

Public-Private Dialogue

PPD as part of the Local Economic Development (LED) Initiative in Namibia

by

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1- Background and Context

Public Private Dialogue (PPD) meetings provide opportunities for the exchange of information and for the discussion of issues, challenges and problems, and potential or intended solutions to these problems. In Namibia, these discussions are intended to bridge the gap between those who deliver services and those who consume or need these services.

The overall objective of PPDs is to promote the business environment for all, hence PPDs are a platform for diagnosing problems and opportunities for economic development. Not only that, PPDs can create awareness of the root causes of certain problems among the public and private sector. Moreover, PPDs are a mechanism to ensure that issues are taken up at the appropriate decision making levels in both private and public sector organizations. Decision makers are more receptive of tackling issues if they are provided with possible solutions at the same time. The most important part of PPDs is to translate those issues into policies, strategies and plans to resolve them effectively.

It is commonly accepted that the business communities of each locality would have needs and problem which are, somewhat, different from those of ordinary citizens. Typically, private businesses are subject to special legislation and policies that shape their business decisions,

the cost of doing business, and their growth potential. At the same time, they generate income, create employment, pay local taxes and levies, and contribute to economic growth. Regular forums such as PPD meetings are thus critical in linking local policy makers and business owners.

There are various PPD initiatives taking place in Namibia on national, sub-national, sectorial and local levels. One such platform which is focused on the sub-national level is the initiative by the Local Economic Development Agency (LEDA) in cooperation with other stakeholders such as the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI), with assistance from GIZ.

2- Partnership, Structure and Processes

The Local Economic Development Agency (LEDA) promotes PPDS in Namibia in cooperation with the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) and other stakeholders. In particular the LEDA supports PPDs through financial and managerial support (e.g. provision of a facilitator, scheduling, etc.). Following the publication of the White Paper on LED in 2011, the LEDA was established as a division of the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development (MRLGHRD), which assists regional and local councils with the development, facilitation and implementation of Local Economic Development strategies, capacity building, funding and networking.

The Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) is a business representative and support organization in Namibia. Its membership comprises of companies across all economic sectors, including prominent large companies as well as SMEs. As a fully independent private sector body, NCCI identifies issues affecting the business environment on sub-national and national levels (e.g. issues on availability of land), highlighted by member organizations during various engagement forums and consultative meetings and advocates for speedy resolutions.

In addition to the above mentioned, as part of the development and implementation process of Namibia's Industrial Policy, efforts have been intensified by the Ministry of Trade and

Industry towards an effective Public Private Dialogue platform. Amongst others, sector consultations were carried out in 2013 (e.g. for the meat industry, the manufacturing and retail sectors) which formed an important basis of this process.

Another institution of the Ministry of Trade and Industry responsible for the strengthening collaboration between the government and the private sector is the Namibia Trade Forum (NTF). The NTF was established in 2005 and coordinates the regular PPD platform on matters related to international trade and investment with its established committees, namely manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries and services committees. These committees are expected to develop solutions and reform proposals aimed at addressing the key constraints in the business environment. The committees comprise of representatives from the private sector and its representative organizations, unions and relevant ministries.

3- Results so far

Results from a recent survey which was focused on assessing the impact of PPDs in Namibia indicate that, although the organizational, the facilitation and content aspects of the meetings were deemed satisfactory, the efforts to implement the outcomes should be intensified across most towns. Moreover, results also indicated that having dialogue is not merely enough and suggested that more tangible results need to be delivered. This means that unless these dialogues deliver, people might become frustrated and despondent. Also, even though the meetings seem to be well received as forums for discussion, they are less well received as mechanisms for improved delivery. This, however, does not mean that PPDs are failing; it simply means they have so far not improved stakeholders' capacity to deliver.

LEDA has recently developed a website to improve information sharing for LED practitioners. The primary purpose of the online platform is to disseminate information, including: an inventory of support programmes offered by national government departments, NGOs and other relevant service providers and organizations.

Biographies of Authors:

Hileni Shifotoka: Ms. Shifotoka is a 26 year old Namibian who currently works as the Junior Advisor for the Enabling Environment on National Level Component of the Partnership for Economic Growth (PEG) Programme within GIZ in Namibia. She has been working for the PEG Programme since February 2013 to date. Ms. Shifotoka has a Bachelor's Degree in Economics obtained at the Polytechnic of Namibia in 2010, and is now currently studying towards her Master's Degree in Economics at the University of Namibia under the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Programme. Before joining GIZ, she worked briefly as a Data Capturer for First National Bank of Namibia.

Eldon Uiseb: Mr. Uiseb joined the Local Economic Development Agency (LEDA) in the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development at its inception in 2010 as a Development Planner, and was later promoted to a Senior Development Planner position in 2013. He obtained his bachelor's Degree in Public Management (Economics major) from the Polytechnic of Namibia in 2009. He is currently studying towards his Master's Degree in Leadership at the same institution. Mr. Uiseb was instrumental in organizing the first PPDs in 2013, as well as the recently concluded PPDs. All in all, 9 PPDs were conducted in 9 towns in 2013.