix I). The Oshana region is sub-demarcated into ten (10) constituencies. These constituencies are as follows: Okaku, Okatana, Okatjali, Ompundja, Ondangwa, Ongwediva, Oshakati-East, Oshakati-West, Uukwiyuushona and Uuvudhiya. The region has currently a population of 161 977. About 69 percent of the region's population lives in rural areas, compared to 31 percent in urban areas (National Planning

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[1]The Second Delimitation Commission was appointed by the President of the Republic of Namibia in 1998 to look into the issue of the regional and constituent borders and eventually demarcate the regions and constituencies in Namibia.

Commission, 2001). The main language spoken in the region is Oshiwambo. Service delivery to rural communities in the region has become a topical issue since the inception of regional government in Namibia. Rural populace started questioning the inadequacy in consultation and communication between councillors and community members concerning service delivery.
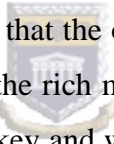
It is in this light, that it becomes imperative to undertake this study in order to examine and assess whether inadequate consultation and communication indeed exist between Regional Councillors and community members in the Oshana region of Namibia. In the same vein, the study examines whether the high degree of consultation and communication that use to take place between politicians and electorate during elections time, is a continuous process or fades away after elections. The study is significant in the sense that the interaction between the Regional Councillors and community members underscores the degree of community participation and the extent to which rural communities in the Oshana region are consulted regarding rural service delivery.

## 1.2    RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the Namibian context, as the case in any other democratic country, Regional Councillors are democratically elected representatives of the people that are closer to the grassroots. Therefore, Regional Councillors are under moral responsibility to conform to norms of community consultation and communication in order to promote rural participation into the planning, designing and implementation of rural programmes and projects. However, at present, the process of consultation and communication between councillors and community members in the Oshana region needs to be revisited in order to make it more inclusive of all the rural communities. This is in line with the Decentralization Policy that sets the legal framework for the functions and services decentralization. Decentralization Policy makes provision for elected representatives to consult and communicate with the grassroots people when it comes to the provision of basic services and the development of the regions.

Therefore, **the research problem of this study is that, inadequate consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members in the Oshana region takes place**. It is assumed however, that some people in the rural areas of the Oshana region do not have access to some basic services due to inadequate consultation and ineffective communication between Regional Councillors and community members.
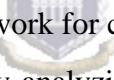
When the Government of the Republic of Namibia implements programmes such as water and electricity provision to rural areas; the grassroots people are not consulted sufficiently and extensively. This made rural communities to complain of the inequalities in the provision of such infrastructure and services. Rural communities feel that they are overlooked when it comes to the planning, designing and implementation of those programmes and projects. Rural communities, particularly in the Oshana region feel that politicians make policies that are put into operation, but with minimal involvement and contribution by the grassroots communities. Dogbe (1998: 97) clearly indicates that the one who rides the donkey does not know the ground is hot, in other words, the rich man can not know or feel the poor man's problems unless he get off the donkey and walks on the ground or unless he asks the poor man. It is against this background that this research focuses on the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia. Particularly, the issue under assessment in this study is to ascertain the degree and the extent to which consultation and communication takes place between Regional Councillors and rural communities.

The widely perception that rural people are poor and cannot afford certain services should be discouraged. While there might be reality in the preceding statement, it should be emphasized that all people, irrespective of their localities (rural or urban), are equal in terms of needs and service provision, hence, it is imperative to consult and communicate with them prior to rural programmes and projects planning, designing and implementation. It is argued, however, in this study that it is essential for Regional Councillors to assess and understand the situation on the ground prior to policies implementation. This allows them to focus and respond to the real needs and

expectations of the masses on the ground. This can be realized through adequate consultation and effective communication with the grassroots communities. It must be noted that while the government of Namibia has good policies in place concerning services provision; the implementation thereof, specifically, in the rural areas is held back by inadequate interaction between Regional Councillors and community members. It is only when the majority of the people at the grassroots level have been adequately consulted, that service delivery will considerably improve in rural areas. Proper consultation can complement the government effort on poverty alleviation, social, political and economic development of the regions.

## 1.3    RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary focus of this study is to examine and assess the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication with community members regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region. The secondary objectives are:

- to establish a theoretical framework for consultation and communication;
- to develop research findings by analyzing and interpreting data collected in the case study; and
- to draw conclusions and provide recommendations that could assist Regional Councillors, academics, readers and community members in understanding the significance of consultation and communication in terms of rural service delivery.

By referring to the above, the research has addressed the following research questions:
- What is the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication with community members regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia?
- To what degree and extent does consultation and communication take place between Regional Councillors and rural communities?

- What other options could be employed to improve consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and the grassroots communities?
- What specific mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate adequate consultation and effective communication between councillors and community members?

## 1.4    LITERATURE REVIEW

Article 18 of the Namibian Constitution, Act 1 of 1990, makes provisions for institutions and administrative bodies to act fairly and reasonably when dealing with the provision of services to people. Furthermore, Section 28 of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 stipulates that Regional Councillors should coordinate services and advise the central government on matters of community interests. Therefore, if Regional Councillors in the Oshana region are not adequately consulting and effectively communicating with community members concerning basic services provision, it is in a way, a denial of the constitutional rights to the people.

Chapter 12 of the ruling party (SWAPO[2]) election manifesto of 1989, states that under a SWAPO government, independent Namibia will have democratically elected local authorities, both in rural and urban areas, in order to give power to the people at the grassroots level to make decisions on matters affecting their lives. Correspondingly, the Namibian Government Decentralization Policy compels lower levels of government to interact with people at the grassroots level and render basic services in accordance with the needs and expectations of the grassroots communities. The Decentralization Policy further points out that an overriding pre-occupation of the Namibia state and government is the extension of democracy to the people of Namibia to whom it has been unjustly denied for so long.  In other words, the government encourages participatory democracy and involvement of local communities through regular consultation and communication between elected representatives and community members. In effect, that promotes good relationship,

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[2] South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), is a political party which became the ruling party after the 1990 general elections in Namibia.

understanding and trust between the grassroots communities and the elected representatives. Lack of consultation, on the other hand, on service delivery hampers rural development and thus awful social conditions such as poverty, diseases, unemployment and hunger of which poverty is the most appalling in rural areas. Becker (1997: 2) emphasizes that the eradication of poverty is the crucial and attainable goal of the international community… government, public and private institutions, and members of the civil society have to be involved. In the same vein, Mackenzie (1992: 29) argues that development policies must be oriented directly towards the problems of poverty, and must be motivated, initiated and controlled from the bottom. For that reason, it is expected of the elected representatives (councillors) in the Oshana region to ensure that sufficient institutions and communication channels are put in place, through which rural people could reach councillors and raise pertinent issues that are affecting their daily lives. Regional Councillors should be approachable, accessible and most significantly, councillors should have institutions where social dialogue could take place. Various authors such as McNaughton (1998), Malpass and Murie (1999) emphasize that regional and local government management as institutions closer to the people should be well managed and efficiently run in order to improve the standard of living of local people.

Accordingly, Totemeyer (1985: 6) asserts that Regional Councils do have the potential to improve the quality of life and upgrade services for all citizens. Totemeyer (1993:104) further argues that any regional economic development policy must be complemented by a comprehensive society policy which attacks the cause of poverty and underdevelopment. That, evidently, demonstrates that development and progress in regional governance may only be possible if rural communities are actively involved in development programmes right from the identification, designing, implementation and evaluation. It is clear that community involvement and participation would not materialize if consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and rural communities is inadequate and ineffective. Regular consultation and communication could play down possible allegation of injustice and unfairness in the provision of basic services and infrastructure. That is so because people (when consulted and their opinions are taken into consideration) would feel

that they are part and parcel of the plan and decision making pertaining to the identification, designing, implementation and evaluation of specific government programmes and projects in respective communities. Therefore, the assumption is that, regular consultation and interaction between Regional Councillors and community members could enhance service delivery and improves the standard of living of rural people. In that light, a detailed literature review or theoretical overview is discussed under Chapter Two of this research report.

## 1.5     RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quality of research findings is directly dependent on the type of research methodology followed by the researcher. As argued by Haralambos and Holborn (1990: 698), the methodology is concerned with both the detailed research methods through which data are collected and that more general philosophies upon which collection and analysis of data are based. This research is literature based and draws on both primary and secondary sources that are relevant to this study in order to answer the research question. These include the Constitution of the republic of Namibia of 1990, the Regional Councils Act 1992, the Decentralization Policy and the Traditional Authorities Act 1995, while academic books and reports have been used as secondary sources.

The method used in the research is a qualitative study. As Mason (1996: 4) points out, qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical way which is broadly interpretivist in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced and constructed.  The author further notes that qualitative research cannot be reduced to a simple and prescriptive set of principles. This type of research is methodical, rigorous, planned, flexible and contextually conducted. Moreover, the theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter Two has been applied to the experiences in the Oshana region to draw main research findings. For the case study purpose, fieldwork results were collected through structured interviews and informal discussions with community members. The researcher observed two community meetings where Regional Councillors were present.

Research schedules in an interview situation with traditional leaders were conducted. For this purpose, eight (8) headmen were interviewed. Nevertheless, these interviews are by no means representative of other headmen, but provide insightful on the relationship between Regional Councillors and community members concerning consultation and communication. Furthermore, ten (10) questionnaires were handed to Regional Councillors in the Oshana region, although only seven (7) were completed and used in this research. In all, this has allowed the researcher to come up with a balanced evidence in the sense that the responses by Regional Councillors as well as views of the community members were received and analyzed.

## 1.6    DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

 A number of key terms and concepts that are fundamental in understanding the context of this research are explicitly defined as follows:

**Accountability** in its simplest term it may mean to report, to explain or to justify one's actions. Accountability is often linked to responsibility in the sense that those perceived responsible for an action or decision are held accountable for it. Moreover, accountability could have little meaning if people receiving the report or explanation do not believe what is said or do not agree with the basic assumptions under which the action was taken.

**Community members** refers to a web of personal relationships, group networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour that develops against the backdrop of physical neighbourhoods and its socio-economic situation (Flecknoe & McLellan as cited in Warburton, 1998: 15). Similarly, White (1999: 29) defines the term community members as a collection of people linked together by communication within a physical environment that can be altered by their collective action and, therefore, such relationship is defined by their significant level of mutual care and commitment.

**Constituency** refers to a geographical unit or area inhabited by community members who by law are entitled to elect/vote for their own representative who should drive and facilitate economic development and social wellbeing of the population of that particular constituency (Burkey, 1993).

**Consultation by Regional Councillors** in the context of this study, it entails that Regional Councillors should interact with community members and consult with them on all matters related to service delivery in the region.

**Decentralization** refers to a process of transferring responsibilities and resources from the decision-making top hierarchy towards intermediate or base levels. It also implies the functional decentralization whereby the functions and services are transferred from central agencies to other intermediate or basic levels in a specific sector of public administration (Alfonso 1997: 170-171).

**Oshana Region** refers to a geographical area established in terms of Article 102 and 103 of the Namibia Constitution.

**Namibia** is a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary state founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all (Namibian Constitution Act, 1 of 1990).

**Rural development** implies helping rural people set the priorities in their own community through effective and democratic bodies, by providing the local capacity, investment in basic infrastructure and social services. It entails justice, equity and security that deal with the injustices of the past and ensuring safety and security of the rural population, especially that of women (Republic of South Africa, 1997: 9).

**Regional Councillor** in the context of this study, it refers to a member of the Regional Council who has been democratically elected by the community members of a particular unit or constituency to represent them and facilitate economic and social development.

**Service delivery** refers to the process whereby basic services are made available, accessible and affordable to community members in specific localities. Equally important, it is that, such services should be planned and designed by community members themselves.

## 1.7    RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since the enactment of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 and the establishment of Regional Councils in Namibia, there has been an outcry specifically by the grassroots people in the regions (Oshana included) of inadequate consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members. Therefore, the rationale behind this study is to contribute to an understanding that consultation and communication should exist between councillors and community members in order to improve service delivery in the Oshana region.

This study is significant since there were hardly any serious academic research undertaken in this area before in the Oshana region. Moreover, the study is imperative because it makes recommendations that, if considered, could assist to improve the consultation and communication process between Regional Councillors and community members, not only in the Oshana region, but in Namibia as a whole. In general, this research report may assist academics, readers, and Regional Councillors in understanding the degree to which consultation and communication takes place in the Oshana region.

## 1.8    LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A general lack of literature, in particular, in the field of regional and local governance in Namibia has hampered the nature and scope of this study. As was mentioned earlier, no previous study in this area has been conducted in Namibia before; hence, there are few sources specifically on regional governance in Namibia to which this study could be based. However, the relevant Namibian legal

frameworks (Constitution, Regional Councils Act and Traditional Authorities Act), Namibian policy documents as well as theories advanced by various authors on provincial/local governance in other countries were reviewed. In addition, political intolerance amongst some traditional leaders and community members resulted in some interviews to be reduced to informal discussions only. The reason being that some rural headmen and community members in the Oshana region were not comfortable and open enough to discuss political related issues with a stranger (the researcher in this case).

It should be mentioned that some issues or problems pointed out in this research such as inadequate consultation, lack of technical capacities and lack of instruments for consultation may not be necessarily applicable to other regions in Namibia, therefore, should not be generalized. In addition, findings and recommendations advanced in this study might not also be necessarily applicable or relevant to other regions or countries in Africa. Moreover, the research was conducted over a short period of time because of financial difficulties and time limit, thus, it could not be as inclusive as it would have been, had it been done over a reasonable period of time. Conducting a two-year study or so would have been ideal to generate a systematic and comprehensive input to the academic domain.

## 1.9    COMPOSITION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One defines the research problem and introduces the theoretical framework of the study. Noteworthy, is that the comprehensive literature review is discussed in Chapter Two of this study. Furthermore, Chapter One explains the methodology used to examine and assess the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia.

Chapter Two deals with the theoretical overview of consultation and communication and conceptualizes the two concepts. The link between consultation and communication and rural service delivery is therefore highlighted.

Chapter Three discusses the role of Regional Councillors and the service delivery in regional governance in Namibia.

Chapter Four forms the base of fieldwork carried out by the researcher. In this Chapter, the responses by Regional Councillors and views of the community members were obtained and interpreted.

Chapter Five forms part of the main research findings. In this Chapter, the theoretical framework has been applied to the case study to develop and sketch research findings.

Chapter Six makes conclusions and recommendations that can assist to improve consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

## 2.1    OVERVIEW

This Chapter focuses on the concepts, analysis, practices and application of consultation and communication as fundamental principles of participatory democracy. It provides the theoretical overview of consultation and communication. Given the critical role elected representatives should play in promoting participatory democracy and inclusive service delivery, this Chapter discusses and analyses the significance of community consultation, community participation and finally discuss the conditions that are essential for effective consultation and communication. In essence, community consultation and participation forms the base of service delivery in the sense that when communities are well informed they could give their full co-operation and participation.

For democracy and good governance to take place consultation and communication between elected representatives and the electorate have become essential tools towards social, economic and political development. Hence, the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in regional governance may be better understood by defining and analyzing the concepts consultation and communication and link them to rural service delivery.

