

8. An analysis of the strategies used to communicate human rights to women in the informal settlement of Greenwell Matongo in Windhoek

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Abstract

This paper examines the communication of human rights by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to women. It presents the communication channels used and assesses the women's knowledge and awareness level of human rights in the community of the informal settlement Greenwell Matongo in Windhoek, Namibia. Namibia's statistics regarding violation of women in Africa are high. Therefore, the violation of human rights of women in marginalised areas has become a major concern. We argue that it is important for every woman to know their basic human rights regardless of where they live and their level of formal education. As such, it is important that the most appropriate media of communication be engaged in order to disseminate the messages effectively to its intended audience. The study posits that relevant communication channels and information are vital in addressing and subsequently combating violation of human rights. This necessitates the need to educate the victims about where to go and what action to take should one be violated. Finally, this study advocates the best approaches to communicate issues on human rights to the most marginalised in an effort to reach and educate every citizen.

Keywords: Human rights, women's rights, informal settlement, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, women's issues, Namibia, communication, women's rights violation, Namibia

Introduction

This study aims to look into communication strategies used by the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW)* to inform women in marginalised areas about human rights. It further examines the awareness of human rights of the women in Greenwell Matongo, one of the largest informal settlements in Windhoek. It also reveals how limited knowledge about these rights can hinder treatment and coping mechanisms of women whose rights have been violated. Hence, we argue that relevant communication strategies should be used in an effort to educate women on human rights. Greenwell Matongo has a high rate of human violations which include theft, stabbing, shooting and even murder. Finally, the study recommends communication approaches in an attempt to make information on Human Rights accessible to women and improve the safety of women and, subsequently, children in informal settlements. The results of this study can be used for informed decision making in the MGECW and the Police.

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Background of the study

Namibia has high rates of human rights violation, particularly those of women. This could be attributed to women not being aware of their rights, being ill-informed or inadequately informed of some of their rights. There also seems to be an increase in the number of anti-women-related crimes in the country (Amulungu, 2014).

The Greenwell Matongo community forms part of the Katutura Township in the capital Windhoek. Katutura which means “the place we do not want to live in” in Otjiherero has a tragic history. It was created by the former South African Apartheid regime, which forced black people to move from the suburb of Hochland Park that was considered a ‘White’ area. The forced removals formed part of the Apartheid policy of racial segregation which was implemented from 1959 to 1961. The removals also led to protests by the affected people, which resulted in the police shooting to death 13 people and leaving many injured (Pendleton, 1994).

The majority of the residents of Greenwell Matongo face many hardships. On the one hand, there is an absence of electricity, sanitary facilities and easy access to water. People are forced to walk a distance from their shack to go and relieve themselves in the bush or wait to go to work where there is a toilet. The absence of electricity means that people commonly make use of candles which pose a potential danger of burning their home. Shack fires are commonly reported as people would fall asleep and some materials catch fire, or the wind blows through the cracks of an opening of the makeshift shelter and cause the fire to spread within the house. The absence of electricity also means that people do not have lighting in the evening, mainly cook outside, lack access to broadcast information and cannot use any other electrical devices commonly used in a household such as irons, kettles among others. Food is usually cooked outside on an open fire place or, if people can afford it, on a gas stove. However, all these alternatives to electricity affect the safety of the dwellers. The use of a common water tap for a certain number of houses can involve walking a long distance, but also be a source of breeding places for mosquitos. Overall, people feel unhappy about the situation as it seems to foster the high unemployment and crime rate. In addition, shebeens, which are informal selling places for alcohol, are open throughout the day and night and sell alcohol to everyone who has money, regardless of their age. Because of high unemployment rates and poverty, prostitution is rife in Greenwell Matongo as well (Muronga, 2011).



Shacks in Greenwell Matongo (L. Newaka, Aug. 2015)

These and other factors, such as lack of formal education and access to information seem to contribute to the helplessness and hopelessness of the women to be heard and helped when their rights

are being violated. Thus there seemingly is no noticeable progress on the subject of safety and adherence to human rights.

Since Namibia gained its independence in 1990, provision was made to protect the human rights of Namibian citizens. Firstly, the National Gender Machinery (NGM) was implemented as a women's unit within the office of the President in 1990. This unit soon grew into the Department of Women Affairs and then evolved into a fully-fledged government Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare in 2000. In 2005, the ministry's name was changed to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. Its initial focus addressed the violence against women and children; it then later assumed a broader national gender response.

The Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare's mandate is to ensure gender equality and equitable socio-economic development of women and men and the well-being of children. Regarding women in particular, this ministry has formulated the following objectives:

- improve the status of women and girls;
- promote positive cultural policies and beliefs;
- facilitate the development of gender responsive policies and laws;

Close collaboration with all stakeholders and the entire nation is required to fulfil these objectives, hence, eradicate some of the social challenges such as substance abuse and human abuse that is faced by women in Namibia. (1)

Statement of the problem

The study posits that there is lack of effective communication with regard to creating awareness or educating women in marginalised settlements about their rights. Thus strategies used by the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare* to communicate to and educate women on the issue of human rights are the major thrust of this study.

Research Objectives

The specific aims of this study are

- to identify communication strategies used by the MGECW to disseminate information about human rights;
- to uncover and recommend possible effective communication strategies that could be beneficial to the women in Greenwell Matongo;
- to identify the communication barriers that exist between affiliates of human rights with the women in the informal settlements and
- to evaluate the awareness of human rights by women in the informal settlement area of Greenwell Matongo.

The Significance of the Research

It is hoped that this investigation into the communication and awareness of human rights and women's rights will be meaningful as its results will inform if the existing material provided reaches the desired target group. The research project will also shed light on whether the female citizens know the possibility of action they can take to deal with a problem arising from a violation of a human right or a woman's right. Subsequently, the MGECW could exploit the results of this research for decision-making and policy design or modification in an attempt to improve communication about Human Rights to women in informal settlements or other marginalised areas across the country. Furthermore, the MGECW could

review current practices of information dissemination to women in these settlements in order to reach more and educate them on the topic. Lastly, the results of this investigation could be an additional significant factor regarding existing knowledge and research literature.

Delimitation of the research

Greenwell Matongo settlement was chosen as it is one of the largest informal settlements in Windhoek. The participants of this study are thirty women who live in the settlement.

Literature Review

The relevant literature puts emphasis on the fact that communication is fundamental to engagement and it is enacted through interactions of individuals and groups within a social network (Newman and Dale, 2005). On the one hand, communication is central to not only citizen participation in community sustainability planning but also to establish the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of this process (Nelson 2001, Cooper & Vargas 2004). Subsequently, it is imperative and the democratic right for citizens of any community to participate in the process through transparent mediums of communication. This enables the eradication of problems of violence and mistreatments of women in the informal settlements. The relationships of trust and reciprocity formed within a community are characterised as strong ties or bonding relationships (Portes, 1998) and are distinguished from the weak ties or bridging relationships that are formed with external actors and agencies (Granovetter, 1982). Newman and Dale (2005) state that effective and transparent communication, can build meaningful and lasting relations and bonds with the community members to help in combating social injustices that are perpetrated against women from less privileged communities. While bonding relationships are important to generating social cohesion or social capital, constraints and relationships of power can also inhibit community change.

The development of social support networks, both formally and informally, rely heavily on the ability to communicate (Anders & Tucker, 2000). Whereas processes of daily social communication remain fundamentally important to the structuring of such discourse they are born of struggle in informal areas, and entail access to technology, even in the poorest of urban areas. The communications ecology of low income urban and rural residents is one that typically relies on cellular telephony and radio technologies (Skuse and Cousins, 2005). Street committees are a crucial tool for communication and inclusion in democratic governance processes and are viewed as such by township residents.

According to *The Namibian Constitution Article 5 (1998)* under *Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms*, the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined shall be respected and upheld by the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary and all organs of the Government and its agencies and, where applicable to them, by all natural and legal persons in Namibia, and shall be enforceable by the Courts. It is important that people should accord themselves to the Namibian Constitution which governs how they behave towards other people and how they should be treated by their fellow men. This awareness of the constitution allows people to abide by the laws and regulations of the country.

Related to this research, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UNUDHR], 2008, Article 1 posits that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood",. The overview of human rights in the above quotation is quite strategic for this study. It has facilitated an understanding of human rights in general. According UNUDHR, women and men are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In other words, all human beings should be treated equally, regardless of their social standing in society. This includes the right to information, the right to be heard and the right to participate in issues close to their hearts for social and economic development.

