

6TH SESSION

CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT
OF NAMIBIA

12 – 19 July 2024 - Windhoek



unicef 
for every child

“TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA”





1. BACKGROUND

The Children's Parliament is a platform dedicated to amplifying the voices of children, guiding the state's policymakers towards a future where the rights and welfare of children are not just recognized, but actively championed.

The Children's Parliament has achieved significant milestones in its 17 years of existence, notably proposing and advocating for changes in legislation that had positive impact on the lives of the children of Namibia.

It has achieved a great understanding of the democratic process involved in making laws in the country, given children a platform to voice their concerns and champion their rights. Each session has had a remarkable impact on realizing the rights of children.

The Fourth Session of the Children's Parliament took place in 2013 under the theme *"Children's Parliament – Ensuring that the voices of tomorrow's leaders are heard"*.

During this session children tabled motions that look to revisit the education policy to allow learners that fall pregnant

during their education careers to be allowed to come back and complete their education upon delivery. The motion was passed successfully, and policy amendments followed suit to give effect to the voices of children. The most notable achievement was the increment of the grant to OVC by N\$50.00.

The Fifth Session that took place in 2019 under the theme *"Engaging young people in the legislative process"* and focused on the challenges present to children, especially children with disabilities.

The house's main mission was to increase the disability grant for children and championed this through their motions. The motion was adopted by the house and adopted by government which resulted in the increment of the disability grant for children.

After four years interval, this year the National Assembly will once again be hosting the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament, under the theme *"Transforming Education in Namibia"* from the 12-19 July 2024.



2. ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the years, the Children's Parliament has proven its effectiveness in realizing the rights of children through its previous sessions. The 3rd Session of the Children's Parliament lobbied government for the adoption and implementation of the Learner Pregnancy Policy by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Since the adoption of the policy, more teenage mothers can continue their education after birth of their child.

The 4th Session of the Children's Parliament through motions successfully lobbied government to increase the grants for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC's) furthermore they championed the Child Care and Protection Act 3 of 2015. The Act is viewed as a powerful piece of legislation that encompasses Child Rights, Welfare and Empowerment for Namibia. In 2022 the Minister of Finance announced in his budget speech that the grant for all persons with disability would increase from N\$ 250.00 to N\$ 1 300.00 per month. This followed a similar motion passed by the 5th Session of the Children's Parliament.

The Children's Parliament has even attracted international recognition and was invited to the 144th Inter-Parliamentary Union to participate in the global panel discussion on the parliamentary budgeting powers of children. This was the 3rd time the Children's Parliament formed part of the Namibian delegation to the IPU with previous attendances in 2014 and 2016 respectively.

3. EDUCATION CHALLENGES FOR NAMIBIAN CHILDREN

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the education sector by disrupting the conventional learning and teaching methods - creating a learning crisis. The education divide was also increased by the switch to online learning and teaching. The online transition of education has been a barrier especially for children living in the rural areas.

This lack of alternative learning tools has resulted in many children dropping out of schools with the Ministry of education reporting that 15,239 learners (8,000 F and 7,239M) dropped out of school in 2021. Of these, 2,658 were due to learner pregnancy (EMIS, 2021) and the youngest being 11 years old. These high dropout rates contribute to the already higher youth unemployed rates and consequently to youth poverty which is currently reported to be around 41 percent.

Namibia's education system has undergone several significant reforms in recent years. The Ministry of Education has been actively involved in stimulating discussions about educational reform and furthering the development of education in the country.

Despite significant investment in the education sector, the national examination results have been a cause for concern. There is a 20% repetition rate of pupils in Grade 5 and 50% of Grade 11 pupils fail their exams. This indicates a gap between the resources invested and the learning outcomes achieved, suggesting that factors beyond funding are influencing educational performance.

Government education reports significant disparities in the schooling experiences of pupils in the most disadvantaged communities. These disparities are reported to be attributed to socio-economic background, geographical location, and access to resources.

The reports further highlight the inefficient use and distribution of resources and a general shortage of books and instructional materials. In a country bigger than France and Belgium put together, with vast areas of desert, authorities are struggling to provide education access to children, especially in hard-to-reach communities, making it even harder to retain them in the system.

Gender disparity in education is another critical issue. Statistics suggest that on average, Namibian secondary school girls performed better academically than boys. A 2023 study done by the University of Namibia show that at the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), more than two-thirds of graduates over the years have been female. This disparity also exists in school completion rates and drop-out rates, with boys being less likely to complete school, more likely to drop out, and less likely to graduate at university.

