

## COUNTRY PROFILE

### Namibia

Under German colonial rule Namibia suffered one of the first genocides of the twentieth century. South Africa took control of the country after World War I and implemented the same apartheid policies that did so much damage to South Africa itself. When Namibia finally gained independence in 1990, after a protracted armed struggle, it was the last country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so. Considering this troubled past, it is a significant achievement that two decades after its first democratic elections Namibia remains peaceful and relatively prosperous. Yet behind good economic growth rates can be found vast disparities between rich and poor, and in 2009 the UN rated Namibia as the world's most economically unequal society.

### SUMMARY FACTS

<b>Population:</b> 2.17 million, UK: 61.57 million	<b>GDP per capita (PPP):</b> \$6,633 (World Bank 2010) UK: \$35,844, US\$47,084
<b>Capital:</b> Windhoek	<b>Human Development Index Ranking (UN HDI 2010) :</b> 105/169
<b>Area:</b> 824,292 sq km(318,261 sq miles), UK: 243,610 sq km (94,060 sq miles)	<b>HDI Value:</b> 0.606
<b>Major languages:</b> English, Herero, Oshivambo, Afrikaans, German, Nama	<b>Monetary unit:</b> 1 Namibian dollar = 100 cents
<b>Major religions:</b> Christianity	<b>Main exports:</b> Diamonds, copper, gold, zinc, lead, uranium, livestock
<b>Life expectancy at birth:</b> 62 years (UN 2009), UK: 80 years	<b>CO2 emissions share of world total:</b> < 0.1%, UK: >2%
<b>Under-five mortality rate:</b> 48 per 1,000 live births (UN 2009), UK: 6 per 1,000 live births	<b>Population without access to an improved water source:</b> 8% (World Bank, 2009), UK: 0%
<b>HIV prevalence:</b> 13.1% aged 15-49 (UN, 2009), UK: 0.2% aged 15-49	<b>Population using improved sanitation:</b> 33% (UN, 2009), UK 100%
<b>Adult Literacy Rate:</b> 89% ages 15 and older (World Bank, 2008), UK: >99%	<b>Government:</b> South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)
	<b>President:</b> Hifikepunye Pohamba
	<b>Year Women received right to vote:</b> 1989, UK: 1918, 1928 (equal rights)

Sources: UN HDI, UN Statistics, UNICEF, World Bank



## History

The earliest known inhabitants of the region now known as Namibia were hunter-gatherers called the San. The Nama, pastoralists who were closely related to the Khoi-Khoi, migrated from further south and gradually displaced the San. The Nama became the dominant group in the region, and remained so until the **16<sup>th</sup> century**. At this point the Herero, a Bantu-speaking group, began arriving from the Zambezi Valley. As pastoralists the Herero came into conflict with the Nama over grazing lands and scarce water sources, but gradually they rose to precedence and the Nama and other groups in the west and north of the territory submitted to them. Later, in the **19<sup>th</sup> century**, another Bantu-speaking group called the Ovambo settled along the Okavango River in the north-east of present-day Namibia.

The inhospitable desert that stretches along almost the entire coastline of Namibia was a formidable barrier to European exploration and settlement in the area until late in the **19<sup>th</sup> century**, significantly later than much of the European involvement elsewhere in southern Africa (the Cape colony, for instance, was founded by the Dutch in **1652**). Although missionaries and traders had occasionally visited the territory it was not until **1878**, when the British annexed Walvis Bay on behalf of the Cape Colony, that sustained European involvement in the territory began. German interest began in **1883**, when German merchant Adolf Luederitz bought the bay of Angra Pequena from Nama Chief Joseph Fredericks for the price of 10,000 Marks and 260 guns.

The German government took over the protection of Luederitz's possessions a year later (to afford greater protection from British encroachment) and, excluding Walvis Bay, the coastal territory between the Kunene River in the north and the Orange River in the south became German South-West Africa. By agreement with the British, the new German territory also stretched inland to the line of longitude running 20 degrees east of the Prime Meridian. An area later known as the Caprivi Strip became part of South-West Africa in **1890** after an agreement with Britain. This thin strip of land protruding eastwards gave the territory access to the Zambezi River and thereby to German territory in east Africa.