UN Human Rights Commissioner Chief Pillay (2013) explains that, "No one should be excluded from

decision-making because they are African, or female, or belong to a minority, or worship a certain religion, because they are gay, have a disability or particular beliefs. We all should have a voice that counts in our societies.” Pillay’s observations are quite relevant to this study. She charges that all human beings are equal regardless of their sex, nationality and religion. However, the patriarchal nature of the Namibian society means that women are not always involved in decision making and in fact decisions are sometimes made for them by people who may not even know what they really need. In addition, she argues that a woman’s voice should be heard because it also contributes to the development of the society. When women are heard and they are encouraged to partake in decision making about their rights, this ensures their existence and visibility in society. Through decision making, the right communication channels will be identified and the different modes of communication will be used based on their suitability to the target audience.

It is quite fundamental that women should be educated about their rights even when they are not close to where the resources of communication are. Educated citizens and particularly women, have an impact on the growth and opportunities that lie ahead for them and exterminating the injustice of violation towards them. Higher education confers social status, political clout, and economic opportunities on women (Jacobs, 1996), while women who work outside the home exert more influence in family life, and are more likely to mobilize politically, and are better represented in government (Ross, 2008). When women are educated and are actively involved in legal reforms and activists groups, both men and women can help change cultural practices that are oppressive. (Ekechi, 1996; Hodgson, McCurdy 2001; House-Midamba, 1996). Women’s activism could help in the advancement of how women of low status in society are represented in their communities.

Information dissemination is an essential ingredient in community development. It is also a critical element in working towards participatory democracy. Lor (1996) argues that access to information is of cardinal importance to satisfy daily coping needs, ensure a competitive economy, and promote education and lifelong learning, democracy and nation building. Similarly, Harris states that the capacity of local communities to cope with economic and social change depends heavily on access to information and if communities are not well informed, other policy measures will fail (Harris, 1992). The aforementioned scholars emphasise the significance of information dissemination, which is the thrust of this study. It is therefore, necessary to consider not only how women experience human rights, but also to uncover women’s own understandings, experiences and claims for human rights to address how wider structural constraints are negotiated (Merry & Stem, 2005). Throughout the centuries, women have experienced lower levels of representation in politics, and a loss of state welfare protection, as well as facing increasing levels of discrimination on the grounds of gender and age in employment and society. In addition, women have experienced a lack of rights protection in the private sphere. This suggests that women have been disproportionately negatively affected by the consequences of the changes (Bridger et al., 1996; Bridger & Pine, 1998; Kuehnasts, Nechemias, 2004; Ashwin, 2006; Johnson & Robinson, 2007; Racioppi, O’Sullivan, 2009). In the same way, Gallagher points out that in most cases, women are voiceless and are often not listened to, because of cultural practices and the societies in which they live in and are conform to. In other words, women have no voice and are invisible since they are silenced by the societies they live in.

Amnesty International (1995: pp 85-86) confirms that “Women who come from minority or marginalised groups are in double jeopardy, they are also victims of prejudice.” In support of Amnesty International (1995: pp 85-86) women from Greenwell Matongo are likely to be victims even though they may not be a minority because of their ethnic identity. They could also be prone to being victimised on the basis of their social status in society due to where they reside in Windhoek. According to Amnesty International (1995), “Women’s voices can be heard all over the world: demanding justice, protesting against discrimination, claiming rights, mourning dead husbands and comforting raped daughters. The job of the human rights movement is to make governments listen and to ensure that they take action to protect and promote women’s rights and human rights” (p 14). The *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare*

could play a major role in educating and promoting women's rights and human rights within Greenwell Matongo, which could lead to a reduction to gender based violence within the area. Most violations against women such as rape, early childhood marriage and slavery, occur in their homes and these violations are perpetrated by close family members or organisations. These kinds of violations are often not known by Human Rights activists groups. This reinforces and creates a gap between the public and private spheres, which results in a lack of involvement of governments to help end violation against women. (Bunch and Roth, 1995). Therefore, women could be encouraged to speak up about what is happening in their homes, if they worked more closely together with Women's Rights activists, the government and the police.