## 2.2 DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

### 2.2.1 Consultation

Consultation both as a concept and as a practice can most likely be traced to the earliest forms of helping existing in the primitive societies. A more systematic look at the history of consultation would reveal that it had been a common medical practice involving the comparing of diagnosis and treatment plan as early as the thirteenth century (Kutzik as cited in Parsons, 1996: 8). This evidences that consultation is not actually a new concept. Significantly is that it has been used over the years as a mode of service delivery. Admittedly, is the fact that services cannot be rendered from the top without the direct involvement of the grassroots people to whom those services are intended. Therefore, this study attempts to answer as to what the concept consultation means and how it relates to rural service delivery.

Schein (1969: 9) defines consultation as the set of activities on the party of local community that help the community to perceive, understand and act upon process which occur in community members' environment. Du Toit et al (2001: 108) hold that consultation must take place between public servants and citizens about the level and quality of the services that the public will receive. Consultation also implies that citizens must have a say regarding the services that are delivered to them. In a modern society where accountability, transparency and good governance are the prerequisites for effective and efficient running of the state, consultation is regarded as one of the principles of participatory democracy. Others are sovereignty, political equality and majority rule. To that end, people's wishes and aspirations should be taken into account when public policies are formulated and programmes are designed.

The people's opinions and inputs should be respected and reflected in all programmes envisaged for community development. However, this cannot materialize unless there is adequate consultation existing between elected representatives and community members. Clapper (1996: 54) holds that consultation demands that people, and not any party leaders or other influential person, persons or body, should ultimately decide which public policies would best serve to advance the common welfare. He further remarks that for consultation to take place, two essential requirements should be met;

*The first demands that the democratic system should provide some kinds of institutional machinery that inform the public officials and other bodies involved in the decisions and policies that the public wants adopted and enforced.*

*The second requires that after having ascertained what public's wishes and demands are, the governing officials bring them to fruition, irrespective of whatever or not they question the wisdom of the demands.*

In other words, consultation should require making constant and continuous contacts with the majority of the community members without manipulating them to accept outsiders' thinking towards a particular problem. Sachs (1993: 118) stresses that, participation could easily be transformed into manipulative designs which in the end do not meet the people's needs. As Arnstein (1969: 217) clearly indicates, manipulation is a form of "non-participation". Therefore, consultation should be a working tool that aimed at encouraging community members to be directly involved in the planning and designing of projects that are envisaged for them. "While consultation has often been presented as an experts' relationship" (Parsons, 1996: 16), it is argued in this study, by various authors, that it is imperative that consultation should include participants in a specific programme or project to enhance compliance during implementation. This would enable them to understand and conceptualize the problem at hand and in the process share their noble ideas and suggestions on how they wish to shape affairs within their communities. More significant is that consultation brings elected representatives closer to the electorate

and vice versa. Elected representatives should use consultation as a tool that enables them to reach remote communities and acquaint themselves with problems experienced by rural people.

To that end, consultation is now emerging as a perspective, a paradigm from which to conceptualize problems and employ a variety of more or less indirect forms of intervention (Parsons, 1996: 17). Thomas Hobbes, one of the greatest philosopher ever, in his work "Of Liberty and Necessity" maintained that it is consultation that causes a man and necessitates him to choose to do thing rather than another, so that unless a man say that cause to be in vain which necessitates the effect, he cannot infer the superfluousness of consultation out of the necessity of the election proceeding from it (Hobbes, 1999: 26).

In its simplest term and in the context this study, to consult implies to consider the suggestions made by community members in the consultation process. It is generally accepted though that consultation places no obligation on elected representatives to agree to the suggestions made by community members. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, for effective and efficient service delivery to take place, consensus is required between elected representatives and community members during consultation process. In the same vein, Goss (2001: 3) contends that new sorts of intervention are emerging which do not involved local people off-loading their problems onto local agencies, instead, they involve a shared or negotiated process of planning action requiring very different behaviours from all concerned.

Therefore, the most important relationship in regional governance is not only between spheres of government, but significantly, it is consultation relationship and in fact good interpersonal relationship that must exist between elected representatives and local communities. Elected representatives must consult with community members (who elected them to power) in order to give information and inform electorate about government policies, services or any other programmes envisaged for communities. Elected officials should also serve as a link between the national government and the grassroots people.

As it may be obvious, effective consultation requires that elected officials understand and clarify the nature of the problems in the respective constituencies and focus the rural communities to specific projects and services the government intends to deliver to those communities. Furthermore, during consultation elected officials and community members exchange ideas and that allow officials to get the relevant information they need in the planning and development process. It is in this line that effective communication between the two parties should be strengthened in order to allow free flow of information during consultation.

## 2.2.2   Communication

Different authors have approached the definition of the term 'communication' from different viewpoints in order to give a clear distinction between consultation and communication. For example, Frost, Vos and Dreyer (Du Toit et al, 2001: 315) define communication as a process of generating meaning between two or more people and it takes place within a cultural context. Pybus, Schoeman and Hart (2001: 8) came up with a more precise definition when they define communication as the successful transfer of a message from one person, or group of people, to another person, or group of people such that the recipient(s) has the same message as the sender. It should be noted that effective communication can only be possible when there is a medium through which the message is transmitted to reach the intended audience. Therefore, in the context of this study, communication implies good interaction and free flow of information between elected representatives and the electorate. This flow of information promotes participatory democracy, good governance, accountability and effective delivery of public services to all stakeholders in a particular locality. Communication is regarded as a medium for consultation, therefore, if good communication method is not used, adequate consultation is unlikely to take place.

Such a medium should be clear, understandable and familiar to the intended audience to allow them to interpret the information correctly as received. For communication to be considered effective, the message must be clear and comprehensible to the intended audience. This in itself increases efficiency in service delivery and subsequently promotes participatory democracy. Furthermore, it is clear that the purpose of communication is to inform, to persuade and to maintain relationship.

For that reason, information provision, and in fact relevant and updated information to the grassroots people, through communication and consultation are crucial in realizing government goals and objectives. To that end, Van Niekerk et al (2001: 162) mention that unless the very languages familiar to the people in their daily lives [is] used there can be no effective communication. They further say that communication is a crucial ingredient for democratic governance. Dervin and Servaes (1999: 169 - 170) argue that communication is the road whereby consciousness and liberation are attained. Ordinary human subjects – variously referred to as the grassroots, the oppressed… are the most solid vessels of wisdom and knowledge concerning their living conditions and must be involved in planning as well as implementation processes if development is to occur. The pertinent question, therefore, is how this should be achieved? How should elected officials involve the people at the grassroots level in the development and, in fact, in the process of service delivery in a particular locality?

"Modernization theorists" (Jacobson & Servaes, 1999) highlight the need for communication with the grassroots people as one of the prerequisites for sustainable development. It promotes participatory communication in development issues and, subsequently, facilitates acceptable public services delivery. What is critical by the way is when, where and how communication should take place. In essence, for participatory democracy to be realized the manner and timing of communication is crucial in making it effective. Communication should be an on-going process if it is to yield required fruits.

In terms of communication, the participatory approach has tended to highlight small rather than large media, horizontal rather than vertical communication, collective self reliance rather than dependence on outside experts, and action rather than theory-oriented inquiry (Jacobson & Kolluri, 1999: 268). Communication does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, there should be an instrument to facilitate it. Communication should be people-centred; in other words, elected representatives must provide venues whereby people can come together and discuss about matters they feel are essential to their livelihoods. People should be given the opportunity to plan and design developmental programmes within the respective communities and make collective decisions on matters affecting their lives. The initiators of communication (elected officials and communities in this context) have a greater responsibility to ensure that communication is indeed taking place. Elected representatives should provide mechanisms for interaction with the grassroots community. To that end, White (1999: 232) contends that communication systems should be reorganized to permit all sectors of the population to contribute to the pool of information that provides the basis for local or national decision making and the basis for the allocation of resources in society. However, Servaes and Arnst (1999: 124–127) hold that the exchange between government officials and their constituencies is conducted in a bureaucratic sub-language which has one meaning to the official and an entirely different meaning to the average citizen. Hence, the authors suggest that we need a new school, not for learning of communication, but the school that gives people the opportunity to identify problems, deal with problems, and learn from problems.

Elected officials should understand the cultural backgrounds of the electorate in the respective constituencies. Councillors should try to address the real needs of the people. This would only materialize when councillors provide familiar communication media to the grassroots communities and provide platforms where community members are allowed and encouraged to identify and conceptualize the problems, discuss them with councillors and collectively reach consensus. This enables councillors to address what the community real needs. Deetz (1999: 151) is perhaps correct to remark that communication act should be responsive to the subject

matter of the conversation and at the same time should help to establish the conditions for future unrestrained formation of experience. As was mentioned earlier and in the context of this study, the purpose for communication and consultation is to facilitate and encourage the involvement and participation of grassroots communities in decision making process hence promotes participatory democracy. Through communication and consultation, community members are encouraged to influence government policies and decisions pertaining to social, economic and political development. Therefore, to maintain participatory democracy and enhance service delivery, community consultation by elected representatives is paramount.

## 2.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The art of facilitating rural service delivery and community participation is manifested in good interpersonal relationship between elected representatives and rural communities. Such a relationship enhances participatory development. Furthermore, mutual trust and respect between elected public officials and the rural people are the major keys to releasing the power of the grassroots creativity in the quest of improving their livelihoods. In this regard, community consultation is tipped to be the most common method used in enhancing public participation in decision making and community development planning and designing. Therefore, elected representatives should by all means endeavour to familiarize themselves with the reality of the village life and assist villagers or rather rural communities to resolve problems. This can be realized if there is regular consultation and communication with communities. In this sense, communities may indeed hear and be heard. They may also influence planning decisions in their localities.

Hawtin et al (1994: 3) remark that community consultation should be seen as an on-going part of community profiling, social auditing and needs assessment exercise which have as one of their aims, the active involvement of the community. The authors further argue that community consultation usually takes place in relation to a set of proposals for action that have been developed by an agency. The agency referred hereto could be a regional council, local authority, community based

organization or any other agency working in the interest of the community. As indicated earlier, any programmes that is envisaged for the community should first be discussed with the concerned community in order to get their inputs and approval before it is implemented. Significant to note is that, communities in their diversity always want to be associated with development initiatives in the respective localities, hence, it is imperative to involve them directly in the planning and designing of all programmes.

Clapper (1996: 56) observes that without citizen participation, democratic government will cease to function as a democracy. Vibrant democracy insists, however, that citizen participation be positively encouraged by those in power. In essence, community consultation entails continuous interaction through which adequate and regular consultation and communication takes place with the local people on matters that affect their daily life. Ordinary citizens, the oppressed, and resource-poor at any age, do want a voice. The desire and will to become involved and gain greater control over their lives is real, but before it can happen it is necessary to make fundamental changes (White, 1999: 17). These fundamental changes, amongst others, may include the right to be heard, the right to initiate social changes within the community and the right to have access to platforms where social dialogue can take place and community members can raise pertinent issues concerning problems that are affecting them. In this regard, community consultation is an important part of project implementation. Depending on whether or when consultation occurs, can have serious implications for the project. When community consultation takes place, it needs to be done properly and conscientiously to ensure good results (Pybus et al, 2001: 21).

It should be noted that people in community might not see the problem as a priority due to the fact that the problem was not properly explained to them or because of the community norms that might discourage them from recognizing the situation as problematic. Alternatively, they might be aware of the problem but because of poor consultation and lack of correct information between community and elected officials the problem may take time before it is resolved. Furthermore, lack of

information, relevant skills, and knowledge to deal with a problem may contribute to the situation as indicated above. Of course this could be addressed if regular community consultation and effective communication is taking place between elected officials and community members.

The community consultation affords community members the opportunity to question the need for certain projects, be it school, clinic, rural piped water or rural electrification in the respective communities, because they are the beneficiaries. Community consultation may also lead to local people suggest the alternatives. Ultimately, community consultation and subsequently community participation lead to resources acquisition that enables them to reach common goals within the community. In practice, community consultation implies talking to rural people, consult with traditional leaders, community based organizations, community activists and all other interest groups within the community. Burkey (1993: 50) indicates that nobody can make people self-reliant but that only their own efforts can be the driving force in obtaining self-reliant. In this sense, community consultation is crucial in realizing their dreams. It is in this similar line of argument, that White (1999: 43) remarks that local people know their needs, they just need the opportunity to express them and be heard, not glanced over. Noteworthy, is the fact that, the regular holding of public meetings, establishment of institutions for consultation and communication and the existence of rural community committees is critical in maintaining good relationship with community members and encourage participation. People who are interested in development issues may attend public meetings and share their opinions through asking questions and personal interaction with the leaders. They may also approach institutions (if institutions are available and accessible) such as councillors' offices, media, community committees, traditional leaders and make their voice heard.

However, the possibility is great that community consultation could end up as window-dressing exercise when community members are perceived as statistical abstractions and when participation is measured by how many meetings, take home brochures, answer questionnaires or take part in surveys (Arnstein, 1969; Pimbert,

2003). Clapper (1996: 73) observes that cross pollination of information between citizen and government is, however, an important factor in improving citizen participation generally, since a poorly informed public cannot sustain high levels of genuine citizen participation, nor will it be interested in examining public administration closely.

Therefore, it is argued in this study that, when consultation is used as a form of participation, community members should be given the powers to make decisions and follow-ups on issues that affect their lives. Consultation with community members should not only take place during elections time, nor should it be only thought about when there is a specific programme to be implemented, but it should be regarded as an on-going process.

## 2.4    COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The best way to learn about participation is to experience it directly. The second best way is vicariously by seeing what others have done in the name of participation and then seeking guidance (World Bank, 1996). In essence, this demonstrates the significance the World Bank attaches to the concept participation. The words "participation" and "involvement" have their origins in the Skeffington Report and the Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizens Participation" of the 1950s and 1960s respectively, (Sachs, 1993: 117; Abott, 1996: 6; Davidson, 1998 and Arnstein, 1969). Although participation is an important aspect in enhancing people's standard of living, as a term, it sometimes causes confusion because of its vagueness.

The above-mentioned authors assert that the term participation has different meanings for different people in different settings and this often leads to its ambiguousness. Therefore, the question that should be answered is; what is meant by the term participation. Burkey (1993: 57) says participation is a process of conscientisation and awareness, whereas, Korten (1990) indicates that participation is an essential part of human growth. On the other hand, Sachs (1993:119) goes further and mentions that participatory process is a new paradigm that should be used

by development practitioners in order to avoid pitfalls and failures of the past. Essentially, this indicates that for political, economic and social development to be realized, citizens' participation and involvement is inevitably essential. In terms of community participation, participation is used as a tool to reach the majority of the community and encourage them to partake in whatever the government intends to do for them. Secondly, for community to participate, they should be provided with the relevant and updated information that allow them to participate and, more importantly, they should be able and willing to participate. It should be stressed that the community willingness to participate lies much in the trust and confidence local people have in the government of the day and the elected representatives in particular. As was pointed out earlier, consultation and communication are dependent on people willingness to participate in programmes that are envisaged for the communities. Fundamentally, the extent to which communities are involved and provision of continuous feedback from elected officials, encourages community participation. The pertinent question, however, is how this can be achieved? How communities can be encouraged to participate?