Germany set up the Schutztruppe (Protection Troops) with the aim of transforming the territory into a functioning settler colony by pacifying the local people groups. Initially the process of colonisation proceeded relatively peacefully and treaties were negotiated with the two main ethnic groups in the territory at the time, the Nama and Herero. By **1896** only a couple of thousand Germans had moved to the colony and relations with the Herero were stable. However, in **1897** an outbreak of rinderpest, a cattle plague, devastated the exclusively pastoralist Herero's herds. In desperation

the Herero sold most of their remaining pastures and cattle to the Germans, or had their stocks seized because of unpaid debts.

The loss of their livelihoods prompted the dispossessed Herero to attempt an uprising against the German colonists in **1904**. Over a few days in **January 1904** armed Herero killed around 100 German men while methodically sparing women and children. The German Government in Berlin acted in the strongest manner, and appointed General Lothar Von Trotha to lead the reprisals against the Herero. Von Trotha's troops surrounded the main body of Herero rebels in **August 1904** on a plateau bordering the Kalahari Desert. The only escape route left open was into the desert, and that was where the Herero fled. Von Trotha placed guard-posts along the desert's edge to prevent their return, and had the waterholes in the desert poisoned or guarded. Without any access to water thousands of Herero perished in the desert and those who tried to return were killed by the German troops. The British Protectorate of Bechuanaland offered asylum to the Herero, but to get there they had to cross the Kalahari without supplies. Only around 1,000 survived the journey.

Von Trotha followed this action by issuing an extermination order in **October 1904**, demanding that any Herero found living within German South-West Africa be shot. This action shocked Europe and the German government rapidly countermanded the order, but they were too late to stop the extermination of thousands more Herero.

After the cancellation of the extermination order the surviving Herero were forced into labour camps and they were joined there by many of the Nama, who had risen against the colonists in support of their traditional enemies. By the time a **1911** census assessed the effects of the war the population of Herero had been reduced from 80,000 to just 15,000. The war, extermination order and labour camps had resulted in the deaths of 80 per cent of Herero and the Nama also suffered the loss of nearly half their people.

Diamonds were discovered in Namibia in **1908**, but the German administration had little opportunity to exploit the discovery: after the outbreak of World War I South African troops, allied with Britain, invaded the German colony in **1915** and forced the Germans to surrender by July of that year. After the war the League of Nations gave South Africa a mandate to administer the territory. After World War II this mandate was renewed by the League of Nations' successor, the United Nations (UN), while requests from the South African government to annexe it were refused.

A period of prosperity in South-West Africa followed World War II thanks to a buoyant market for diamonds and beef, commodities the territory possessed in abundance. However, this wealth failed to benefit the African majority and accrued almost exclusively to the white population. The implementation of apartheid laws after **1948** aggravated the situation for Africans in South-West Africa. The majority of the arable land in the south was parcelled out among the white population while the Africans were sent to live in tribal reserves known as Bantustans, or allowed to stay in specified areas for employment in urban workplaces.

In the late **1950s** and through into the **1960s** mass demonstrations occurred over the imposition on Africans of forced labour. These economic concerns, coupled with the fact that elsewhere on the continent the European powers were granting independence to their colonies, led to the establishment of a nationalist movement. Initially the movement was among the Ovambo tribe whose territory straddled the border between South-West Africa and Angola: In **1958** they founded the separatist Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO). In **1960** they claimed a wider nationalist remit and renamed themselves the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO): Sam Nujoma, co-founder of OPO, became the party's President. SWAPO

quickly became the major African political force in the country and they took the issue of South African occupation to the UN International Court of Justice in The Hague. In **1966** the UN revoked South Africa's mandate in South-West Africa, but South Africa refused to end its occupation of the territory. In the same year, following South Africa's refusal to leave the country, SWAPO began an armed guerrilla struggle to liberate South-West Africa. In **1968** South-West Africa was officially renamed Namibia by the UN, and in **1972** the UN General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people. After Angola received independence from Portugal in **1975** it allowed SWAPO to establish bases in the south of the country, from which SWAPO was able to escalate the scale of its armed struggle against South Africa.

In **1977** a number of UN Security Council members, including the United Kingdom, France and Canada, launched a diplomatic effort to bring the Namibian War of Independence (or Border War as it is referred to in South Africa) to a close through a negotiated transition to independence. In **April 1978** the Security Council announced Resolution 435, after lengthy consultation with South Africa, SWAPO and Namibia's neighbours. It called for the cessation of all hostile acts by both sides and the holding of UN supervised elections in Namibia. Although South Africa agreed to co-operate, in **December 1978** Pretoria defied the UN proposal by holding elections in Namibia without UN supervision. SWAPO boycotted the elections and multi-racial coalitions installed by South Africa continued that country's control of Namibia.