In support of this research, in Greenwell Matongo, people see it as a norm when people steal, fight and violate the rights of others compared to other parts of Windhoek and as such, it results in a slow pace in getting to the root of causes of the problems in the area. Amnesty International states that women are exposed to a variety of human rights violations than any other group, during war and through traditional cultural practices (Amnesty International, 1991). Culturally in Namibia, women are seen as subordinates of their male counterparts, which indirectly results in them being victimised and them being side-lined in major decisions that have an impact on their lives. Bunch (1990) emphasises the need for the relationship between the public and the private spheres, the state and the family to be re-theorised, violations against women will remain undocumented, regardless of a vowed commitments. He further recommends that Human Rights abuse should include the degrading and violation of women. Traditional approaches to Human Rights should be integrated to transform the concept and practice of Human Rights in culture. Women's groups and the government play a pivotal role to use effective communication channels to interconnect with the public for the betterment of women's lives.

Theoretical Framework

It is generally assumed that many women in informal settlements are not adequately informed about their human rights. Due to the lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity and water combined with high unemployment rates, the crime rate in informal settlements is higher than in formal residential areas. That includes petty crime, break-ins, domestic violence, physical, verbal and emotional abuse, rape and murder. It is also assumed that women who become victims of such crimes often:

1. are unaware about human rights,
2. do not know where to get help, and
3. if they seek help from the authorities, do not succeed.

Thus this study is supported by the Communication Theory in an attempt to describe and improve the use of methods to communicate human rights by the MGEWCW to women in informal settlements with an aim of educating them to be able to use the right channels to seek assistance when such rights are violated.

Research gap

It is implicit that there is insufficient communication about human rights and related issues to the public and, in particular, to women living in informal settlements. In addition, we posit that communication strategies have not been explored to its fullness in the Human Rights dissemination context considering that there seems to be an escalation of Women's Rights violation. No attempt has been made with regard to investigating if women who live at the lowest level of society are aware of their basic rights, if the information available reaches them and if these women have the prospect to be helped when their Human rights are violated.

In addition, there is a research gap with regard to women living in informal settlements and having little or no formal educational background, regardless of their rights or them not knowing where to obtain the information about their rights. Some of the attempts to communicate made by the authorities may

possibly be unsuccessful as some of these women cannot read or write. Another reason why these women fail to receive information might be the language barrier, especially if the person does not have access to a radio or is from a marginalised group whose language is not presented in any media.

Methods

Quantitative as well as the qualitative methods were used to gather the data during the period of January to August 2015. A questionnaire was distributed to thirty respondents and a focus group discussion was organised to provide a platform for issues not covered in the questionnaire. Data was also collected from the MGE CW via interviews and secondary sources, such as brochures, magazines and newspapers.

The research was conducted in the informal settlement of Greenwell Matongo in Windhoek. The reason for choosing this particular settlement was because it is both a residential and business area both mainly informal. Meetings with the thirty participants were scheduled to help them complete the questionnaire. The focus group discussion, in which fifteen women participated, was arranged separately.

The study population comprised of:

- Thirty formally, informally employed or unemployed women;
- Age range 16 – 30 and older;
- With a basic income of N\$ 3000 or less per month; and who
- Work as house maids, cleaners, tellers, hawkers and street vendors.

The data was collected over several weekends as it meant helping the women to fill in the questionnaires as well as conducting the focus group discussion.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are divided into three sections. Firstly, the paper shares the strategies used by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to communicate Human Rights and issues related to Human Rights to the public. The second part of the analysis discusses the findings of the questionnaire and, lastly section three deals with the findings of the focus group discussion.

In the initial stages of the study most of the respondents were anxious to participate. Some women even expressed resentment when starting to complete the questionnaires as they could not picture any yielding results from the government with regards to easy accessibility of information pertaining to their rights as women living in the informal settlements. Therefore, the aim of the study was explained to them in detail. Once they understood what the study was about, they were eager to contribute to the study in an attempt to improve communication strategies regarding Human rights for women in informal settlements. The women were informed about the objectives of the research project. An interpreter was used to ensure the participants understood all aspects of the study.