Chambers (1995: 33) talks of "the shift from paradigm of things to paradigm of people" that is required to enhance public participation. People participate more if they are convinced that they are the initiators, owners and stakeholders of local development initiatives in the community. It should be noted that community members cannot participate effectively if their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and understood. Local people want to see participation as an end. People should be afforded the opportunity to see that they can influence government policies and decisions pertaining to service delivery in the respective localities. However, it should be stressed that no standard recipe for community participation exists, (Planact, 1997: 41). Efforts should be made by elected representatives (councillors, in the context of this study) with the help of the community to come up with the suitable methods of community participation depending on the environment and the nature of services being delivered. For example, community representative forums, consultation by councillors, councillors-community dialogue and community radio must be in place to allow community participation at the grassroots to take

place. Du Mhango (1998: 6) asserts that public participation gives people or communities at lower or grassroots level full legal power to determine and deicide for themselves what they want, in a self-reliant manner. Various authors such as Sachs (1993); Davidson (1998) and Korten (1990) emphasize the importance of community or rather public participation in the economic and social development. Sachs (1993: 119) further says that participation is currently perceived as an instrument for effectiveness as well as new source of investment. However, it should be further emphasized that participation is a process and not a one off event. Community members need assurance from the political leadership that they would be regularly consulted and allowed to participate in all programme envisaged for them. People should be empowered to take ownership of community programmes.  In other words, they must be fully involved in the planning, designing and implementation of projects that are affecting them.

 The World Bank (1996) argues that through active community participation, community becomes more capacitated as the capacity of the poor is strengthened and as their voices start to be heard. However, Ismail, Bayart and Meyer (1997: 32) feel that participation is also less effective if communities are not empowered to participate fully in public issues. Therefore, it should be noted that the willingness of community to participate in community issues also dependent on the availability and accessibility of information from elected representatives and the manner in which such information is disseminated. Poor dissemination of information not only hampers the delivery and quality of services but also leads to low community participation.

## 2.5    CONDITIONS FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Adequate consultation and effective communication between elected representatives and community members are fundamental to effective participatory democracy and indeed to inclusive rural service delivery. In this study it is argued that consultation is only possible when there are familiar established channels of consultation, communication and co-ordination among spheres of government and community in general. In essence, the success or failure of consultation and communication would be dependent, but not exclusively, on specific conditions that should be met in order to facilitate such. These conditions are as follow:

A good relationship between elected representatives and the respective community members is one of the conditions for consultation and communication. The point of departure here is that councillors are elected officials and their future as councillors lays in the electorate whimsical idiosyncrasies to keep them or not. If community members are not satisfied with the councillors' performance, they (community) have the constitutional power to remove them from office during the next election. It is for this reason that Chambers (1995: 30) holds that the role of dominant uppers have to change. From planning, issuing orders, transferring technology and supervising they shift to convening, facilitating and searching what people need and supporting.

To that end, good interpersonal relationship between, not only local elected representatives, but all other government agents and members of the society are critical in enhancing consultation and communication.  As was mentioned earlier, good interaction may lead to an improved standard of living of rural community and enhances a lasting relationship between elected officials and community members. Therefore, for this to be realized, adequate consultation and communication must take place. As Parsons (1996: 103) indicates, consultation should be aimed at problem-solving and not problem-generating. In other words, during consultation parties should identify shared goals, articulate rules of intervention and define roles to be played by either party. In essence, this is one possible way of building up a good relationship between elected officials and community members.

The availability and accessibility of the relevant and updated information to both the elected officials and community members is another condition that encourages consultation and communication to take place between the two parties. It must be noted that rural community is composed of diversified people with different cultural backgrounds, different status in society and expectations. Some are literate and other not. For this reason, consultation and communication efforts should take all the above factors into consideration and include all groups in society. Adequate consultation and effective communication, as indicated earlier, are largely dependent on the availability and accessibility of relevant information and continuous feedback. Elected representatives and community members should share information and make it accessible to each other.

For this to materialize, we need what Chambers (1995: 30) calls, a "paradigm shift, from things to people". This enables elected leaders to realize that a paradigm shift is required from top planning to local participation, from controlling to community empowerment and from beneficiaries to actors and, most importantly, from centralized to practically decentralized. In this regard, grassroots participation is realized and information is made available and accessible to all stakeholders.

The institutional capacities that are functional and accessible to all community members irrespective of race, sex and political background and affiliation should be created. Functional in this sense implies that the institutions so created should be accessible and responsive to the needs of the community. Consultation and communication between the grassroots people and elected officials is regarded to be effective when there are public offices at the grassroots level, which people could approach when they need help concerning services and problems that are affecting them. There must be venues available where public meetings can take place so that community members can be informed and ask questions about government policies and programmes. Community committees should be in place to facilitate and coordinates issues within the respective communities. Essentially, traditional leaders should be available and be equipped with relevant and updated information. In

essence, this may help elected officials to reach the majority of the community members.

Legitimate and responsive government agent is another condition for effective consultation and communication. Citizens tend to participate more and give full co-operation if the leaders who drive the economic and social development were duly elected by the majority of citizens. In this regard, the government or its agents must be legitimate and responsive to citizen needs. More often than not consultation and communication focus much on how community needs should be met rather than what people need. Hawtin et al (1994) argues that these two aspects should be separated in order to assess the real needs of community. This can make government and its agents more responsive to community needs and, subsequently, promotes public participation. Participation in this context should be an end, where the community sets up a process to control its own development (Nelson & Wright, 1995: 1). In other words, community profile, social audit and needs assessment should be carried out if the government agents are to be responsive to community needs. Peoples' opinions and inputs should be taken into account and the services being delivered should be in response to their needs and expectations.

## 2.6    CONCLUSION

This Chapter has confirmed the significance and inevitability of consultation and communication between elected representatives and community members especially at the grassroots level. In reality, this is central to service delivery at regional level. Such a form of interaction enhances participatory democracy and inclusive rendering of essential services not only at the grassroots level, but at all spheres of government. In other words, adequate consultation and effective communication between councillors and local communities may lead to improved community participation at the grassroots level. Fundamentally, elected officials play a critical role regarding service delivery in regional governance due to their strategic positioning. Therefore, in this Chapter, four key issues that are central to this study were identified. These are: consultation and communication; accessibility of councillors and community

participation; institutions/instruments for consultation and communication and consultation for rural service delivery. It is further argued in this study that these issues should be sufficiently addressed if councillors are to serve the needs and expectations of the people. Based on the above, in the next chapter the researcher discusses the role and functions of Regional Councillors and service delivery at regional level in Namibia.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS AND RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN NAMIBIA

## 3.1    OVERVIEW

Historically, the independence of African countries placed new governments under pressure from local populace because of high expectations amongst the respective communities. More often than not when the colonial system moves out, it leaves behind unstructured institutions both at urban and rural level. For that reason, Namibia is of no exception. Werner (2001:270) points out that the independence of Namibia in 1990 was followed by an administrative vacuum specifically in rural areas. There were hardly any institutions at regional and local level that could drive and facilitate the economic development and deliver essential services to the grassroots people. Therefore, it became necessary for the new government to put in place institutions of governance as well as proper mechanisms that are capable of driving and facilitating grassroots development, which has been denied to the people for long time.

Legal frameworks such as the Namibian Constitution Act 1 of 1990, the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992, the Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992, the Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995, Council of Traditional Leaders Act 13 of 1997 and Decentralization Enabling Act 33 of 2000 were legislated. These legislations have facilitated the establishment of Local and Regional Government in Namibia and, subsequently, the decentralization of functions and services to lower spheres of government. Furthermore, Regional Councillors were elected as representatives of people in every constituency. Regional Councillors are closer to the people and this gives them ample time to interact, consult and communicate with people at the grassroots to ensure that essential services are delivered where they are most needed. In this respect, Regional Councillors are critical in terms of regional governance and

service delivery because of their strategic positioning. Regional Councillors drive and facilitate development initiatives that may contribute to the overall economic development of rural areas (settlements and villages) and the social wellbeing of those people. Therefore, this Chapter focuses on the role, powers and functions of Regional Councillors, as well as rural service delivery in Namibia.

## 3.2    THE ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS IN NAMIBIA

### 3.2.1   Role, powers and functions

As was stated earlier in Chapter One of this research report, shortly after the independence of Namibia in 1990, Regional Councils were established. Each region has Regional Councillors elected by popular vote to a specific constituency for a period of six years. In essence this demonstrates that Regional Councillors are members of the Regional Councils, hence, their role, powers and functions are determined by the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992. In fact, Section 28 of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 spells out the powers and functions of Regional Councils, amongst others, as follow:

- Undertake development planning for its region
- Exercise all functions assigned to it by law or the president of the Republic of Namibia.
- Establish, control and manage settlement areas
- Advice the Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development or the President on regional matters
- Advise the Minister of Finance on regional expenditures needs
- Form committees deemed necessary for the execution of its functions

However, in addition to these, a complete outline of powers and functions of Regional Councils is spelled out in the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992, (see Appendix V). Section 28 of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992, stipulates that Regional Councils have full authority over settlement areas. In effect, this means

Regional Councillors are responsible for rural areas where the majority of the Namibian people live. This makes the role, powers and functions of Regional Councillors more critical to the social wellbeing of the grassroots people.

As such, Regional Councillors as the actual performers (actors) of the above-mentioned powers and functions are required to interact and consult with the grassroots community (MRLGHRD[3], 1997) if they are to meet the needs and expectations of the grassroots people. In short, Regional Councillors (as members of Region Council) are responsible for the overall planning, coordinating and facilitating of regional programmes and services. Furthermore, Regional Development Plans were formulated and incorporated into National Development Plan, Vision 2030[4] as an integral element (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004). This demonstrates the strong role Regional Councillors have to play and the immense responsibility the government attaches to Regional Councils.

Notwithstanding the constitutional powers and responsibilities, it is no doubt that Regional Councillors perform more than one roles. Firstly, Regional Councillors are elected representatives of the people in the respective constituencies. Therefore, it is expect of them to deliver effective and efficient services that meet community needs and promote the social welfare of the people. Secondly, Regional Councillors represent the political parties' ideologies and programmes (except in the case of independent councillors). Finally, Regional Councillors are collectively responsible for the overall economic and social development of the region.  It is for this reason that the councillors' performance should at all times be satisfactory to both the community members and other stakeholders who elected them to power, otherwise the electorate have the constitutional power to remove councillors, who are not performing, from office during the next elections. Therefore, this study emphasizes that adequate consultation and effective communication between Regional Councillors and the grassroots people can complements the councillors' role regarding rural service delivery.

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[3] Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development
[4] Vision 2030 is a policy framework for Long-Term National Development of Namibia.

### 3.2.2 Consultation and communication

As was mentioned earlier, a Regional Councillor is a public official who is democratically elected and represents the people of that specific constituency at large. For example, Totemeyer (1993: 107) remarks that a Regional Councillor represents a particular constituency. This is the underlying principle which indicates that the councillor is the servant of the people and accountable to the electorate in terms of service delivery. In other words, the Regional Councillor represents the interests of people in a particular constituency. In addition, the Regional Councillor is a member of the Regional Council that designs plans and priorities in terms of economic and social development of the region. In essence, this places Regional Councillors in a good position to facilitate the implementation of council decisions and, in fact, the Regional Development Plan at the constituency level.

However, this can not be realized unless there is adequate consultation and effective communication with people to whom services are delivered. People receiving the services should be given the opportunities to actively participate in the designing and implementation of such services. In other words, the Regional Councillors should ensure that constant flow and sharing of information between the respective offices and community members takes place. The councillors should consult and communicate with community members and give regular feedback on the activities of the Regional Council. The councillors should involve the grassroots people in all matters related to service delivery and development. As Du Toit et al (2001) argue (Chapter Two of this research), consultation is an important tool that should take place between people at grassroots and government officials about the level and quality of services that the public should receive. It is clearly mentioned in this study that equitable rural development can not take place if there is a communication breakdown between Regional Councillors and community members. The role Regional Councillors play in consultation and communication with community members enables the grassroots people to identify problems within the communities and discuss these problems with councillors in order to reach mutually agreed solutions. It also gives councillors the opportunity to enlighten the Regional Council decision making body more about problems and concerns of communities in the

respective constituencies. Practically, this whole exercise promotes participatory democracy, good governance and accountability and eventually leads to the empowerment of rural communities.

### 3.2.3 Holding of public meetings and attending of Council meetings

One of the main role Regional Councillors should play is to make sure that the grassroots people are adequately consulted and effectively communicated with in whatever matters related to their wellbeing and livelihoods. For this to materialize councillors should attend all meetings of the Regional Council and hold public meetings in the respective constituencies to provide feedback about the Council's plans and decisions. Section 41 of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 makes provision for members of the public to attend councils' meetings for the purposes of discussing matters of public interest. Similarly, Section 11 and 42 of the same Act stipulates that Regional Councillors should attend all council's meetings to discuss matters of mutually interests. Nevertheless, the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 is not clearly on how often public and councils meetings should be held per month or year. Notwithstanding the above and the fact that most communities are far from Regional Council Headquarters where meetings as mentioned in Section 41 and 42 usually take place, Regional Councillors must go to the people and hold community meetings in order to provide information and give feedback. This is in line with the Decentralization Policy which states that elected representatives should actively engage with the grassroots people. These engagements can be in the form of community forums, personal interaction, consultation, communication and regular holding of public meetings. Earlier discussions in this study (Chapter One and Two); show that Regional Councillors are not only instrumental but also influential in rural development programmes because of their strategic positioning. In reality, this requires that councillors should go to the grassroots and listen to the peoples' problems and concerns. Strategic positioning in the context of this study implies that councillors should interact and regularly hold public meetings with rural communities and give feedback on issues raised either in Regional Council meetings or discussed during previous community meetings.

The holding of public meetings by Regional Councillors could give them a clear picture about rural poverty and needs. It enables councillors to draw development plans and programmes that address specific needs and expectations of the poor. Through regularly holding of public meetings, informed decisions are taken and essential services are delivered to those who real need them. However, as it was alluded to earlier, it is important to keep in mind that the holding of community meetings does not necessarily means community problems and concerns would automatically be resolved. The understanding here is that, community meetings may generate consensus between Regional Councillors and community members on how needs and problems can be addressed.

Sewell and Coppock (1997) and Meyer and Theron (2000) argue that council members could use council and public meetings to promote interaction between council and community regarding developmental issues or matters of mutual concern. However, it should be noted that in the Namibian context, Regional Councillors are new entrants into the system of regional governance and administration. For that reason, there is a need for proper training and continuous guidance in terms of leadership in order to make councillors effective communicators. That may be true in the sense that Regional Councillors are vested with power and authority, and the two go together with leadership. In that light, Dessler (1982) stresses that the concepts of power and leadership are closely related and, in fact, some experts all but equate the two. Furthermore, De Coning (2005:14) states that the role of leadership and management is critical in realizing policy implementation. That gives emphasis to the earlier understanding that the level of consultation and communication may improve, depending on the leadership quality Regional Councillors possess. Therefore, addressing community meetings may requires Regional Councillors to have those qualities.

