



SUCCESS STORY

Strengthening Democracy, Civil Society

Namibia forms “Democracy Support Center”

A “Democracy Barometer” survey conducted in southern Africa in 2000 found that Namibia was the only country where “the perceived ‘supply’ of democracy is higher than the ‘demand’ for democracy.” The research indicated a need to strengthen



the “demand” for democracy by increasing dialogue between civil society and government and helping Namibia’s citizens understand their rights. USAID had long facilitated this kind of interaction in Namibia by sponsoring training and technical assistance for both civic groups and Parliament. This had resulted in considerable progress, but the analysis suggested that

Board members of the Democracy Support Center, with U.S. Ambassador Joyce Barr, third from left, National Assembly Speaker Hon. Theo-Ben Gurirab, fourth from left, and National Council Chairman Hon. Asser Kapere, center.

Namibia would benefit from a more permanent mechanism for strengthening communication between civil society representatives and elected leaders. In response, USAID helped institute the Namibia Democracy Support Center. The center facilitates interaction between government and civil society groups, helping to ensure the continued development of Namibia’s democratic transformation.

Government and civil society leaders teamed up to form the Namibia Democracy Support Center, which aims to create a more robust democratic culture in this young democracy.

The Namibia Democracy Support Center is a unique cooperative partnership between government and civil society organizations. Its goal is to formalize and strengthen interaction between select government institutions and the Namibian citizenry in a coordinated manner. It is an independent membership-based organization that includes key government and civic groups, such as Parliament, the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing, Namibia’s national university, a legal aid and public interest organization, the Namibia Institute for Democracy, the Namibia Media Women Association, and the Namibia Community Radio Network.

The center coordinates the participation of civic organizations in the legislative process and in regional decision-making. Together with member media institutions, it launches information campaigns on key issues. Through this effort, Namibian leaders are strengthening the quality of democratic governance in their country and creating a more robust democratic culture.