1. Communication Strategies used by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGE CW)

According to the Public Relations Officer of the MGE CW, the ministry communicates information to both men and women who are faced with social challenges. The Communication Strategy by the MGE CW makes use of a variety of communication channels to communicate to the public.

a. Television

The MGE CW has a toll free number that victims of abuse can dial to get immediate help either to be referred to social workers or care takers. It does not cost anything and anyone can call them at any time because they operate 24/7. They have advertised the toll free number through the Namibian Broadcasting

Corporation (NBC 1). Currently, the MGECW shares information about their social grants, counselling services to abused victims and support to anyone who is victimised at work on *Good Morning Namibia* which is a programme that is aired every morning at 06h00 on the Namibian Broadcasting television to the general public.

b. Newspapers

The ministry also advertises a toll free number in various local newspapers, such as *The Namibian*, *New Era*, *Die Republikein* and in the *Informante*.

c. Website

The MGECW also has a website that shows all the information pertaining to their services in facilitating gender equality in the country. However, the website can only be accessed by those that have Internet connection. This also requires money for purchasing the airtime to have data on one's phone.

d. Community outreach programmes

The ministry intends to go out within the communities and share information about its services with the members of the community that are not aware of a social grant that is eligible to all children of unemployed parents. Previously, they did not have a Public Relations officer but since 2015, they now have a public relations officer who will be responsible for all of the communication regularities within the ministry. This initiative began in mid-2015, where the communication department in the ministry started to travel to the Northern Regions, such as Oshana, Omusati and Ohangwena region to bring information about the ministry to the regions.

e. Radio

The MGECW also plans on sharing information about their toll free numbers with all the local radio stations in the indigenous languages spoken by the people within the country. No specific date was provided at the time of the interview.

In conclusion, the ministry is doing all that it can to make human rights information more accessible to the population. Informing the population about what to do in the event of abuse is another precaution that the ministry is trying to take.

2. Analysis and discussion of the data collected via questionnaires

2.1 Demographic data

This section gives an overview of the nature of the group of 30 women studied. It displays the age groups, home language used, employment status and marital status of the women who participated in the study. Two thirds of the 30 women were between 21 – 30 years while the rest of the participants were either under 21 or older than 30. The representation of the home languages that are used by the participants were: Over 70% of Oshiwambo speakers, (a realistic representation of the largest ethnic group in Namibia), 20% equal representation of Damara/Nama and Otjiherero-speaking women and remaining 10% spoke other ethnic languages.

All participants had a job where two thirds of the participants were in a formal working relationship whereas only one third work as informal employees. On the one hand, slightly less than half were informally employed as domestics workers, bar tenders or street vendors. Some of them owned businesses, or had odd jobs, such as selling seasonal food, while others worked as temporary construction workers. On the other hand, more than half of the participants were formally employed as cashiers, retail tellers, security

guards and shop assistants, which are known to be the lowest paid formal jobs. Another point of interest was to find out about the marital status of the respondents as crime rates and unawareness rates usually correlate with higher numbers of unmarried or single women. Predictably, the majority of the respondents were single. They were either single mothers, still living with the extended family or living with a partner, but not legally married. Only three of the respondents were married and two of the participants were widows.

2.1 Awareness of various issues related to the topic of Human Rights

2.1.1 Awareness of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

As the crime rate is high and human rights of women are violated, it was assumed that women are aware of the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare* and that they could seek help from this Ministry. The answers revealed that in fact almost all of the respondents know about the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare*.