It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this research to discuss the leadership role of Regional Councillors, however, it is argued that consultation and communication to a certain extent can not take place in the absence of good and effective leadership. Hence, Regional Councillors can not be good public servants if

leadership skills are not inculcated in them. It is forthwith essential for Regional Councillors to regularly attend regional council meetings to accustom themselves with all relevant policies that are essential in the development of the region. Similarly, councillors should hold public/community meetings to discuss issues of mutual and public interests and strengthen community consultation, participation and communication. This affords councillors the opportunity to understand the grassroots life so that services can be equitably delivered and diversified to all sectors of society where they are most needed.

## 3.3    SERVICE DELIVERY AT REGIONAL LEVEL IN NAMIBIA.

The colonial history of Namibia shows that there is a noticeable backlog in service delivery such as piped water, electricity, education and healthcare at regional level. Prior to independence in 1990 Namibia was divided into homelands based on ethnicity. This had a big influence on what should be provided and where. As it is indicated in the Decentralization Policy Document, quite few basic services were rendered to people in rural areas. The majority of rural people were denied the right to education and health care. Economic activities at regional level were in shamble and better public services were reserved for the white minority in some urban areas. When Namibia became independent in 1990, one of the government's priorities was to ensure that basic services are provided to all people irrespective of race and locality (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). It was realized that service delivery at regional level is critical in enhancing and improving the standard of living of rural people. As the Head of State pointed out, basic services such as education, healthcare, piped water, boreholes, rural electrification, secondary roads and telecommunication facilities are today being provided at regional level.[5]

It is worthwhile to mention that the adoption of the Decentralization Policy and the subsequent legislation of the Decentralization Enabling Act 33 of 2000 have confirmed the government position about services and functions diversification and decentralization to all people in Namibia.

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[5] Office of the President: State of the Nation Address by His Excellency Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia on the 31st March 2004.

As it is indicated in the Decentralization Policy document, the decentralization objectives among others are:

- To extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy.
- To ensure and safeguard rapid sustainable development.
- To transfer powers to the regional and local authorities based on natural ideas and values.
- To improve the capacity of Regional Councils and Local Government to plan, implement, monitor and manage delivery of services for their constituents.

To ensure that the above-mentioned activities in deed take place, Regional Councils should take the lead and see to it that grassroots people receive essential basic services. Therefore, the following are but some of the essential basic services that are provided to the rural areas in Namibia.

### 3.3.1   Education

Prior to independence the education in Namibia was characterized by racial segregation. Best education and educational infrastructure were reserved for the urban areas. Rural children were denied access to better education and, in addition, travelled long distances to and from schools. Today, fifteen years after independence, more primary and secondary schools have been built in all thirteen regions (Ministry of Basic Education, 2002). Rural children are able to attend schools, which are within the reach. The Ministry of education introduced Adult Education Policy in 1991 and culminated in adult literacy programmes being carried out in all thirteen regions. The Presidential Commission Report on High Education resulted in the establishment of institutions of high learning in the regions in order to accommodate learners who wish to study further. Colleges of Education and Vocational Training Centres were established in the Oshana, Khomas, Otjozondjupa, Kavango and Caprivi region. In addition, the Oshana region which is the focus in this study has the privilege of housing the University of Namibia's northern campus. It should be noted that paragraph 3.3.5 elaborates more about why community consultation,

participation and involvement as well communication are essential in enhancing those rural services as listed under this Chapter.

### 3.3.2   Health facilities

The 2000 Report of the Ministry of Health and Social Services indicates that medical health facilities have been made available to all thirteen regions although not in every constituency. The majority of people have access to medical treatment both in rural and urban areas at a reasonable fee. Immunization campaigns for children between the age of 0 -10 are conducted at all clinics and healthcare centers throughout the country at no cost in order to prevent polio and other related diseases as well as child mortality. It is only expected of the line Ministry and respective Regional Councils to make information available to the grassroots people so that they can take their children to clinics for immunization when it is due. Therefore, Regional Councillors are crucial in ensuring that such important information reaches all people in the community. However, to qualify the earlier statement that some constituencies have no clinics, it is forthwith to mention here that the Oshana Regional Development Policy (2001/02 – 2005/06) indicates that the Okatjali and Uuvudhiya constituencies have neither clinics nor health centers. The communities of those two constituencies still travel long distances to access medical treatments in other constituencies in the region.

### 3.3.3   Water provision

Clean water provision in rural Namibia has been a cause of concern to the government since independence in 1990. The Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and the Namibia's National Water Utility (Namwater[6]) has committed itself to providing piped water to all people in Namibia especially in rural areas. The National Housing and Population census (National Planning Commission, 2001) indicates that, 15 years after independence more than

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[6] Namibia National Water Utility is a State Owned Enterprise that is tasked to provide water to rural areas and municipalities.

85 percent of the population in Namibia has access to piped water. However, this does not necessarily mean that the majority of the population are within the 2, 5 kilometers radius from water points as required. Most people are farther than that. Nevertheless, mechanisms have been design to ensure that water is provided and communities take charge of managing water resources. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Directorate of Water Supply (1996) indicates that Water Committees were established in all constituencies in the regions where water points are available. The reason is to make this services people oriented and allow the grassroots people to manage water infrastructure and water points. In other words, provision has been made to involve rural people in the water management in the respective constituencies.

### 3.3.4  Rural electrification

In the Namibia context rural electrification is the responsibility of the government through the Namibia's National Power utility (Nampower[7]) and its subsidiaries: the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (Nored) in the northern part and the Southern Electricity Company (SELco) in the southern part of the country. However, due to the high cost that is involved in the provision of electricity to the rural areas, the majority of people in Namibia especially in rural areas still have no access to electricity.  Despite that, in rural areas, electricity has been provided to some schools, clinics, churches and in some cases to cucashops. The provision of electricity to cucashops is a cause of concern, and at a time prompted Namibian Parliamentarians to react strongly about it. They claimed that some villagers or rural people spent more time at cucashops where electricity is available than in their homesteads.[8]  The Parliamentarians felt that even though electricity is an essential commodity it is very expensive to rural people and the provision thereof does not necessarily target grassroots needs. Therefore, they further argued, equitable rural development cannot be realized if rural people have no access to electricity.

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[7] Namibia Power Utility is a State Owned Enterprise that provides bulk electricity to municipalities and rural electricity distributors such as Nored and SELco.
[8] Discussions in the Namibian Parliament on the Appropriation Bill of 2005/06, 17 May 2005.

### 3.3.5 The importance of consultation and communication on rural service delivery.

In this research it is emphasized that although rural services in Namibia are continuing to be rendered by line ministries, the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding the provision of these services could not be underestimated. Equally important is that the grassroots people should be involved and participate in all services that are rendered to them. Community members, with the assistance from Regional Councillors, should be the initiators of such services. It has been noted that the central government is reluctant to delegate those services to Regional Councils despite the Decentralization policy that compels them to do so. The provision of education facilities, water, healthcare and electricity is mainly regulated by central government while Regional Councillors relegated to consultation and facilitation only. It is for this reason that Keulder (199: 60) mentions that there is still considerable uncertainty about the role and authority of the Regional Councils in Namibia regarding service delivery. The general trend is for ministries to hold to power at the central level, and sometimes have been reluctant to acknowledge the coordinating and facilitating functions of the Regional Councils. The author further notes that the ability of Regional Councillors to plan and coordinate is further hindered by poor consultation and communication with line ministries. Service delivery, be it piped water, education, healthcare, electricity requires coordinated efforts, and this could only be possible when adequate consultation and communication exist between Regional Councillors, line ministries and community members. In other words, Regional Councillors should form a link between service providers and the grassroots people. Good relationship and coordination among all stakeholders are essential to enable equitable service delivery at regional level to take place. Most of the services listed above could have been made better if Regional Councillors, community members, traditional leaders and community groups were actively and directly involved right from the beginning.

## 2.4    CONCLUSION

This Chapter has discussed the role, powers and functions of Regional Councillors regarding rural service delivery in Namibia. It has been noted that one of such role that Regional Councillors should play is consultation and communication. In essence, this means that councillors should be the link between the grassroots people, regional council and the central government. In other words, Regional Councillors should be the coordinators and facilitators of rural service delivery because they interact with community on a daily basis and know what people's needs and expectations are. Secondly, the Chapter discussed some of the major essential services in regional governance which are decisive to the social wellbeing of the rural people. As it was pointed out under paragraph 3.3.5 above, those services can not be equitably delivered in the absence of adequate consultation and communication between rural people, Regional Councillors and service providers. Significant to note is that community consultation and active participation is the answer to equitable service delivery.

Notwithstanding the above, a general lack of key basic services still exists in rural areas of Namibia.  As noted in this study, this has a negative impact on rural development and particularly on the social wellbeing of the grassroots people. To that end, it should be said that better service delivery to all at regional level could not be fully realized, unless the provision of infrastructure and other essential services for the constituencies where they are not exist are materialized. It is against this background that the subsequent chapter (Chapter 4) focuses on the Oshana region as the case study in this research report. The responses by Regional Councillors and views of the community members are interpreted to determine the degree and extent to which consultation and communication between the two parties takes place. Fundamentally, this is important because adequate consultation and effective communication could promote participation, self-mobilization and community empowerment.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FIELDWORK RESULTS IN THE CASE OF THE OSHANA REGION

*"Go to the people, Live with them, Love them, Learn from them, Work with them, start with what they have, Build on what they know, And in the end, When the work is done, The people will rejoice: We have done it ourselves!"* (Burkey, 1993).

## 4.1   OVERVIEW

This Chapter presents the case study of the Oshana region which is the focus of this research report. It interprets the data collected by the researcher through the questionnaires which were handed to ten (10) Regional Councillors of the respective constituencies in the Oshana region. It should be noted that although all ten councillors were given questionnaires only seven (7) were returned and used in this research report. The other three Regional Councillors have not returned the questionnaires. In addition to the responses by councillors, further data were collected from community members as well as community leaders through structured interviews, informal discussions, observation of community meetings where Regional Councillors were present and by conducting research schedules in an interview situation with traditional leaders. Eight headmen from six constituencies were interviewed: Ondangwa (2), Ongwediva (2), Okaku (1), Okatana (1) Oshakati East (1) and Uuvudhiya (1). The eight interviews are by no means representative of other headmen in the region, but provide insightful on the relationship between Regional Councillors, community leaders and ordinary members in the community regarding consultation and communication.

As it was indicated earlier in Chapter One of this study, the ultimate aim of this research is to examine and assess the role of the Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region of

Namibia. For this reason, the views of community members and headmen were collected and used to check the reliability of the responses by regional councillors and vice versa. Moreover, since the research focus more on consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members, this Chapter is divided into four sections, based on the key issues as identified under Chapter Two. These sections are; consultation and communication, accessibility of councillors and community participation, institutions/instruments for consultation and communication, and rural services delivery. In each case the responses by the Regional Councillors as well as the views of community members were interpreted and analyzed in order to establish an understanding of the situation in the Oshana region. In the case of traditional leaders, research schedules were conducted and further probing questions were asked by the researcher in order to clarify some issues where necessary.

## 4.2    CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

### 4.2.1   Responses by Regional Councillors

All seven Regional Councillors who responded to the questionnaires indicated that they have offices in constituencies where communities are at liberty to approach them concerning development and social issues. However, out of seven respondents, only two councillors (Okaku and Ongwediva) confirmed that they have secretaries at the constituent offices. Other five councillors have no secretaries and indicated that when they are working in the field the office remains closed. All seven Regional Councillors pointed out that the lack of technical capacities attributed to the slow pace under which decentralization process in Namibia is taking place, hence, they are not yet in the position to appoint secretaries at constituency level due to lack of funds. They indicated that without the decentralization of funds it becomes difficult to operate. Moreover, the Regional Councillors further indicated that in order to reach the majority of the rural people in the respective constituencies they organize public meetings in the community. This gives them the opportunity to inform communities about government programmes and projects, and at the same time listen

to community problems and concerns. The councillor of the Okaku constituency (who is also the Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy) indicated that consultation and communication between community members and the constituent office is satisfactory. The councillor, however, pointed out that although the office's door is open to all community members, some people live far away from the constituent office, hence, they might not consult with the councillor as they wish to. The councillor further indicated that regular community meetings are held to inform, give feedback and listen to community problems and concerns as well as to discuss development programmes in the constituency. The councillor of the Ongwediva constituency shared the same sentiment and maintained that not only the constituent office is used for consultation and communication but general community meetings are regularly held at various constituency centers. The Ongwediva councillor further pointed out that center leaders[9], headmen, church ministers and school principals are also used to convey messages, information and feedback to community members.

On the question whether the consultation meetings are communicated to community members well in time; all seven respondents said yes and further indicated that they make use of traditional leaders, centers leaders in the constituencies, community development committee leaders, announcement over the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) Oshiwambo radio service, church leaders, school principals or any other appropriate structures to convey messages and give feedback to community members. However, some Regional Councillors pointed out that there is a need to improve consultation and communication with community members at constituency level. Other councillors felt that consultative meetings should be held on regular basis to give communities the opportunity to discuss matters of economic and social concern as they occurred. Regional Councillors pointed out that due to workload on the side of Regional Councillors, community members are always encouraged to approach traditional leaders (headmen) and center leaders who in turn forward such information to councillors' offices. Public meetings at constituency

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[9] In the case of the Oshana region, the center leaders are persons who are elected by political party supporters to represent the interests of the party that is dominant in that particular constituency, in this case the SWAPO Party. Such persons are used by regional Councillors as intermediaries between the community and Regional Councillors

centers, the Regional Councillor of the Oshakati East constituency indicated, should only be held when the situation allows it or when there are issues that need the whole community attention. Notwithstanding the above, all seven respondents indicated that they allow community members to consult with them in their homes, even after office hours or over weekends. Regional Councillors further pointed out that all community members are actively involved in all development issues in the constituency. However, as the councillors of the Uuvudhiya and the Okaku constituency pointed out, due to ignorance and reluctance among some community members it is not easy to ensure a hundred percent participation of the community in the Regional Council development programmes.

### 4.2.2   Views by community members

At a community meeting held at Enguwantale in Ompundja constituency on the 23rd of August 2005 the researcher observed that the community members are concerned about the manner in which information is conveyed to them from the councillor's office. The community members indicated that although they receive such information, in essence, the information reach the community members very late. Community members indicated that sometimes the information is received one day prior to the scheduled meeting and this leads to poor attendance due to other commitments from the side of community members.

