

*This Presentation will be done by  
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CONF/002, 48*

WHY WE HAVE TO GET RID OF SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION IN  
DISTRIBUTING COMMUNAL LAND : THE FACTS.

Prepared by Dr T. T. Tueumuna, on the occasion of the  
National Land Conference.

At the present, ACCESS to communal land in at least some  
(if not all) parts of Owambo is highly affected by the  
gender of the applicant:

- (i) women are usually excluded from getting fertile  
land;
- (ii) women may not get large plots of land, even if they  
have many dependants;
- (iii) when a male head of the household dies, the land  
does not automatically resort to the wife.

The National Land Conference should change ALL these  
practices for 2 important reasons:

1. The sexist practice works against health and development  
of the affected families and of the community and nation  
at large. I will elaborate on this point below.
2. In their discriminatory nature these practices are  
UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

1. How does sexual discrimination in land distribution  
work against HEALTH and DEVELOPMENT?

The practice renders female-headed families unlikely to  
produce adequate food for themselves. In a study conducted  
by the Ministry of Health and Social Services with the  
support of UNICEF in April-May 1990 it was found that  
(a) every 3rd child under the age of 5 years (35%) in  
Owambo is undernourished. In comparison, in Katutura  
every 10th child (12%) was undernourished. This level of  
undernutrition (in Owambo) is even worse than that of many  
poor countries in Africa. My own experience of looking  
after undernourished children at Oshakati and Onandjokwe  
Hospitals for 6 years is that most undernourished children  
come from female-headed families. Discriminatory practices  
in land distribution are obviously contributory to this  
tragedy.

(b) The same study found that female heads of households  
generally have less education than that of male heads of  
households. This means that female-headed households are  
already disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities  
and general knowledge. These families, therefore, more  
than others, need adequate, good land to at least grow  
their own food.

(c) As a rule, women do not get jobs as easily as men and  
when they do get jobs, they are often paid less. Therefore  
they depend more on land.

(d) Women are the main people who work the land, therefore  
it does not make sense to reserve better or larger plots  
of land for men.

In conclusion, it is obvious that we cannot continue to accept the sexiest practices mentioned, because they are working against our national interests. Many undernourished children die. Those who survive do not do well at school. Many drop out and become delinquents (botsotso's). Many others become adults of low intelligence, who continue the cycle of poverty and undernutrition. Therefore the land conference should facilitate that:

(i) in future, communal land is leased to a family rather than to just the one (male) member of the family

and

(ii) the gender of the head of the household should NOT be a factor in the allocation of land, no matter if the plot is fertile or large.

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A Brief Oral Presentation on Otjimbingwe Communal Land And Land Reform to  
The National Conference on Land Reform, June 25 to July 01, 1991 at Windhoek.

Honourable Prime Minister,  
Distinguished Guests and Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

National Archives  
of Namibia

At the outset, we welcome and support our government's relentless efforts on the land question; for it is the issue - subject matter that constitutes our bitter struggle for freedom and the hard won independence.

Secondly, Otjimbingwe communal land borders the Namib Desert and is about 200 km northwest of Windhoek. Historically and traditionally, Otjimbingwe has been one of our people's dwelling place, with its vast space and economic viabilities (stretching from beyond Tsaobis in the west to near Wilhelmstal in the northeast, and up to the Khomas Hochland mountains, in the south).

But today, Otjimbingwe is an entrenched, squeezed, economic sterilized and impoverished area. Its beauty, vastness and richness is but a painful history, nowadays.

Thirdly, we wish to state that most Otjimbingwe's area was expropriated without compensation like other areas in Namibia, since the eve of colonialism. Greater and economic land of Otjimbingwe were given to White settlers at random. And today some farms in the area owned by non-citizens.

Fourthly therefore, given now the irreversible independence of our land and the fact that we must live here abundantly as citizens, we suggest the followings:

1. Farms owned by non-citizens should be confiscated with only compensation of movable property but not the land.
2. Communal farming land should be extended, if possible to its original borders.
3. The government should have a fixed quota of hectares for farming purposes. And each person can be allowed to have up two farms, if such farms were economic feasible and were within the fixed quota.

.....2/

4. Those with up to ten farms should give them up to the government and remain with at least two or one. And only movable property should be compensated.
5. Loans to acquire farming land should be made available and realistic to the deprived farmers, who <sup>were</sup> excluded for many years.
6. Existing government farms be made accessible for grazing to the communal farmers.

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