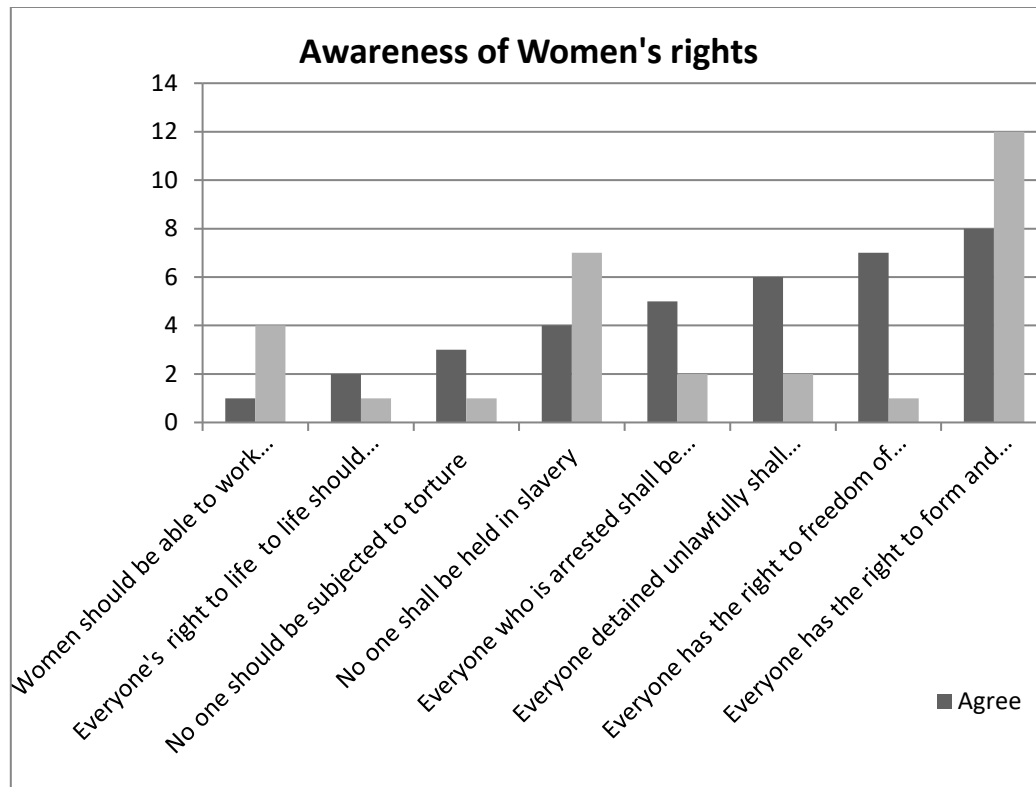
2.2.2 Awareness of Human Rights

The question intended to establish if the participants were aware of their Human Rights as well as Women's Rights. The question read 'Are you aware of your Human Rights and Women's Rights?'. Almost all participants claimed to be aware of their Human Rights and Women's Rights, whereas only 10% of the participants claimed not to be acquainted with them.

2.2.3 Awareness of Women's Rights

We were interested to find out which women's rights are known to the participants of the study in order to get a picture of their awareness. The questionnaire presented a list of eight women's rights. The graph below illustrates the particular Women's Rights the respondents are cognisant of. The question intended to discover which Women's rights the participants knew. The participants had to tick the box of the Women's Rights they were aware of. They range from very basic rights, such as the right to life, to the rights determined by free will, such as the right to start a trade union.

Figure 1: Women's Rights known to the respondents



Overall the majority of the answers reveal fewer that seven participants disagreed with the statements regarding Human Rights. Interestingly most answers were provided regarding the right to join a trade union. On the other hand, less than half of the women disagreed with the statement that everyone should have the right to form and join a trade union and less than 30% agreed to that statement. Based on the low number of women agreeing or disagreeing, and more not providing an answer, it must be assumed they were not sure whether they agree or disagree.

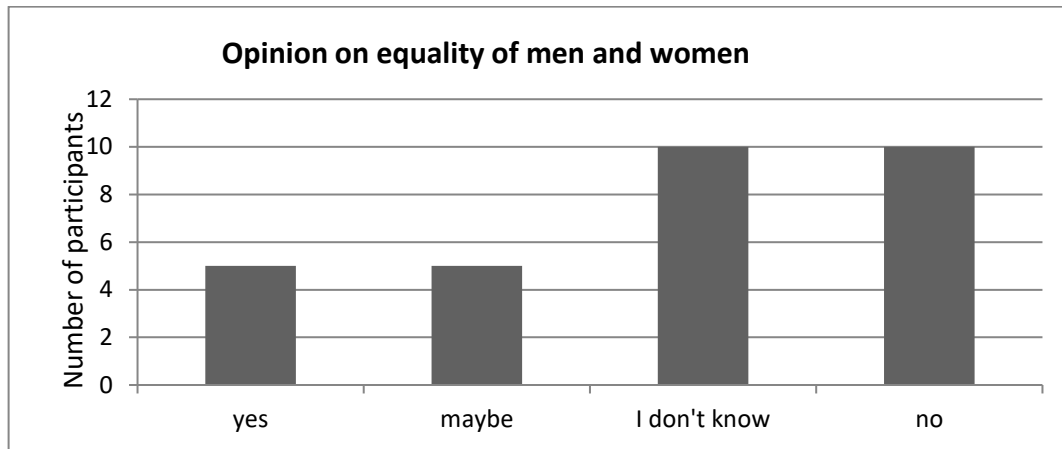
2.2 Views, opinions and beliefs related to Human Rights of men and women

This section of the questionnaire intended to find out what the women's opinion was concerning issues related to human rights. Hereunder is the analysis of the responses.