The community members indicated that if messages are conveyed and received well in time, the majority of the people can be able to make the necessary arrangements to attend those meetings and make contributions or voice their problems and concerns. The headman of the Ekkolanahambo village in the Ondangwa constituency showed appreciation about the degree of consultation and communication that are currently existed between the Regional Councillor and community members. However, the headman pointed out that the councillor's office is located far away from some communities in the constituency, and this makes it difficult for some people to reach the office whenever they wish to do so. In addition, the headman said that even though public meetings are held time and again, the constituency is large and this

may results in some communities not meeting the councillor for months. In essence, that could have a negative implication on the process of consultation and communication. In the Ongwediva constituency some community members the researcher has either interviewed or spoken to, felt that the degree of consultation and communication is not effective. For example, at Omaalala village in the same constituency, community members held that they had no meeting with the Regional Councillor for the past nine months. The last time they met the councillor was during the regional elections campaign in November 2004. Some indicated that they do not even know where the constituent councillor could be located. Some community members at the Omaalala village said they were not aware of the existence of center leaders in their area. Others said they were aware of center leaders, but confirmed that no meeting was held to introduce such people to the community. They also indicated that center leaders were elected by few individuals and not by the majority of the community members. Through probing questions, it came to light that center leaders were elected to represent political parties and not necessarily the community in its totality. Therefore, some community members who are not supporters of a specific political party may not be comfortable to consult with such center leaders.
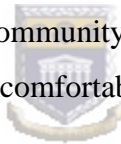
In the Oshakati West and East constituencies, particularly in the township areas, community members interviewed, indicated that they could not real make a difference between local authority councillors and the Regional Councillors in terms of consultation and communication. The community members residing within urban areas jurisdiction said that they meet the Local Authority Councillors more often than the Regional Councillors. Community members indicated that the Regional Councillors are more of use to communities outside the boundaries of the town (remote areas) than to those living in townships. In the Okaku constituency, community members mentioned that although there is a constituent office, the fact that the Regional Councillor is also a Deputy Minister means that the councillor spends more time at Windhoek (where the ministerial office is located) than in the constituency. Therefore, the community members felt that even if they wished to consult with the councillor it might not be possible because the councillor is not around in the constituency.

## 4.3    ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCILLORS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

### 4.3.1    Responses by Regional Councillors

The accessibility of the Regional Councillors largely determines the extent to which community participation takes place. Communities become actively involved when they have access to the councillors and information related to regional development activities. According to the councillor of the Ongwediva constituency, community members are eager and willing to participate in all matters that affect their daily lives. The community is keen to participate in issues like static (piped) water provision and management, literacy and other development programmes. However, as the councillor pointed out, lack of information limits community participation. The Regional Councillor further indicated that community participation takes place only when the councillors are accessible to community members in the respective constituencies. The councillor, therefore, indicated that despite the distance and lack of resources he is accessible to the majority of community members in the constituency. The other six Regional Councillors also indicated that they are accessible to the majority of the community members in the respective constituencies. Five of the councillors pointed out that they were satisfied with the degree of accessibility to rural communities. They attributed this to constituent offices which have been established and open to all people in the constituencies and the good relationship between NBC radio services and the Oshana Regional Council.

In addition, the councillors mentioned that the center leaders play an important role in facilitating activities at the constituency level. That makes the councillors as well as information accessible to the majority of rural communities. The Uuvudhiya councillor said that due to the fact that the office is not located in the constituency and that there is no secretary at the office; he quite often visits headmen and center leaders in the constituency to listen and discuss problems and concerns that are faced by the community. According to the councillor, that is one way of making himself available and accessible to community members in the constituency.

On the other hand, the Regional Councillor of the Oshakati West constituency pointed out that accessibility of the constituent office to community members is a matter of concern in the sense that the office is not centrally located. The councillor said that some community members cannot travel to the councillors' office due to the distance and lack of transportation means. Furthermore, the Regional Councillor indicated that apart from Regional Council responsibilities he is also a member of the National Council which requires him time and again to attend the sittings of the Council in Windhoek. That gives him an impression that albeit community in the constituency want to consult with him, they may find it difficult because he is not at the office or in the constituency for that matter.

On the question whether councillors stay (reside) in the constituencies where they have been elected as Regional Councillors, all seven respondents indicated that they have their places of residence and stay in their constituencies. Regional Councillors seem to be inconformity with the provision of Section 6 (iii) of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992) which stipulates that a councillor must be an ordinarily resident of the constituency where he/she is elected. That may afford the community members the opportunity to access the councillor at any time they wish to do so because the councillor is available.

On the question whether community members have access to relevant information, all seven Regional Councillors indicated that the majority of people in the respective constituencies have access to relevant information pertaining to government policies on regional development. According to the Regional Councillor of the Uuvudhiya constituency, such information is acquired through holding of public meetings by Regional Councillors and center leaders, government ministers' visits to constituencies and through media such as NBC-Oshiwambo radio service that is commonly listened to all over the region, NBC-TV and local daily newspapers. However, as the Regional Councillor of the Ondangwa constituency pointed out, community members are some times reluctant to attend public meetings, therefore, it is not easy for the councillor to ensure that information and feedback are

communicated to all who need them. Nonetheless, the Regional Councillor indicated that community participation is satisfactory.

### 4.3.2  Views by community members

The general impression of the community members reflects a low accessibility of Regional Councillors. The views of the community members indicated that although all the constituencies have Regional Councillors, the offices are not easily accessible as those offices are not within easy reach. The community members said that some councillors' offices are not staffed with secretaries and when the councillor is not in the office or out of constituency they find it difficult to take their concerns and problems to such office.  At the Okatana Township in the Okatana constituency, residents showed the general appreciation with the flow of information and interaction between the Regional Councillor and the community members. The communities attributed this to the Oshiwambo radio service that is usually used by the councillors to convey messages and give feedback to them. The headman of the Ondjondjo village in the Okatana constituency indicated that the majority of the people in the village support the same political party as the Regional Councillor does, and this makes it easy for them to consult and access the councillor and center leaders. Furthermore, the headman indicated that the majority of communities of the Okatana constituency have access to Oshiwambo radio service, hence, access to information from the councillor's office because such information is broadcasted over the radio. Similarly, the headman of the Ongungila village in the Ongwediva constituency said that the councillor is available and accessible to people in the village. The office of the councillor is also within easy reach from his village. Villagers, according to the headman, do receive the information well in advance. Therefore, it encourages them to participate in matters related to constituency development.

## 4.4    INSTITUTIONS FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

### 4.4.1  Responses by Regional Councillors

The Regional Councillors indicated that the Regional Council of the Oshana region made provision for the establishment of offices in all constituencies in the region. According to the councillors, the establishment of such offices further strengthened the process of consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members in the respective constituencies. The councillor of the Ongwediva constituency indicated that there are reasonable number of institutions and instruments for consultation and communication available in the constituency. First, as the councillor pointed out, there is an office for the councillor where individual community members are at all times encouraged to approach and discuss development and social issues with the councillor. Secondly, traditional leaders and centers leaders are available in all villages within the constituency. According to the councillor, with the exception of the constituent office which is far from some communities, all other institutions as mentioned above are closer to the people and community members are at liberty to consult and communicate with such institutions whenever they wish to do so. In the Ompundja constituency it was pointed out that due to the fact that the constituency is big and people are scattered all over, the Oshiwambo radio service has become one of the most suitable means of communication. The councillor further indicated that community members are at all times encouraged to approach headmen and center leaders who are closer to them.

The councillor of the Okaku constituency shared the same sentiment. He indicated that although there are institutions for consultation and communication available in the constituency; local communities could only become aware of these institutions if the councillors sensitize and mobilize community members to make use of these institutions. The councillor said that depending on issues at hand, he engaged with community members by holding public meetings.

**4.4.2  Views by community members**

The general feeling of the community members is that institutions for consultation and communication are readily available in the constituencies. The advantage, as some community members pointed out, is the fact that the majority of people in the respective constituencies speak the same dialect (Oshiwambo language) and this can facilitates better consultation and communication with councillors, headmen and center leaders. However, other community members said that even though such institutions are available, relevant information might be difficult to find since even the headmen and center leaders are some times not well informed on issues like draught relief food, water and electricity provision and job creation opportunities. The community members indicated that those services are planned and co-ordinated from the central government and councillors only become involved when the projects are being implemented. Therefore, the community members felt that if Regional Councillors find it difficult to get information, then headmen and center leaders may sometimes not be useful in terms of relevant and updated information sharing. The community members further pointed out that headmen, center leaders and church leaders are available and accessible but communities need more of the councillors to give them clear pictures about service delivery when needs arise.

The headman of the Ekkolanahambo village in the Ondangwa constituency agreed with the community's views and further said that although he is there to serve the community, he sometimes did not have the information the community may wish to know.  The headman specifically referred to the Communal Land Act of which he has knowledge of that it was passed by the Parliament in 2000. However, thus far the headman did not have any information on how it works.  The headman further said that the communities feel more comfortable when they consult with institutions that are closer to them. Therefore, the headman said that, the Regional Councillors should make use of headmen and equip them with relevant and updated information if they want such information to reach the majority of the communities at the grassroots level. The community members of the Omaalala village in the Ongwediva constituency acknowledged that the councillor's office is available in the

constituency but they said that the office is not accessible to the majority of the communities. The Omaalala community further indicated that the office lies 20 kilometers away from the village and to access it one should need to have money to pay for transport to and from such office. The community members said that community leaders and headmen are not equipped with relevant and updated information concerning service delivery.

The headman of the Okapya village in the Okaku constituency pointed out that thus far there is no major problem with the manner in which consultation and communication take place between the councillor and community members. The headman indicated that the councillor often hold public meetings with community members, however, community members are some times reluctant to attend meetings. He could not provide the reason why some community members are reluctant to attend community meetings. However, the headman emphasized the need to educate the grassroots communities about the essence of community participation. At the Uuvudhiya, the headman was of the opinion that since the village situated far way from the office of the councillor, some community members rarely meet him. The headman pointed out that although meetings are held with community members, it might take some times before some communities meet the councillor. Like other headmen that were interviewed, the headman at Uuvudhiya indicated that he does not have the relevant and updated information to give to the community.

## 4.5 RURAL SERVICES DELIVERY

### 4.5.1 Responses by Regional Councillors

The eight Regional Councillors (Okaku, Ondangwa, Ongwediva, Uuvudhiya, Oshakati East, Oshakati West and Ompundja constituencies) who responded to the questionnaires, indicated that since the independence of Namibia in 1990, the government has done a tremendous job by providing basic services to rural communities. These services include the provision of piped water, electricity to more strategic places in the constituencies, building of classrooms, healthcare centers and

clinics, upgrading of public secondary roads and installation of public telephones in rural areas of the Oshana region. The councillor of the Ongwediva constituency said that although such services are not provided in the homesteads or within the neighbourhoods of every citizen in the constituency, people could access and make use of some of those facilities. The councillor specifically referred to piped water, schools, clinics and public telephones. The Ongwediva councillor further pointed out that in order to ensure that those services are delivered to every citizen, more resources must be made available from the central government to the Regional Council, and more importantly, decentralization process should be accelerated. The councillor of the Ompundja constituency shared the same sentiment, but further pointed out that besides him being a facilitator and co-ordinator of services in the constituency, his powers and responsibilities are limited due to lack of resources. The councillor said that the Oshana Regional Council lacks the necessary resources to address the appalling and persisting poverty in the region due to slow pace under which decentralization is taking place.

The councillor of the Uuvudhiya constituency said that the current methods used to deliver services are satisfactory. However, it will take time and lot of resources before every citizen in the rural areas has piped water and electricity in the homestead. The councillor also emphasized that there is a need to have decentralization process accelerated to ensure that functions are carried out by the Regional Council and at the constituency level in particular. As the councillor of the Uuvudhiya constituency pointed out; more often than not poor communication between Regional Councillor and line ministries led to poor services delivery[10]. The councillor was specifically referring to the Marula trees project in the Uuvudhiya constituency which dried up because of poor consultation between the Regional Councillor and the line ministry officials in Ongwediva.

On the question as to what Regional Councillors were doing to ensure an improved standard of living of the grassroots communities; all seven Regional Councillors

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[10]This was mentioned by the Regional Councillor of the Uuvudhiya constituency over the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) TV news on the 23rd August 2005 at 20H00

indicated that there is a need to plan, work closely with community members and more important involve and encourage them to participate. The councillors pointed out that communities should be mobilized to be actively involved in all development activities. The councillor of the Ongwediva elaborated further by mentioning that councillors should encourage the creation of sustainable projects that could generate funds for the rural communities to benefit.

### 4.5.2   Views by community members

Some community members showed their general satisfaction about the type of services they receive from the Regional Council of the Oshana region and the government in particular. They said unlike in the past (colonial era), clean water is available and accessible to the majority of rural communities. Some community members indicated that schools were built and clinics are available. However, other community members said that they are not satisfied with the services being delivered by the National Government. They pointed out that they still travel long distances to access piped water and receive medical treatments. The community members of the Uuvudhiya constituency said that the constituency lacks health facilities, hence, they travel long distances to access those services in other constituencies. In general, even though basic services and facilities are available community members felt that some of these services are far away from some communities and they have to travel long distances to either fetch water or get medical treatment. Community members attributed these problems to inadequate consultation and ineffective communication between service providers and rural communities especially during the planning and designing stage. They said that if all communities were involved in the planning of government programmes the distances could have been reduced.

All eight headmen that the researcher has interviewed have electricity provided in their homesteads. Nevertheless, they also indicated that most of the essential services are available, but not all are accessible, for example, electricity and telecommunications. The headmen further pointed out that rural community want more piped water points, drought relief food and employment opportunities in order

to earn incomes so that they can buy food and other necessities. It must be mentioned that the main concern of the community members the researcher has either spoken to or interviewed, in all seven constituencies in the Oshana region, is the manner in which services are provided and not necessarily that services are not rendered. Community members said that there are no proper mechanisms in place that could be employed to identify areas where certain specific services are needed. This has resulted in people who need such services not getting them. At the public meeting held at the Cascades Sport Field on the 13th of August 2005 in the Oshakati East constituency where some Regional councillors were present, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs addressed the community regarding the provision or issuance of national identification documents. At the same meeting community members indicated the desire to have the processing of identification cards decentralized. According to community members the processing of national identification cards in Windhoek takes long before a document is issued. Therefore, it is argued in this study that in order to improve service delivery in the Oshana region, adequate consultation and communication is required, while community involvement and participation are preconditions for service delivery.
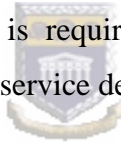
## 4.6    CONCLUSION

It has been noted that there is no big differences of opinion between the responses by Regional Councillors and views of the community members regarding essential rural services delivery in the Oshana region. In one way or another, community members confirmed what the Regional Councillors have indicated as being done in addressing the plight of rural communities in the respective constituencies. However, information gaps existed between Regional Councillors and community members. Some councillors seemed too remote from the communities and this has resulted in insufficient consultation and communication. When Burkey (1993) says: "go to the people … start with what they have … people will rejoice: we have done it ourselves", if loosely translated and in the context of this study it might mean that councillors should put more effort to interact and consult with the communities so that essential rural services could be delivered in accordance with the grassroots

needs and expectations. The responses by the Regional Councillors and the views of the community members have indicated that essential rural service delivery and development in particular can become a reality if there is inclusive active involvement of community members to whom the services are delivered. Good and regular interaction between the two parties is a prerequisite for effective co-operation and understanding between community members and Regional Councillors. Furthermore, traditional leaders/headmen could play a crucial role in consultation and communication regarding rural services delivery in the sense that unlike the Regional Councillors, headmen are the closest institutions to the grassroots communities and know the community needs better than Regional Councillors. Therefore, headmen must be effectively utilized if the Regional Councillors indeed wish to reach the majority of rural community members. It must be noted that in this Chapter the responses by Regional Councillors and the views of the community members have been tested on the four main issues as identified in Chapter Two; in order to determine the impact these issues have on rural service delivery and indeed on the standard of living of the grassroots people.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 5.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of this Chapter is to present the main research findings on the key issues of the study and information derived from fieldworks. The research findings are presented in the same manner following this research pattern: First, the researcher puts forward findings on the empirical evidence derived from fieldwork in the case of the Oshana region. Secondly, the researcher drew main research findings based on the following key issues; consultation and communication, accessibility of councillors and community participation, institutions for consultation and communication, and rural services delivery in regional governance. In other words, the theoretical overview and the fieldwork results are combined in order to draw main research findings.