Between **1978** and **1988** negotiations continued between the concerned parties. During this time the intense conflict between SWAPO and the South African Defence Force (SADF) continued, costing South Africa \$1 billion a year to sustain and resulting in the loss of over 2,000 SADF soldier's lives. The economic and political cost of this war became too much for the apartheid regime and the military effort in Namibia collapsed in **1988** following South Africa's defeat by Angolan and Cuban forces at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola. This marked a turning point in the conflict between the sides and, according to Nelson Mandela, was a major morale boost to the ANC at this time. Mediators again brought together SWAPO, South Africa and neighbouring countries. South Africa agreed to remove its troops from Namibia and grant it independence in exchange for the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. The implementation of Resolution 435 began on **1 April 1989**, more than a decade after it was first announced, when a Transitional Administration led by General Louis Pienaar officially began administering Namibia in conjunction with the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG).

Despite further incidences of fighting between SWAPO and the SADF in early April the 11 month transition went relatively smoothly. South Africa withdrew its troops from Namibia, and in November **1989** the first democratic elections were held. Over 90 per cent of registered voters turned out and SWAPO received 57 per cent of the vote, just short of the two-thirds needed to draft the new constitution exclusively. The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, an amalgamation of parties registered as one, gained 29 per cent of the vote and became the main opposition party. The new Constituent Assembly met on **21 November 1989** and agreed on a framework for Namibia's new constitution based on earlier negotiations. In February of the following year a new constitution was formally adopted and Namibia finally achieved independence on **21 March 1990** and on that day Sam Nujoma was inaugurated as the first President of Namibia.

Nujoma's initial policies focused on reconstruction and national reconciliation in an attempt to repair the damage done by a quarter of a century of armed struggle. The policies of reconciliation aimed at improving relations between white settlers and Africans, as well as with South Africa; by now moving towards an end of apartheid. A

reflection of the improving relations between Namibia and South Africa came on **1 March 1994**, when the coastal enclave of Walvis Bay was transferred to Namibian control by South Africa following three years of bilateral negotiations between the two governments. The peaceful resolution of this territorial dispute was praised by the international community as it fulfilled a UN Security Council declaration that Walvis Bay was integral to Namibian development.

Although national reconciliation was a policy of Nujoma's he refused calls from civil society groups for a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which would hold public hearings into disappearances and allegations of torture by both sides during the liberation struggle. South Africa's TRC requested that hearings be held in Namibia in **1997**, but the government rejected the request. Since then SWAPO have rejected numerous calls for a TRC-style process to be set up in Namibia. When the Namibian National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) made such a request in **1999**, President Nujoma summed up SWAPO's view of the matter by stating that SWAPO's post-independence reconciliation policies were sufficient and that there was no need to open old wounds. Critics, however, have claimed that SWAPO do not wish to risk suffering embarrassment by holding a TRC that could potentially reveal human rights abuses by high-ranking SWAPO officials.

In **1994** Nujoma was re-elected as President for a second term. However, in **1999**, when he had almost served out his second term he aroused international concern by changing the constitution to allow him a third five-year term in office. He won his third term that year with nearly 77 per cent of the vote.

In **August 1999** a separatist faction in the Caprivi Strip launched a coup attempt, which was swiftly put down by the Namibian Defence Force. Unrest had preceded the attempt, and violent attacks on civilians and travellers continued in December of the same year, causing an emergency to be declared in the Strip.

In **August 2002** the new Prime Minister, SWAPO's Theo-Ben Gurirab, announced that land reform would be his priority. Around 4,000 predominantly white farmers owned around half the arable land in Namibia at this time, and there was popular pressure for a redistribution of land to the historically dispossessed black population. This policy was supported by President Nujoma, who said that white farmers must embrace the land reform programme. A black farm-workers' union threatened to invade 15 white farms in **2003**, but the Government responded by stating that it would not tolerate illegal land seizures. Farms belong to absentee landlords were earmarked for repossession but by **2004** many resident farming families were being handed eviction notices, sparking criticism that the Government was using land reform as a political tool to escape its failure to create jobs for the Namibian people. Popular desire for land reform was increased in **August 2004**, when Germany offered a formal apology for the Herero and Namaqua Genocides but refused to consider compensating the descendants of victims.