2.3.1 Opinion about equal treatment of women and men in Greenwell Matongo

The intention was to establish whether the participants think that women are treated equal to their male counterparts. The graph reveals that one third of the participants are convinced or lean towards thinking that women and men are equally treated in Greenwell Matongo. The other two thirds either don't know or think that they are not treated equally within their vicinity.

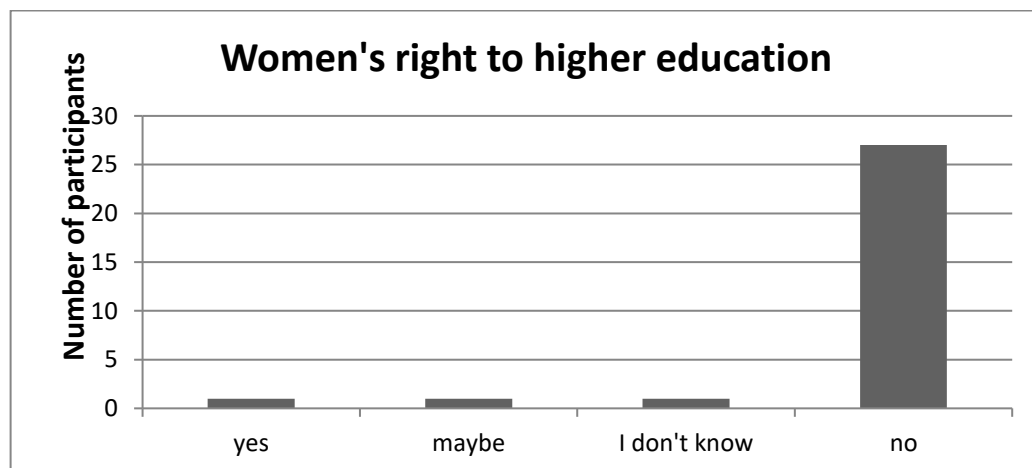
Figure 2: Opinion about the equality of men and women



2.3.2 Opinion about Women's Rights to Higher Education

Overall, the answers to this question revealed that almost all women were of the opinion that tertiary education is a privilege for men. The graph below shows the percentage of the views of the respondents on whether university education is more important for boys or girls. What the graph clearly reveals is that the vast majority (27) thought that boys should have a right to education. This fact makes it evident that the respondents do not know of the right of women to university education.

Figure 3: Opinion about the right to education

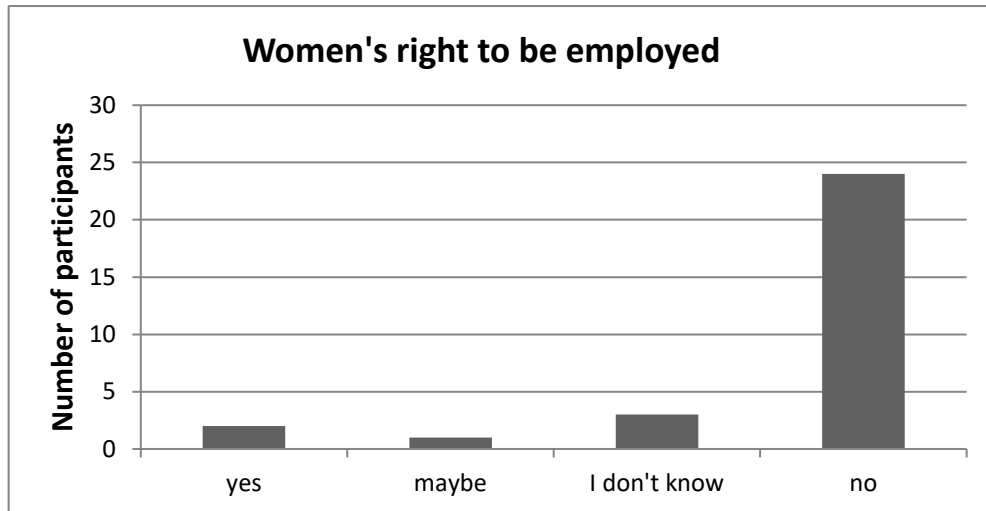


2.3.3 The right to be employed

The question regarding employability of men and women intended to question whether men should have the right to get a job. Figure 4 below illustrates the respondents' opinion on employability of men and women, when jobs are scarce. What the graph reveals is that a majority of the participants disapproved of men being more employable than women when jobs are scarce. They stated that, men should not have more rights to jobs than women. 6.70 % of the participants agreed that men should have more rights to

jobs than women, when jobs are scarce. 10% of the participants said that they did not know, while only slightly less than a third of the participants were not sure who should get a job when work was scarce.