## 5.2 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The responses by Regional Councillors and views of the community members on consultation and communication shows that Regional Councillors in the Oshana region have constituent offices, however, lack of technical capacities (eg. Secretaries and other technical staff) at constituency level hampers the process of consultation and communication. This is so in the sense that when the councillor is in the field, community members might not be able to consult because the office remain closed. Furthermore, the slow pace under which decentralization process is taking place in Namibia is a matter of concern to councillors. For that reason, Regional Councils lack resources such as funds, office equipments and transport that could enable them to reach all corners of the constituencies. In addition, many essential services are still being delivered by line ministries and state owned enterprises. However, councillors (as indicated in Chapter Four) try earnestly to fulfil their political obligations under the current circumstances.

This is evident when the councillors allow community members to consult with them in their homes, even after office hours or over weekends. It should be noted that adequate consultation and effective communication might only be realized when sufficient funds and other resources are made available to the disposal of the Regional Councils. Alternatively, the decentralization of specific decision making powers is crucial to councillors' performance and improved services at the grassroots. The community members indicated that poor community participation existed due to the inaccessibility of councillors, and relevant and updated information. Instruments for consultation and communication are limited in the region, yet, those available are not effectively utilized. The Oshiwambo radio service remains the main instrument of communication commonly used in the region to convey messages from the councillors and give feedback to community members. Nevertheless, there are community members who do not own radios and therefore, they might be excluded from receiving information broadcasted over the radio. The empirical evidence by Regional Councillors and community members seemed to indicate that unless proper mechanisms are put in place, consultation and communication would remain a problem in the region. Community members are concerned with the degree of accessibility of the councillors due to distances between some communities and the offices of the councillors. It came to light that some Regional Councillors hold more than one portfolio, therefore, this may limit the accessibility.

The above might be true in the sense that, historically, the majority of rural community members are resources poor and cannot afford to travel to councillors offices; hence they may not be able acquire the relevant information if the councillors are not applying the 'Burkey approach' – "go to the people …" and hold public meetings with community on a regular basis. Furthermore, the holding of more than one portfolio as alluded to by community members could also limit consultation and accessibility of councillors in the sense that such councillors are forced by the situation to divide the time in order to satisfy both offices. Therefore, community members in the constituency where these councillors are officially elected as Regional Councillors might suffer the inconvenience.

## 5.3 FINDINGS ON CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The theory and experience on regional/provincial government in other countries indicate that where good relationship and interaction between councillors and community members exist, consultation and communication may also flourish. In the case of the Oshana region, the Regional Councillors and the majority of the community members belong to the same political party (SWAPO) and speak the same language (dialect). It gives an impression that the relationship between the councillors and community members might not be a matter of concern if effective consultation is carried out. However, Regional Councillors and community members indicated that inadequate consultation and communication takes place.

The theory revealed that for consultation and communication to be effective certain requirements should be met. These are; good relationship and consensus between elected representatives and community members, active community participation, access to relevant and updated information and responsive government agent. For that reason, Regional Councillors as elected representatives of the people should consult with the grassroots communities on regular basis so that they could fulfil their political obligations and address the real needs and expectations of the community. The feeling among some community members and traditional leaders is that headmen are not effectively utilized in the consultation and communication process. In essence, this consultation and communication breakdown could lead to limited service delivery and poor standard of living of the grassroots people. However, the research found that the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 and Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995 are not explicitly clear on the consultation and communication issue. These pieces of legislations do not clearly specify that councillors must hold public meetings and that intensive interaction must take place between councillors, traditional leaders and community members at the grassroots level for the benefit of the poor. However, the Decentralization policy is clear on consultation and communication. According to this policy, consultation and communication promotes participatory democracy and increase community participation.

The research found that Regional Councillors rely heavily on the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (Oshiwambo radio service) to convey messages and give feedback to community members. There is a special programme broadcasted on NBC every morning between 06h15 to 08h00 – Monday to Friday specifically for officials and Regional Councillors to inform communities about activities that are taking place in the respective constituencies. In effect, this is one of the effective ways of communication in the sense that the radio is listened to all over the region. Even so, it should be noted that among community members in the Oshana region there are those who do not own radios and have no access to it either, thus, they are sometimes deprived of the current and important information from councillors. The theory and practical examples show that there are other several instruments of consultation and communication that elected officials may employ to convey messages and give feedback to community members. Such instruments are community activists, newspapers, traditional leaders, regular public meetings, community magazines, neighbourhood groups or any other instruments in communities that are available, accessible and easily reachable. These are some options that Regional Councillors can exploit if they wish to reach the majority of community members.  Lack of secretaries (as mentioned earlier) may also render the process of consultation and communication ineffective. However, in the absence of technical staff, Regional Councillors can encourage community members to make use of center leaders, headmen and other instruments as mentioned above in order to raise problems and concerns provided such institutions are equipped with updated information.

## 5.4     FINDINGS ON ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCILLORS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is a constitutional requirement to have Regional Councillors elected in all constituencies and represent the interest of the people; hence, councillors must be accessible to community members at all times. Nevertheless, the research found that the vastness of some constituencies and the lack of resources limit the accessibility of councillors to some community members. As it was revealed by literature, the

active participation and involvement of the grassroots people to a certain extent is determined by the availability of relevant information to community, and continuous interaction between elected officials and community members. It is therefore, important for the councillors to keep regular contacts with electorate because it creates a spirit of lasting relationship and co-operation.

However, as Servaes and Arnst (1999) pointed out (see Chapter Two) the exchange between government officials and their constituencies is conducted in a bureaucratic sub language which has one meaning to the official and an entirely different meaning to an average person. The accessibility in this context does not only necessarily mean that the councillors should make meetings or be in office so that community members access them; but the very language the councillor uses to consult and communicate with communities plays a determining role. Moreover, the theory (Chapter Two) and empirical evidence (Chapter Four) have proved that the accessibility of councillors and community participation could be much easier if councillors keep an open door policy, hold regular public meetings, use familiar language and share all information related to community development in the region.
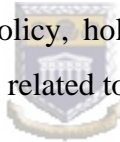
The experiences from other countries in Africa, for example, South Africa, shows that the practical decentralization (not rhetoric) of resources, funds and decision making powers to lower spheres of government could increase the accessibility of councillors to rural communities. This is so in the sense that councillors at regional level may have adequate resources that enable them to reach all corners of the constituencies and deliver essential services to the grassroots people. The study found that there exits poor information sharing between line ministries, councillors and community members, limited resources and low level of community participation. The study also found that while community members are said to be reluctant to attend meetings, on the other hand, Regional Councillors are struggling to meet their responsibilities due to some reasons. Regional Councillors have no official transport and in most cases they are forced by the situation to use their private vehicles. There is lack of co-ordination from line ministries and lack of support staff. In actual fact, these could have a visible effect on councillors'

accessibility and also negative implications on rural service delivery in particular. Furthermore, the study found that proper dissemination of information to headmen, center leaders and church leaders is not taking place. Despite that, the study also found that the grassroots communities are not properly organized, therefore, their impact on the community participation process is minimal. For that reason, community members could not claim their constitutional rights regarding relevant information, but rather to rely on the Regional Councillors to lead the process.

## 5.5 FINDINGS ON INSTITUTIONS FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Based on the empirical evidence from fieldwork results it came to light that there are fairly number of institutions for consultation and communication exist in the Oshana region. At regional level the regional council offices, headed by the Chief Regional Officer and staffed with administrative officials, are open to all people in the region. Section 41 of the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992 stipulates that regional council meetings are open to members of the public to attend. Besides that, constituent offices have been established and community members are at liberty to approach those offices and raise their problems and concerns. In the communities in remote areas, there are center leaders understandably selected by the community in consultation with the political party that is dominant in that particular constituency. There are also traditional leaders (headmen) at village level available and accessible to every community member in that particular village. Basically, headmen are traditionally well placed closer to the grassroots communities, and could play a significant role in facilitating consultation and communication provided the Regional Councillors use them effectively.

However, as this study found, these institutions (be it the regional office, constituent office, center leaders or headmen) are either underutilized or not utilized at all. In reality, there is minimal co-ordination and co-operation among these interrelated institutions, specifically between Regional Council, line ministries and traditional leaders. Furthermore, the study found that civil society organizations are notably

absent in the Oshana region. If these organizations ever exist in the region, then they are not properly organized to take Regional Councillors to task. Some community members do not even know who the center leaders in their constituencies are due to lack of information. Traditional leaders are not well equipped with updated information so that they can assist the respective communities in the absence of Regional Councillors or centre leaders. It should be noted that the Regional Councillors' offices and center leaders are not at all times within the reach of all community members. For that reason, traditional leaders such as chiefs and headmen, if effectively equipped with relevant information, could play a vital role in assisting Regional Councillors to reach the majority of the communities.

## 5.6 FINDINGS ON CONSULTATION AND COMUNICATION IN RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Service delivery is a topical issue, not only in the Oshana region but in all other regions in Namibia as well. Grassroots community expectations and needs are not met by the respective Regional Councils. Based on information from the fieldwork, experience and observation by the researcher, evidence exists that the Oshana Regional Council is co-ordinating efforts to ensure that the majority of rural people receive essential services. It was established that the Oshana region has a Regional Development Plan in place as the guiding policy document that facilitates development initiatives and rural service delivery. However, the study found that the delay in the implementation of the decentralization policy has negatively impacted on the efforts of the Oshana Regional Council. It is evident that even if adequate consultation and communication may take place between Regional Councillors and community members, the obvious lack of resources, funds and decision making powers may render rural service delivery unrealistic. Both Regional Councillors and community members acknowledged that some essential services such as piped water, schools, clinics, electricity, gravel roads, telecommunication means are provided to the rural areas in the region, but not to all communities. Basically, this indicates that most of the basic services are not accessible to some community members. Constituencies such as Okatjali, Uuvudhiya lack piped water points and health

facilities and communities travel long distances to access those services. It should be noted that since the advent of democracy in Namibia in 1990, most of these basic services have been provided by line ministries and state agents, whereas Regional Councillors' powers are reduced to a merely advisory and facilitating role. In reality, this means that the Regional Councillors do not have the necessary resources to practically deliver services to communities, but instead act on the direction from line ministries and other state agents. It has also come to light that the Regional Councils in Namibia are not yet in the position to make policies (apart from trivial rules and regulations) at regional level. This means that Regional Councils rely on policies made at the central government level which are sometimes not really compatible to the environment under which rural services are delivered. Notwithstanding the above, it should be clear that this research does not necessarily implies that national policies are not appropriate to regional governance environment, however, it is imperative to have policies that are well informed by the actual situation on the ground so that they can be of beneficial to grassroots people.

## 5.7    CONCLUSION

Regional Councillors alone are by no means the architectures of social change and rural development in particular. Although, councillors are the facilitators and co-ordinators of rural service delivery, community participation and their active involvement in all development matters are equally critical to the improvement of the standard of living of the grassroots people. The Governor of the Oshikoto region once mentioned that it is becoming increasingly necessary to seek the experience of the poor people themselves on the basis of the fact that people living in poverty are in a better position to describe what poverty means to them in a special local or regional context (Nawatiseb, 2005). Therefore, as discussed in this Chapter, adequate consultation and communication, accessibility of councillors, community participation, availability of institutions for consultation and communication and equitable service delivery could enhance people life; promote good governance and participatory democracy. As pointed out in this Chapter, it requires a better co-ordinated effort from all stakeholders to ensure that Regional Councillors in the

Oshana region fulfil the political obligations. Regional Councillors should be given significant powers to decide on matters that are central to the acceleration of development in rural areas. This study argued that all these may only be possible if a significant number of services and functions are devolved to regions.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1    CONCLUSIONS

The research attempted to address and answer the question of inadequate consultation and communication that exist between Regional Councillors and community members in the Oshana region. This was extensively highlighted under Chapter Two and Four of this research report. From the outset, it was clear that consultation and communication process is not seemed to receive the necessary attention and co-operation from the Oshana Regional Council. This was confirmed by headmen and community members in the interviews and informal discussions with the researcher. It appears that there is a need to broaden the understanding of elected officials regarding consultation and communication and, indeed, inculcate in them considerate of the imperativeness of community consultation and participation at the grassroots level.

The research has noted that in an attempt to address the question of participatory democracy at the grassroots, the government of Namibia put in place legal instruments to augment participatory democracy. These are: the Constitution Act 1 of 1990, the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992, the Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995, the Council of Traditional Leaders Act 13 0f 1997 and the Decentralization Enabling Act 33 of 2000 and, of course, the Decentralization policy. To strengthen consultation, communication and participatory democracy at the grassroots, Regional Councillors were elected and placed in proximity of grassroots people.

The study showed (through literature and fieldwork) that regional governance is not only about services planning, implementing and controlling, but also to sustain practicable relationship, dialogue, information sharing, participation, involvement, mobilization, accountability and equitable distribution of services. All these improve consultation and communication, promote participatory democracy and encourage

the citizens to claim their constitutional rights regarding service delivery. Based on the above, the Regional Council can design better interventions to address community problems and concerns.

Notwithstanding the above; consultation, communication and community participation are still minimal in the Oshana region, particularly at constituency level where the majority of the population live. It is therefore, necessary that this study should provide recommendations that could help readers, academics and community in general to understand the situation in the Oshana region. In the same vein, these recommendations may assist the Regional Councillors in the Oshana region to improve consultation and communication with the historically neglected and disadvantaged rural communities.

## 6.2    RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations are suggested in this study for the purpose of improving the role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia. It should be emphatically clear that the under-listed recommendations are not generally apply to other regions in Namibia or elsewhere in Africa, but could be useful and may adopted depending on the environment.

### 6.2.1  Recommendation One:    Grassroots    communities    must    be continuously and cautiously engaged in participation through consultation and communication.

Consultation and communication is an ongoing process which calls for the active involvement and participation of all stakeholders in order to increase conscientization. Experience in other countries, especially in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region shows that consultation and communication is more effective when it is people-centred. It works well when there

is ongoing community dialogue and more forums have been established at the grassroots level in order to engage communities in all rural development activities. For example, in South Africa they have what is called an "Area Co-ordinating Teams, which serve as vehicle through which government agencies engage communities … at grassroots level" (Williams, 2004: 19). This could augment consultation and communication between councillors, communities and all other stakeholders. The same can be established in the Oshana region in order to facilitate consultation, communication and participatory democracy at the grassroots level.