Nujoma's did not seek to change the constitution to allow a fourth term, announcing at the end of **2004** he would step down to be replaced at the helm of SWAPO by his chosen successor Hifikepunye Pohamba. Pohamba, a SWAPO veteran, who was Minister for Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation under Nujoma and he had presided over the controversial land expropriation scheme.

Pohamba comfortably won the presidential election in **November 2004** and since his inauguration he has gained a reputation as a consensus-builder. In **2005** the government began the expropriation of white-owned farms as part of the land reform programme planned while Pohamba was Minister for Lands. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held again in **November 2009**: the SWAPO party and

incumbent President Pohamba won with 75 and 76 per cent of the vote respectively. Although international and domestic observers pronounced the elections to be largely free and fair (despite some procedural irregularities), nine opposition parties claimed the outcome had been manipulated and tried to challenge the result without success. In July 2011, President Pohamba was reported to have had a mild stroke. Questions are emerging over his future effectiveness as President. His term as President is scheduled to finish in 2015. SWAPO have denied rumours circulating around Pohamba's health.

### **Population**

With just 2.2 million inhabitants living in an area more than three times the size of the UK, Namibia is the most sparsely populated country in sub-Saharan Africa. About 60 per cent of Namibians live in the north of the country, where higher rainfall makes the land more suitable for agriculture. Around 30 per cent live in central Namibia, mainly in urban areas such as Windhoek and the towns of Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. The least populated region is the arid south, where less than 10 per cent live.

Namibia's population can be divided into at least 11 distinct ethnic groups. The Ovambo are the biggest single group and mostly live in the north, although urbanisation, industrialisation and the need for labour has meant that many Ovambo have moved southwards. The Herero and Nama, though much reduced in number since the twentieth century genocide, make up a significant minority and live mostly in the central and southern regions respectively. A considerable population of the descendents of white Europeans live in Windhoek and as farmers towards the south.

Education and services have been extended to most rural areas in recent years, with varying degrees of success. The literacy rate in Namibia is quite high, although this is somewhat misleading as the number of Namibians that are functionally literate and have the skills needed by the labour market is substantially lower.

### **Politics**

Since 1990 Namibia has had a system of multiparty, representative democracy. The President is directly elected for a five-year term, renewable for two further terms (3 in total), and acts as both head of state and head of government. The Prime Minister heads the Cabinet, and both are appointed by the President. The 1990 constitution established a bicameral parliament: a 72-seat National Assembly, whose members are elected through a proportional party list system, and a 26-seat National Council composed of members of popularly elected Regional Councils. The Assembly is largely responsible for legislating, while the Council predominantly acts in an advisory role. Constitutionally, the judiciary is independent, and consists of a Supreme Court, the High Court and lower courts.

At the most recent election the main parties other than SWAPO include the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO). Although Namibia does have multiparty elections, it is considered to be a dominant-party state, as only one party – SWAPO – currently has a realistic chance of winning a majority in elections. This is similar to the situation in a number of southern Africa countries where the liberation movement has become the dominant political party. Oddly (but not uniquely), although the ruling party has no serious rival it seems very sensitive of any criticism of itself and its Government.

### **Economy**

Namibia's economy is heavily dependent on the export of minerals to South Africa and Europe. Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a key producer of gem-grade diamonds, and other minerals produced include uranium, lead, zinc, tin and

tungsten. Increased fish production and mining boosted growth between 2003 and 08, but poor fish catches, higher mining costs and the global recession have slowed Namibia's economy considerably.

These rich mineral resources contribute to a per capita GDP that is relatively high for the region, but this masks the fact that income distribution in the country is grossly unequal: a 2009 UN GINI coefficient of 74.3 (with 0 representing total equality and 100 total inequality) means Namibia is considered the most economically unequal country on earth. The Government's adherence to neo-liberal economic policies since independence is pointed to by some as the main reason economic inequalities have been exacerbated.

Between 35 and 40 per cent of the population exist entirely outside of the cash economy and are dependent on subsistence agriculture to survive, which is problematic in drought years when food shortages become a major problem.

In addition to its membership of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Namibia belongs to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) along with South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Until 2010, Namibia obtained 40 per cent of its budget revenues from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) but the country's allocation is scheduled to drop in 2010 and 2011, which is likely to create a budgetary deficit unless state spending is reduced.