Considering these challenges, the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament will be a platform where children's representative from the 14 Political Regions, discuss these issues, and propose solutions that will contribute towards transforming education in Namibia.

4. THE 6TH SESSION 2024

This year's session which will be held from the 12 – 19 July under the auspices of the Speaker of the National Assembly Professor Peter Katjavivi, will mark 17 years of a platform dedicated to amplifying the voices of children.

Building on the achievements of the previous sessions. The 6th Session of the Children's Parliament will look to bring forth new members and grant the members an opportunity to lobby for the rights of children post COVID-19.

The session will consider the significant gains made for children and the challenges that hamper progress, to foster an educational environment where all children can thrive to their full potential.

Furthermore, the session will explore innovative strategies to enhance equity and inclusion, improve the quality and relevance of education, and prepare Namibian children and youth for a rapidly changing world. Through this theme, the Children's Parliament reaffirms its commitment to shaping a brighter future for Namibia through education.

5. OBJECTIVES



Provide a platform for children to voice their concerns, ideas, and aspirations regarding education and other issues affecting them.



Afford children an opportunity to advocate for policy changes and initiatives that prioritize the rights and welfare of children, particularly in the context of post-COVID-19 challenges.



Enhance understanding of parliamentary processes and democratic principles among young participants.



Foster collaboration and networking among children from diverse backgrounds and regions of Namibia.



Allow children the freedom to contribute to the transformation of the education system in Namibia by proposing innovative solutions and strategies.



6. OUTCOMES

6.1 Development of actionable recommendations and proposals to address challenges in the education sector, with a focus on equity, inclusion, and quality.

6.2 Increased awareness and engagement of policymakers, stakeholders, and the public regarding children's issues and perspectives.

6.3 Empowerment of children to actively participate in governance processes and advocate for their rights at local, national, and international levels.

6.4 Strengthening of the Children's Parliament as a sustainable platform for ongoing dialogue, advocacy, and action on children's rights and welfare.



7. THEME OF THE 6TH CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

The theme for the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament is ***"Transforming Education in Namibia."***

This theme is inspired by the ongoing education reform agenda taking place in the Namibian education system. The theme is also aligned with Education as the AU Theme of the Year 2024, with the Theme – *"Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa"*.

The theme further underscores the critical role of education financing in ensuring that every child in Africa has access to inclusive, accessible, and relevant learning opportunities.



8. STRATEGIC APPROACH/ ACTIVITIES

The theme for the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament is *"Transforming Education in Namibia."*

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8.1 ORIENTATION WEEKEND (12-14 JULY 2024)

All Child representatives are expected to arrive and register for the session on Friday. All children will receive their session package which will include information regarding the session and the 8 days programme (see full draft programme annex 1).

On Saturday and Sunday, children will receive orientation on parliamentary proceedings. Children will also attend session with various speakers, highlighting key thematic areas (birth registration & education; finances & education; governance & education; gender/violence & education; poverty & education; disability & education etc) touching on education as an overarching theme.

The purpose of these session is to impart as much information as possible to the children, to allow them to have informed debates during the parliamentary sessions and to equip them with skills to communicate better.

8.2 OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 6TH SESSION (15 JULY 2024)

For the first time since its inception, this year the Children's Parliament Session will be officially opened by the President of the Republic of Namibia, HE Nangolo Mbumba.

Following Parliamentary Protocol, the day will start with a session in which the 5th Session will be dissolved. The dissolution of 5th Children's Parliament will be followed by the swearing in of the 6th Sessions members and subsequent election of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chief Whip and Assistant Whips of the Children's Parliament. The session will also have an opportunity to elect Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of Children's Parliament Committees.

The official opening is planned to commence at 14:00hrs with various key partners (Minister of Gender Equality Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa) expected to give statements and message of encouragement to the 6th session. HE, The President will give a keynote address and officially opening the session.

8.3 PARLIAMENT IN SESSION 16 – 19 JULY 2024

Parliamentary session will take place from Tuesday the 16th and will be on recess on Friday 19th July 2024. During the 4 days children will table motions, debate, argue, defend their motions and vote on the motions that will be adopted.