This study recommends that the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992 should be the main tool to facilitate consultation and communication, therefore, it should be amended specifically Sections 11, 28, 41 and 42 to make clear provision for consultation and communication with the grassroots people. These Sections, although they make provision for the council and public meetings to take place (at the Council's office), they do not specify as to how many meetings should be held by the council on a monthly or annually basis. The Act does not say that Regional Councillors should consult and hold public meetings at the constituency level. Therefore, even if the councillors fail to convene community meetings or just hold few, there is no legal basis on which communities could hold the councillors accountable. It should be noted that rural communities are poor and cannot afford to travel and attend meetings at the Regional Council Headquarters where these meetings are usually held, as stipulated in the Act. Councillors must go to the constituencies and hold public meetings. It is further recommended in this study that councillors should not hold two portfolios at the same time. For example, if the Regional Councillor holds a ministerial position or a Governor for that matter, it may hamper consultation and communication with community members in his/her constituency. In actual fact, the holding of two portfolios leads to councillors spending more time on the other office at the expense of the constituency where they are democratically elected as representatives of the people. Therefore, the Act must be clear in this regard. Hill (1974: 37) argues that the popular demand for ordinary people to have a greater say has arisen because of dissatisfaction with government leaders who seemed too remote…and do not consult or inform the electorate before

they act. It should be noted that inadequate consultation and communication result in uninformed decisions being taken and subsequently non-compliance.

## 6.2.2 Recommendation Two: Central government should put in place sufficient mechanisms that promote active community participation and facilitate the accessibility of Regional Councillors.

An accessibility of Regional Councillors and community participation are prerequisites to good governance and democracy. Good governance can only be realized if Regional Councillors are accessible and community participation is taking place. The current situation in the Oshana region indicates that institutionally community participation process does not seem to receive the necessary co-operation both from the Central Government and the Regional Council. Burkey (1993: xvii) holds that sustainable rural development will only be achieved through the efforts of the rural people themselves working for the benefit of themselves, their families and, hopefully their communities, and not necessarily through efforts of the government and government agencies. Therefore, it is imperative that the National Government put forward sufficient mechanisms that facilitate community participation. This can be done through devolution of services, functions, resources and funds to Regional Councils. Harmonizing and formalizing of policies in order to suit the condition on the ground. Councillors should be given transport means to enable them to reach all corners of the respective constituencies. More funds must be made available to enable Regional Council to appoint secretaries and other technical staff at the constituency level. The Regional Council Act should make provision for community participation in order to compel government agencies consult with community members in the respective constituencies. For community participation to take place, information sharing is very important, hence, it must be made available and accessible. This can be achieved through workshops, information sessions, participatory needs assessment, youth forums, village committee meetings and general public hearings. Participation should not be used as cosmetic label but rather as an empowering process (Chambers, 1995: 30). In essence, these could transfer decision-making powers, development planning responsibilities as well as design to

the grassroots where essential services are need. In general, as Parry 1997 (Goetz & Hassim, 2003: 20) indicates, it is expected that decentralization promotes greater responsiveness to citizens, improved decision making based on the more accurate information and better knowledge of local conditions and improved efficiency in service delivery.

### 6.2.3 Recommendation Three: Consultation and communication should be institutionalized

Institutionalizing consultation and communication can serve as a catalyst for effective service delivery and, of course, for adequate consultation and communication at the grassroots level. In other words, this means that consultation and communication must be institutionalized to facilitate co-ordination and co-operation between line ministries, Regional Councils and community members, if equitable services are to be delivered. For this to materialize, this study recommends that institutional arrangements should be considered. The constituent representative body must be established in each constituency and be co-ordinated and chaired by the Regional Councillor.  The body should meet monthly to discuss and review development issues as well as problems and concerns of the community in the constituency. The chairperson of this body must be tasked to take all issues discussed at constituency level to the regional council meeting for further discussion. The chairperson is then required to provide feedback about the outcome of the regional council meeting. In addition, community forums, quarterly community newspaper, village committees, traditional leaders committees, youth forums, NGOs, civil society and business organizations must be established in the Oshana region. Representatives elected by these groups together with the Regional Councillor will then form part of the constituent body referred to above. In principle, these are ideal modus operandi of consultation and communication.

Therefore, it is expected that Regional Councillors should be people of good characters, proven track record on leadership and have a thoroughly understanding and knowledge of regional governance. This study has also noted that traditional

authorities as institutions that are closer to the grassroots are stripped off the traditional powers of controlling and managing the settlements which were formerly under the control of the traditional leaders (see Section 28 (c) of the Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992). Section 12 (2) of the Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995 further sidelined the traditional leaders. In essence, this means that traditional leaders have no more legal authority over settlements in the villages and, more often than not, this situation causes tensions, contradictions and subsequently risks consultation and communication process. It is therefore, recommended that in order to improve consultation and communication the Council of Traditional Leaders Act 13 of 1997 must be amended, specifically Section 3 (b) and (c), to specify what specific role traditional leaders should play over settlement areas apart from assisting and co-operating with the government, Regional Councils and Local Authority Councils. Furthermore, for traditional authority to be able to disseminate development information to the community as required by the Act, provision should be made for headmen to be regularly updated with relevant information by Regional Councillors. This can be achieved through the establishment of constituent body as mentioned earlier.

This study recommends that a Governor Listening Campaign (GLC)[11] must be introduced. The GLC should be composed of a team of experts in rural development from the Regional Council office in addition to the governor. The team should visit rural areas and settlements in the region and listen to community problems in order to receive first-hand information which could assist the Regional Council to make informed decisions about rural development and service delivery. In fact, this is one of the reasons that this study recommends that the Governor should not be a constituent councillor so that he can carry out the above mentioned task unconditionally. Therefore, if consultation and communication is institutionalized, it may enhance co-ordination and co-operation between central government, regional council, traditional leaders, community members, youth groups, NGOs, civil society,

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[11] Governor Listening Campaign entails that the Regional Governor and his team of officials will undertake a listening tours to various constituencies in the region on an annually basis, and listen to problems that rural people are experiencing. This can help the council to take informed decisions and consequently the information gathered could serve as a base in the preparation of the regional budget.

service providers in the region such as Nored, Namwater and all other stakeholders involved in the provision of rural service delivery.

## 6.2.4 Recommendation Four: Development policy rhetoric should be transformed into practical implementation
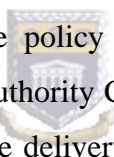
Consultation and communication on rural service delivery is critical in enhancing and improving the standard of living of grassroots people. According to Dore (1981: 29) the rhetorical literature about community development frequently calls for programmes built on the felt needs and spontaneous initiatives of the people. However, Chambers (1995: 30) hold that the language of development rhetoric and writing changes fast, but the reality of development practice lags behind the language (see Chapter Two). Therefore, this study recommends that for the actual rendering of rural services to be realized development policy rhetoric should be harmonized and transformed into practical implementation. Grassroots people to whom such services are delivered must be consulted and involved in the planning of those services so that participatory democracy could be promoted.

The central government has the ultimate responsibility towards the citizens of Namibia, therefore, should consult and involve all stakeholders in the regional budget process. Furthermore, funds should be allocated directly to Regional Councils. In other words, there must be a vote in the national budget that specifies how much each region should receive. The participation of stakeholders in the budget allows the central government to budget according to the needs and expectations of the grassroots people. The current procedure whereby Regional Councils receive the budget through the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development is not only a betrayal of regional governance, but it also hinders consultation and communication, reduce accountability and service delivery at regional levels. In the 2005/06 budget thirteen Regional Councils and 44 Local Authorities altogether received only N$ 315.8

million (Pandeni, 2005)[12], compared to R 15.5 billions to Provincial and Local Governments in South Africa (RSA, 2005: 63). It is therefore, recommended in this study that more funds should be allocated to Regional Councils and Local Authorities in Namibia to enable them to delivery equitable services to the historically neglected and disadvantaged people in rural areas. This is in line with the President's call when he told "government that in the short term their focus should remain on reducing the disparity in socio-economic development, poverty, the provision of social amenities, safe drinking water, electricity, housing, health services and education."[13]

## 6.2.5 Recommendation Five: The National Policy on consultation and communication should be formulated

The National Policy on consultation and communication should be put in place in order to ensure that the grassroots people are mobilized and participate in matters that are affecting their lives. The policy can serve as a guideline document to Regional Councillors and Local Authority Councillors on how to effectively consult and communicate regarding service delivery. It is argued in this study that it is the ultimate responsibility of the national government to ensure that the historically disadvantaged communities participate and involve in all forms of service delivery. De Coning (2000: 13) concludes that the policy is a functional perspective on the process of government. Therefore, the policy should be coherent and authenticate the government commitment to equitable service provision, promotes participatory democracy, accountability, capacity building and continuous information sharing.

It would be perhaps appropriate to mention that the problem of inadequate consultation and communication at regional level should not squarely be blamed on the government and its agencies alone, but all stakeholders do have a hand on it. Therefore, this study recommends that an integrated approach must be sought if

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[12]Honourable John Pandeni, Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development was addressing Regional Governors during the approval of the Regional Councils budget for 2005/06 financial year, 24 June 2005

[13] His Excellency, Hifikepunye Pohamba, the President of the Republic of Namibia in his inaugural address to the Parliament, 5 April 2005.

consultation and communication is to be effectively addressed. Consultation and communication must lead to, intervention, interactive participation and self-mobilization and not the other way around.

## 6.3    AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As it was pointed out in Chapter One, hardly any serious academic research has ever been conducted regarding consultation and communication in the Oshana region. This shows a lack of research information that could benefit the community in the region and the country as a whole. Further academic research on various regional governance aspects need to be conducted. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future academic research should be undertaken in the following areas:

- Community participation on rural service delivery. A cardinal element in rural development strategy is public participation. The research in this regard needs to determine the impact that community participation may have on rural service delivery and regional governance in particular.

- Allocation of resources to regional government in Namibia. As was indicated throughout this study, resource allocation is one of the main factors that may hinder the effective delivery of services in the Oshana region. It was noted during the fieldwork that Regional Councils have few resources and this limits Regional Councillors' efforts to carry their functions and responsibilities in an effective manner. Research needs to be undertaken on priority allocations and alternative sources of funding.

- Decentralization of functions and services to regional government in Namibia. This is particularly pertinent given the problem of resource scarcity. This study has indicated that there has been a slow pace in the decentralization process since its inception in 2000. Therefore, the research in

this area could generate more understanding about the imperativeness of decentralization in terms of regional governance.

- The role of National Government in regional governance. The recent experience in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region and elsewhere in the world shows that a holistic approach by the government towards regional and local government could have a significant contribution to rural development, equitable service delivery and participatory democracy. Therefore, the research in this area could generate more knowledge about the role of National Government in regional governance.

- A review of appropriate legislation (For example Regional Councils Act, Local Authorities Act, Traditional Authorities Act, and Decentralization Enabling Act) regarding rural service delivery and development needs to include specific provisions on issues such as consultation and communication, community consultation and participation. This will accelerate regional development and enhance the social wellbeing of not only rural communities, but all citizens of Namibia. Hence, it is necessary to undertake an academic research in this area.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that although this study has mainly focused on consultation and communication between Regional Councillors and community members specifically in the Oshana region, the findings put forward may have positive implications for both Namibia and Africa at large. As was pointed out earlier, adequate consultation and communication, be it in the Oshana region or elsewhere in Namibia, cannot take place effectively unless practical decentralization of essential resources and functions is realized. Furthermore, it should be emphatically clear that African countries are economically interdependent, hence, the progress and success in regional/provincial service delivery in one country may benefit others in terms benchmarking and experience. This study also suggests that the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), particularly its Peer

Review Mechanism, should make provision for regional/provincial government in member states to be included in the review programme, specifically in the area of community consultation and participation. This could promote consultation and communication and lead to a high degree of community participation. In essence, it could improve the standard of living of the rural people in Africa. Equally important, such an intervention could contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.[14]

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[14] These Goals range from halving extreme poverty, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS, and ensuring the attendance of all children in primary schools by 2015 -United Nations, 2005.

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# APPENDIX I

Oshana region
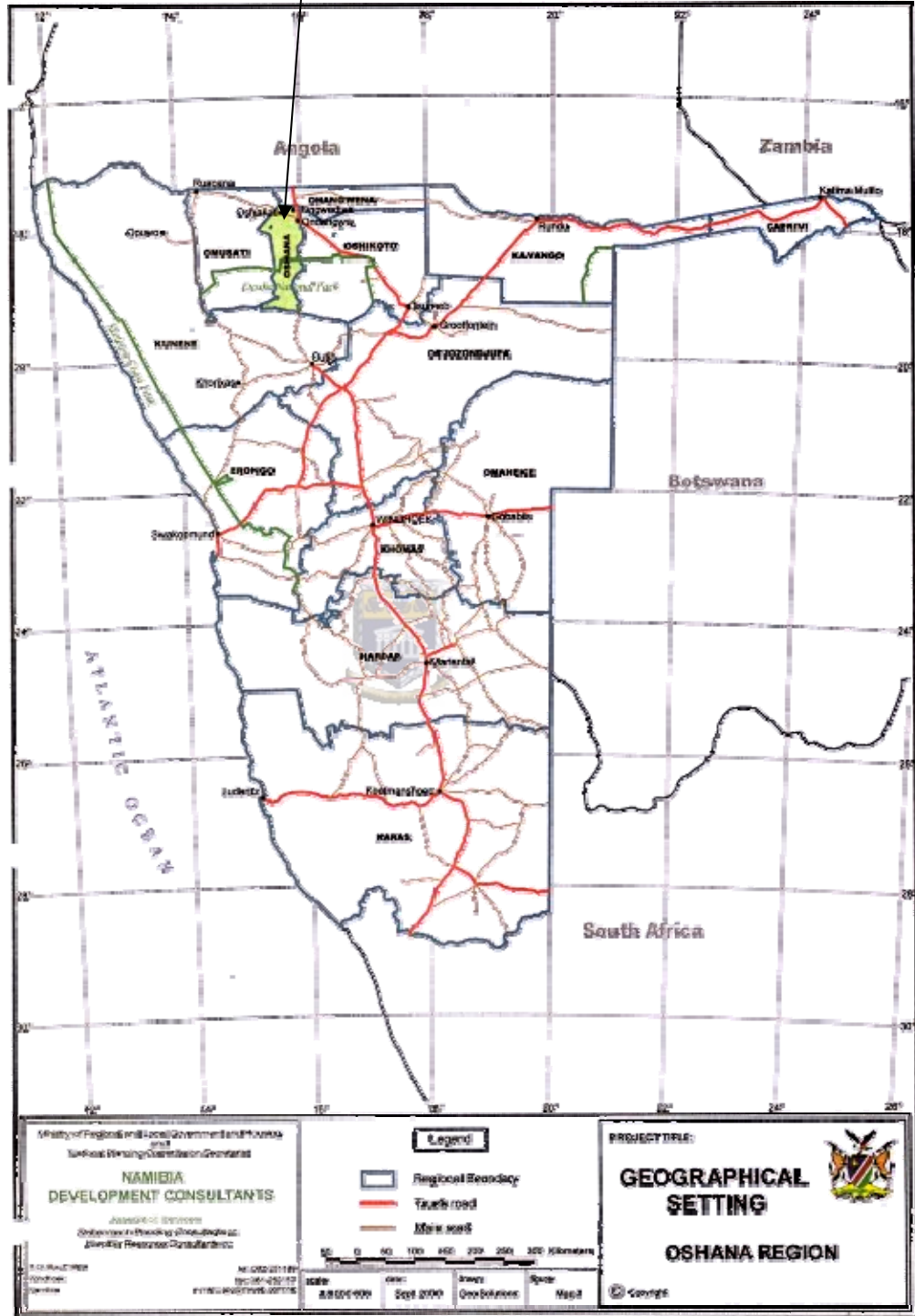


**SOURCE:** Oshana Regional Council Development Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06

**QUESTIONNAIRES** (To Regional Councillors)

**RESEARCH TOPIC: The role of Regional Councillors in consultation and communication regarding rural service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia**

**PART A: CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

1. The name of your constituency.

   ……………………………………………………………………………………

2.    (a)    Do you have an office in your Constituency?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

   (b)    If yes, do you have a secretary?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

   (c)    If your answer is 'no' to <u>a</u> and <u>b</u>, how do you consult and communicate with community members in your constituency?