Heavy dependence on South African goods has led to Namibia seeking to diversify its trading relationships away from its neighbour. Europe has become an important market for Namibian food products, particularly fish and beef, and the mining industry has important heavy machinery from Germany, France and the UK. The Namibian dollar remains pegged one-to-one with the South African rand.

Despite the government pursuing neo-liberal free-market principles since independence, there are still state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in many key sectors of Namibia's economy. The government has stakes, and sometimes 100 per cent ownership, in companies involved in telecommunications, water, energy, transportation and mining.

### **Civil society and trade Unions**

During the liberation struggle many civil society organisations (CSOs) emerged and acted in support of SWAPO's struggle for national independence. At independence therefore, when SWAPO gained executive power, finding a new role was a significant challenge for a highly politicised civil society. Civil society and SWAPO have continued to maintain close links, and the Government advocates co-operation with NGOs in recognition that civil society groups are often closer to the communities the government wants development programmes to reach. Such co-operation is criticised by some as it may reduce the independence of civil society from the Government, but SWAPO and many civil society actors declare that working together is in the best interests of the people.

One of the main areas that civil society has turned to since independence is democracy building. Civic participation is a crucial element in promoting a functioning democracy, but the widely dispersed and often isolated communities of Namibia make participation a challenge. The Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) has been particularly active in this area since its foundation in 1991. The NID's main focus is on building the capacity of civil society in rural areas to enable better engagement with the democratic process. Foremost among the NID's objectives is the education of voters. Education initiatives through schools, radio programmes and local newspapers help to give citizens a better understanding of how they can participate

in politics. The NID also runs the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), which aims to strengthen civil society through providing institutional and technical support and training to rurally based CSOs in order to give them the capacity to engage with local and national government. NID has also initiated a programme training civil society actors in Namibia to observe elections in order to ensure a transparent and fair election process.

Women's Action for Development (WAD) has committees at both local and national level, and promotes greater female involvement in politics and the economy. WAD typically works through churches and schools to reach women with training in nutrition, child development care, AIDS awareness and marketable skills. WAD is also involved in identifying potential women for political candidacy.

Although civil society in Namibia is active, there are certain weaknesses that inhibit its effectiveness. Many CSOs are fragmented along ethnic or cultural lines, which in turn fragments the work that they do by making co-operation with other CSOs working for similar goals difficult. The weakest aspect of civil society, however, is financial viability. Due in part to significant levels of poverty and unemployment it has been difficult to secure funding from domestic sources. CSOs are therefore largely dependent on bi and multilateral donor funds. As a result initiatives are often driven by donor priorities and not the interests of the community, which may cast doubt on the legitimacy of their activities.

Workers in Namibia are mostly represented by the two largest trade union federations; the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and the Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA), who have membership of 80-90,000 and 40-60,000 respectively. Both are affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The government involves representatives of the NUNW in certain policy areas through giving them membership of the Social Security Commission and the Government Institution Pension Fund. However, those trade union organisations not affiliated with ruling SWAPO party have consistently been marginalised from labour discussions, and the TUCNA has been the main target of this discrimination.

Namibia amended their labour laws in 2007 with a Labour Act that provided for the right of freedom of association to every person, with the exception of the military, the police and prison staff. Although this act goes some way towards guaranteeing trade union rights, according to International Labour Organisation (ILO) principles, prison staff should also have freedom of association. Although the Labour Act and the constitution give workers the legal right to join trade unions, private companies often flout the laws and sack trade unionists. Excessive restrictions still apply to the right to strike, making it difficult for workers to stage walk-outs legally.

Current levels of unemployment in Namibia are a real challenge to the trade unions, as some companies use the excess of labourers in the country to ignore the unions and exploit their employees. This is of particular concern in the pelagic fishing industry, where alleged slave-like labour conditions and no-work-no-pay contracts have been condemned by the Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU).

### **Achievements**

1. Democracy: Namibia made the transition to democracy in 1990 after a century of undemocratic colonial rule. Whereas some other African nations reverted to undemocratic rule shortly after independence and only later managed to establish democratic elections, Namibia has maintained elections, largely considered free and fair, for the 20 years since independence. Some concerns were voiced in 2008 when the opposition RDP were subjected to intimidation by SWAPO members but the President called for more tolerance and respect for the

opposition, and increased police protection at opposition gatherings. Although continued vigilance is required, the government, civil society and citizens have gone a long way towards entrenching democracy in Namibia.