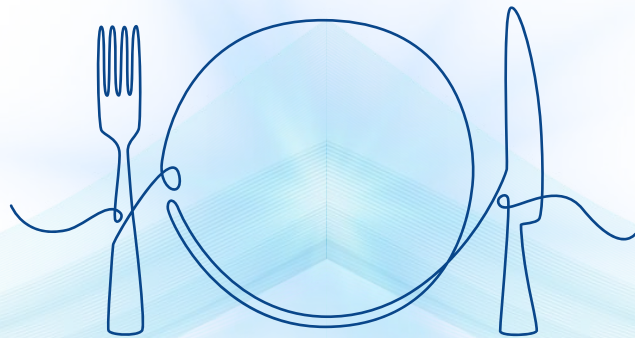
Each day, the session will also be addressed by special guests starting with the Minister of Education Arts and Culture who will be speaking on *“Transforming Education in Namibia: The Future We Want.”*

Wednesday will be graced by Advocate Bience Gawanas who will be giving her thoughts on the role of young people in shaping the education system through their social and public engagement. The Afternoon will see an international Guest Speaker sharing his journey and making it against all odds.

The Minister of Information, Communication and Technology will also motivate and share her experience as a former Child Parliamentarian and how education enabled her to excel.

While Mr. Tim Ekandjo will share tips on how Child Parliamentarians can best prepare themselves with skills needed for a prosperous Namibia.

8.4 SPECIAL DINNERS



In line with the Children’s Parliament tradition, and to give the newly sworn in members a learning and memorable experience, and more so to give them an opportunity to connect with each other, the following dinners will be held at various location as follows:

Monday	Welcoming Reception	Hosted by the Honorable Speaker
Tuesday	Dinner	Hosted by Konrad Audeneur Stiftung
Thursday	Dinner	Hosted by NEDBANK NAMIBIA
Friday	Official Farewell Reception	Hosted by the Honorable Speaker

9.COMMUNICATION & MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The National Assembly and its partners will use social media to amplify the activities taking place throughout the week. Our targeted audience includes Government leaders, children aged between 13 to 18 years (grade 8 to 12), parents, schools, local government bodies, NGOs, corporates, and media outlets.

- **Television:** A week prior to the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament, we will launch a marketing campaign across various NBC radio and TV channels. The session will be live streamed on television and NBC's digital platforms.
- **Talk Shows:** Members of the Children's Parliament will appear on popular NBC talk shows such as Good Morning Namibia, Talk of the Nation, and Inside the Chamber.
- **Social media:** We will create a buzz on social media platforms with countdowns, introductions to Parliament members, and daily posts during the 6th Session of the Children's Parliament.
- **Newsletter:** Daily newsletters will be produced for Members of the Children's Parliament, summarizing the day's events, and providing insights for the next day. These newsletters will also be published in the New Era Newspaper.
- **Photography and Videography:** Professional services will be hired to capture still images and create a documentary highlighting the week-long activities of the Children's Parliament.
- **Website:** Children's Parliament web page will be developed (link to the main Parliament one) to provide resources, event calendars, and a blog highlighting members' projects.
- **Offline:** Flyers and posters will be digitally distributed via email and other platforms to schools and community centers.
- **Radio Stations:** Members of the Children's Parliament will give interviews in various vernacular languages at all NBC radio stations throughout the session.
- **Educational Videos:** Short videos will be developed to explain parliamentary procedures and highlight success stories.
- **Infographics:** Key issues and statistics relevant to children in the community will be illustrated through infographics.
- **Storytelling Sessions:** Members will share first hand experiences related to important topics through organized storytelling sessions.
- **Media Kit:** A media kit, including press releases, fact sheets, and contact information for media inquiries, will be created.
- **Media Training:** Select members will be trained as media spokespersons and interviews will be arranged with local newspapers or radio stations.
- **Media Monitoring:** Media coverage will be monitored, and positive stories will be shared on social media and the website.



10. PARTNERS

To leverage partnerships and create better outcomes for children, this year the 6th Session's Task force has brought together various ministries, development agencies, the private sector, civil societies, former Child Parliamentarians, and other stakeholders to provide their technical skills, knowledge, and financial support for the successful hosting of the session.

For the private sector, the support will be in line with their corporate social investment while highlighting the importance of action now and together for an inclusive quality education for all Namibian children (see list of support annex 2). The following are the key partners in this endeavor:

- The Office of the President of the Republic of Namibia
- Ministry of International Relations and Cooperations
- Ministry of Gender Equality Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology
- Konrad Audeneur Stiftung
- Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia (EPDN)
- Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID)
- NEDBANK Namibia
- Telecom Namibia
- MTC Namibia
- UNICEF
- NBC
- New Era
- Other Media houses



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