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

3.    (a)    Do you think there is a need for regular consultation and communication between your office and community members?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

(b)     If yes, how often and why?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

4.      (a)     Do you communicate your consultation meetings with community members well in advance?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

(b)     If yes, how and where (medium of communication)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

5.      On what issues do community members usually consult your office and vice versa?

| Developmental issues | Social issues | Both |
|----------------------|---------------|------|

6.      (a)     Are community members involved in all development issues in their respective communities?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

(b)      If the answer is yes , how? If no, why?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

## PART B: COUNCILLOR'S ACCESSIBILITY

7.  Do all community members in your constituency have access to the councillor's office?

| yes | No |
|-----|-----|

8.  (a)  Are you satisfied that you are accessible and available to the community in your constituency at all time?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

(b)  If no, what makes it difficult for some members in your constituency not to access your office or you in person?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

9.  (a)  Do you have your residence (do you live) in your constituency?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

(b)  If no, and you do not have an office in your constituency, how people get hold of you?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

10.  (a)  Do people in your constituency have access to information regarding Government policies pertaining to rural development?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

(b)     If yes, how do they get such information (channels)?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

11.     How often do you hold meetings with community members in your constituency?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

12.     Which meetings draw the majority of attendance from the community in your constituency and why?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

13.     In few words, how do you define effective consultation and communication between councillors and community members at constituency level?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

## PART C: SERVICES DELIVERY AT REGIONAL LEVEL

(To Regional Councillors and Traditional Leaders)

14.    What basic services are most needed by the community in your
       constituency?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

15.    (a)  Do the community members have access to those services?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

16.    (b) If the answer is 'no' what should be done to ensure that all people in your
       Constituency can receive such services?

.................................................................................................................................

…………………………………………………………………………………………

17.    (a) Which institutions are responsible for rendering of basic services in your
       constituency?

| Regional council | Line ministries | Both |
|------------------|-----------------|------|

       (b)   If the answer is 'either', what role does the Regional Councillor play
       in rendering of such services in the constituency?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

18.    (a) Are you satisfied with the public services being rendered to the people in
       your constituency?

| Yes | No |
|-----|-----|

(b) What do you think should be done to ensure that government services are diversified and access to all people throughout your constituency?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

19     What do you think should the Regional Councillor do to improve the standard of living of rural people?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

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…………………………………………………………………………………………

*Thank you very much for your assistance in making this research a success.*

# APPENDIX III

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS** (To community members)

Who is the Regional Councillor of your constituency?

How far is the constituent office from your village?

Is the Regional Councillor accessible?

How accessible are the community representatives in the constituency?

How often does the Regional Councillor hold meetings with community members in your area?

Does the Regional Councillor communicate meetings to you well in advance?

How do you receive information and feedback related to development activities in the constituency?

What services do you receive from the Oshana regional council?

Are those services accessible to all community members in the constituency?

# APPENDIX IV

## LIST OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS IN THE OSHANA REGION

| NAME | CONSTITUENCY | CONTACT NUMBER |
|------|--------------|----------------|
| Hon. Silverus T. Ekandjo | Ongwediva | 0926465 231075 |
| Hon. Clemens H. Kashuupulwa* | Okatana | 0926465 220927 |
| Hon. Lotto Kuushomwa | Oshakati East | 0926465 220680 |
| Hon. Aram Martin | Oshakati West | 0926465 220236 |
| Hon. Joseph Mupetami* | Okatjali | 0926465 243326 |
| Hon. Amutenya Ndahafa | Uuvudhiya | 0926465 221234 |
| Hon. Peter Shigwedha* | Uukwiyuushona | 0926465 241807 |
| Hon. Ismael Uugwanga | Ondangwa | 0926465 241488 |
| Hon. Adolf H. Uunona | Ompundja | 0926465 225047 |
| Hon. Henock YaKasita | Okaku | 0926465 240176 |

* Regional Councillors have not responded to the questionnaire, hence, their responses and views are not included in this research report.

# GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

OF THE

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

R-5.60                    WINDHOEK - 31 August 1992                    No. 469

_____

## CONTENTS

## Government Notice

FFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

No. 115                                                                        1992

### PROMULGATION OF ACT OF

### THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The following Act which has been passed by the National Assembly and signed by the President in terms of the Namibian Constitution is hereby published in terms of Article 56 of that Constitution.

No. 22 of 1992: Regional Councils Act, 1992.

Act No. 22, 1992          **REGIONAL COUNCILS ACT, 1992**

**Meetings of regional Councils**

**11.** (1)(a) The first meeting of a regional council after a general election for members of regional councils shall be held at the seat of the regional council and at such time, being a date not later than seven days after such general election, as may be determined by the Minister, and meetings thereafter shall be held at such seat and at such times as may from time to time be determined by the chairperson or, if, and for so long as, the office of chairperson is vacant, by the regional officer.

(b) The chairperson or, if, and for so long as, the office of chairperson is vacant, the regional officer may at any time or, at a request in writing signed by not less than half of the members of the regional council, shall within 14 days after receipt of such request or, if the National Council is then in session, within 14 days after such session, convene a special meeting of the regional council.

(c)    Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a) or (b), no meeting of a regional council shall be convened during any period during which the National Council is in session.

(d) A notice signed by the regional officer and containing the time, date and place of, and the matters to be dealt with at, every meeting of the regional council shall be delivered to every member of the regional council so as to reach such member at least 72 hours before such meeting.

(2) (a) Every meeting of a regional council shall be open to the public, except on any matter relating to –

(i) the appointment, promotion, conditions of employment and discipline of any particular officer or employee of a regional council;

(ii) any offer to be made by the regional council by way of tender or otherwise for the purchase of any property;

(iii) the institution of any legal proceedings by, or opposition of any legal proceedings instituted against, a regional council,

unless the regional council by a majority of at least two-thirds of its members present at the meeting in question determines such meeting to be so open.

(b) The regional council may allow the regional officer or any other officer or employee of the regional council or other interested person to attend any proceedings of a regional council and to take part in any such proceedings, but such regional officer or other officer or employee or person shall not have the right to vote in respect of any decision of the regional council.

(3) The majority of the members of a regional council shall form a quorum for a meeting of the regional council.

(4) If the chairperson is absent from a meeting of a regional council, the members present shall elect a person from amongst its members to preside at such meeting, and such person shall, while he or she so presides, have all the powers and shall perform all the duties and functions of the chairperson.

(5) The decision of the majority of the members of a regional council present at a meeting thereof shall constitute a decision of the regional council, and, in the event of an equality of votes relating to any matter, the member presiding at the meeting shall have a casting vote in addition to his or her deliberative vote.

(6) (a) A regional council may make standing rules in connection with the convening and holding of, and procedure at, meetings of the regional council or any committee established by the regional council, including the conditions under which a language other than the official language may be used by a member during discussions at meetings of the regional council.

(b) The Minister shall as soon as possible after the commencement of this Act make standing rules contemplated in paragraph (a) which shall apply in respect of every regional council until such time

as a regional council by any standing rules made

under that paragraph provides otherwise.

(7) (a) Subject to the provisions of any rules made under subsection (6), there shall be freedom of speech and debate in any meeting of a regional council.

(b) No member of a regional council shall be subject to any legal proceedings by reason of his or her speech or vote in any meeting of the regional council.

      **REGIONAL COUNCILS ACT, 1992**

## PART VI
## POWERS, DUTIES, FUNCTIONS, RIGHTS AND
## OBLIGATIONS OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

**Powers, duties, functions**
**Rights and obligations**
**of regional councils.**

28. (1) In addition to the powers conferred upon a regional council by Article 108 of the Namibian Constitution or any other provision of this Act, a regional council shall have the power -

(a) to undertake, with due regard to the powers, duties and functions of the National Planning Commission referred to in Article 129 of the Namibian Constitution and any other law relating to planning, the planning of the development of the region for which it has been established with a view to -

(i) the physical, social and economic characteristics of such region and, in so far as any neighbouring region has or is likely to have any effect on the physical development of that region, the physical, social and economic characteristics of any such neighbouring region;

(ii) the distribution, increase and movement and the urbanization of the population in such region;

(iii) the natural and other resources and the economic development potential of such region;

(iv) the existing and the planned infrastructure, such as water, electricity, communication networks and transport systems, in such region;

         **REGIONAL COUNCILS ACT, 1992**

(v) the general land utilization pattern;

(vi) the sensitivity of the natural environment;

(b) to exercise in connection with its region such powers, and to perform the duties and functions connected with such powers, as may be delegated by the President to the regional council in terms of section 29;

(c) subject to the provisions of Part VII, to establish, manage and control settlement areas;

(d) to make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the exercise, in relation to a local authority situated within its region, of any power conferred upon the Minister under the Local Authorities Act, 1992, or any other law;

(e) to advise the President or any Minister on any matter referred to the regional council by the President or such Minister;

(f) to assist any local authority council in the exercise or performance of its powers, duties and functions;

(g) to make, for purposes of the preparation of the estimate of expenditure to be presented to the National Assembly in terms of Article 126 of the Namibian Constitution, recommendations to the Minister of Finance in so far as it relates to matters concerning its region;

(h) to establish from time to time such committees as it may deem necessary to advise it in the exercise of any of its powers or the performance of any of its duties or functions and may appoint such members or such other persons as it may deem fit to be members of such committees;
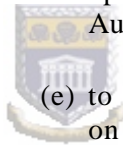
(i) to acquire or hire, or hypothecate, let, sell or otherwise dispose of movable property;

(j) with the approval in writing of the Minister previously obtained in general or in every particular case and subject to such conditions, if any, as may be determined by him or her –

(i) to acquire or hire, or hypothecate, let, sell or otherwise dispose of immovable property or any right in respect of immovable property;

(ii) to borrow money from time to time by way of loans from any source within Namibia and against the security which the regional council may deem fit or the issue of debentures, bills of exchange and other negotiable instruments;

(k) to guarantee the due fulfilment of the contracts and obligations of any person, and enter into surety bonds or deeds of security;

(1) to open banking accounts, including savings accounts with a building society as defined in section 1 of the Building Societies Act, 1986 (Act 2 of 1986), and the Post Office Savings Bank controlled and managed by the Namibia Post Limited established by section 2 of the Posts and Telecommunications Companies Establishment Act, 1992;

(m) to accept, with the approval in writing of the Minister previously obtained in every particular case and subject to such conditions as may be

determined by him or her, donations and to so receive moneys offered to it and to so make donations;

(n) to pay all expenses in connection with its establishment and administration;

(o) to exercise any power assigned to regional councils by the laws governing communal land which vests in the Government of Namibia by virtue of the provisions of Schedule 5 to the Namibian Constitution, or any other power so assigned by any other law,

and may, generally, do anything that is necessary or conducive to the exercise of its powers or the performance of its duties and functions in terms of this Act.
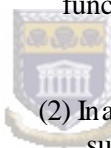
(2) In addition to the powers referred to in subsection (1), a regional council –

(a) may be consulted in relation to all proposed legislation or submissions made to the Cabinet by any ministry on any matter which may have any effect in its region, and may make recommendations in connection with such matter;

(b) shall have the right to make submissions on its own motion to the Cabinet or the Minister in relation to the administration of any provision in any law which confers or imposes any power, duty or function on the Minister, or on any matter peculiar to its region.

(3) Anything purporting to have been done by the chairperson by order of the regional council by virtue of any power vested in the regional council under this Act or any other law shall be deemed to have been done by the regional council.

Act No. 22, 1992 **REGIONAL COUNCILS ACT, 1992**

**Delegation of powers by President to regional councils, and by regional councils to management committees or regional officers or other officers or employees**

**29**. (1) (a) The President may, with a view to the effective administration of any law in a region or promoting the moral and social welfare of the residents of a region, delegate, on such conditions, if any, as may be determined by the President, by proclamation in the *Gazette* any power, other than a power to issue proclamations or to make regulations, conferred by or under any law upon the President, the Prime Minister or any other Minister to a regional council, and may at any time by like proclamation amend or withdraw any such proclamation.

(b) Different proclamations may be issued under paragraph (a) in respect of different regional councils.
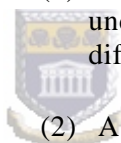
(2) A regional council may delegate in writing, on such conditions, if any, as may be determined by it, any power other than a power -

(a) to make regulations or rules;

(b) to approve its estimates or supplementary estimates of revenue and expenditure;

(c) to determine rates, charges, fees or other moneys which may be levied under any provision of this Act;

PART IX
GENERAL PROVISIONS

**Public meetings for purposes
of discussion of
Matters of public interests**

**41**. (1) The chairperson may, if he or she deems it fit, and shall, upon a request in writing signed by at least 10 per cent of the voters registered in terms of the laws governing elections for members of regional councils in respect of such region, convene a meeting of the regional council to which the public is invited by public notice in any newspaper circulating within the region of such regional council and such other manner calculated to reach as many members of the public as possible for purposes of discussion of any matter of public interest set out in such request, on such date and at such time and place within the region of such regional council as may be determined by the chairperson.

(2) For purposes of subsection (1) any matter relating to the promotion, opposition or discussion of the election of any person as a member of the regional council shall be deemed not to be a matter of public interest.

(3) Any costs incurred by the chairperson in convening a meeting in terms of subsection (1) shall be paid out of the funds of the regional council.

**Meetings of regional
Councils for purposes of
Discussion of matters of
Mutual interest**

**42.** The Minister may at any time convene a meeting at such time and place as may be determined by him or her to which all members of all regional councils or representatives of such regional councils are invited for purposes of discussion of matters of mutual interest.