2. **Post-war stability:** often, after a protracted armed liberation struggle, a country will find it difficult to maintain peace and stability. Armed groups who worked towards the same goal of independence may turn against each other in violent conflict. Both Angola and Mozambique suffered devastating civil wars almost immediately after independence, and in Zimbabwe as many as 20,000 ZAPU supporters were killed during the Matabeleland Massacres after the ZANU party came to power. It is by no means an insignificant achievement, therefore, that Namibia has remained stable, making a peaceful transition from armed struggle to democratic participation.
3. **HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention:** since HIV/AIDS prevalence peaked at 22 per cent of 15-49 year-olds in 2002, the Government has received praise for its commitment to addressing the problem. HIV/AIDS has become a major consideration in development projects and education, combined with increasing provision of antiretrovirals to pregnant women to reduce mother-to-child-transmission (MTCT) have resulted in a decline in the prevalence rate to 15.3 per cent of 15-49 year-olds. Treatment for those who have the virus has also been improved. In 2005 just 27 per cent of people with advanced HIV infection received antiretrovirals, but by 2009 83 per cent of adults and 93 per cent of children with HIV were receiving the drugs. In order to continue this positive trend the Government must maintain its levels of commitment to fighting HIV for many years to come.

### **Development Challenges**

1. **Economic inequality:** in 2009 the UN reported Namibia to be the most unequal country on earth, in terms of income. The roots of the inequality found in Namibia stem from the country's colonial history, but since independence the Government has failed or been unable to adequately address the issue. The developmental policy of the Namibian Government, backed up by most of the donors, has been weighted towards the neo-liberal, market-driven model. Although there has been economic growth under these policies they have resulted in uneven accumulation, with the poor receiving few if any benefits from growth. The main redistributive measure undertaken by the government has been Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which involves promoting members of the previously disadvantaged African population to positions of ownership and management in Namibian companies. This policy may have effected a small redistribution, but it has also shifted the inequalities from the basis of race to the basis of class rather than addressing the core problem.  
There are calls from many within Namibia to create a more even distribution of wealth and income in the country through the Government's tax policies, job creation schemes and a Basic Income Grant (BIG) for all Namibians. Pilot studies into the feasibility of a BIG in Namibia have shown a reduction in malnutrition, increased income-earning activities and increased self-employment. Supporters of the scheme say the net cost would be around three per cent of GDP and could be covered through changes in the tax system; however the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has strongly discouraged the plan.
2. **Land Reform:** since independence only 12 per cent of the land held by a minority of former colonial farmers has been redistributed to those who were dispossessed during the colonial era. Nearly half the agricultural land in the country remains in the hands of a privileged few, contributing to poverty and food insecurity. Thus far the redistribution of land in Namibia has been under a 'willing

buyer, willing seller' approach and although the constitution makes provision for land to be expropriated, attempts by the Government to do so have been expensive and slowed down through farmers contesting expropriations in court. The challenge for Namibia is to create a more equitable distribution of land without resorting to the repressive measures that were seen in Zimbabwe under Mugabe's Fast-Track Land Reform programme, when the violent seizure of farmlands effectively received Government sanction, and largely benefited its supporters. Namibia's land reform must be transparent. Furthermore, although the issue of land reform is about rectifying past injustices, it must equally be about sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

3. Judicial system: the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this in practice. However, access to justice is obstructed by geographical barriers, a shortage of public defenders and delays caused by a lack of capacity in the court system. Traditional courts in rural areas have often ignored constitutional procedures. Investment is needed in the judicial system to recruit staff and increase the capacity of the courts in order to ensure that all citizens are provided with access to justice.

**For more information on Namibia, visit the following websites:**

- Official Namibian Government website - [www.grnnet.gov.na/](http://www.grnnet.gov.na/)
- Website of The Namibian, the country's leading independent daily newspaper [www.namibian.com.na/](http://www.namibian.com.na/)
- Namibia Institute for Democracy Website - [www.nid.org.na/](http://www.nid.org.na/)
- NID Guide to Namibian CSOs - [www.nid.org.na/pdf/publications/Guide%20to%20civil%20society.pdf](http://www.nid.org.na/pdf/publications/Guide%20to%20civil%20society.pdf)