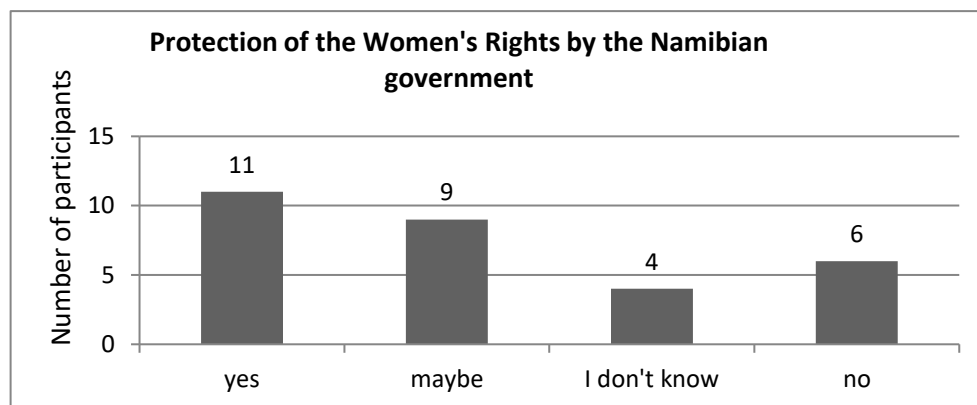
Figure 4: Women's right to be employed



2.3.4 Protection of Women's Rights by Namibian government

The graph below shows the views of the respondents with regard to the protection of women's rights. Slightly more than one third agreed that a lot has been done to protect their rights as women, but the majority was not sure, did not know or disagreed with that statement.

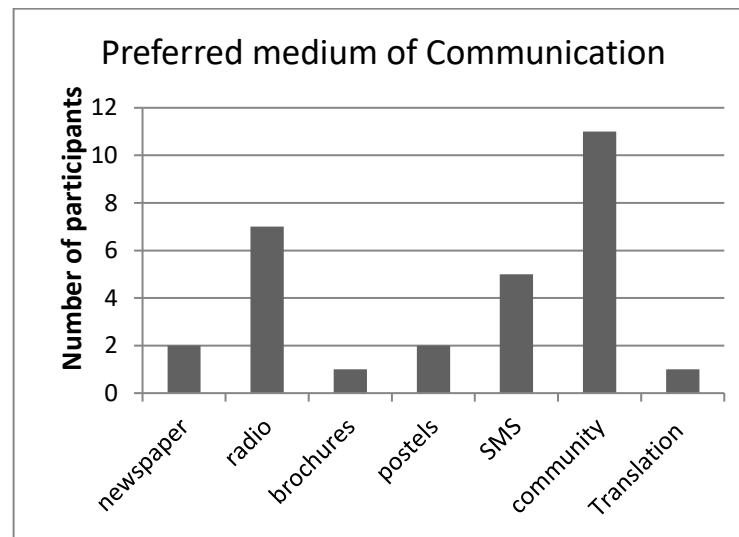
Figure 5: Protection of Women's Rights



2.3.5 Communicating Human Rights to the public

The graph below shows the mode of communication that the participants preferred concerning being informed about their rights.

Figure 5: Preferred medium of communication



Community Meetings and Radio stand out as the most preferred communication tools, which reflect the marginalised living conditions of these women in the informal settlement. These are followed by the choice of SMS and newspaper. A small number of respondents prefer brochures, posters and other means of communication. It can be assumed that community meetings and radio are the more traditional ways of communication which is confirmed by the results. It possibly also means that they have limited or no reading skills. Only approximately one third preferred newspapers and brochures, which indicates that they read regularly. The remainder prefer to hear about human rights from other sources such as posters and SMS.

3. Focus Group Discussion

The main aim of the focus group discussion was to listen to the women's problems related to human rights. The focus group discussions consisted of fifteen women from different ethnic groups. Overall, the women were more eager to answer questions as a group than individually. The women gathered at one of the respondent's house for the discussion. They agreed to take part in the discussion anonymously.

Most of the women worked formally or informally as domestic workers, security guards, bartenders, retail assistants while others were self-employed. A few were unemployed women who had no basic income.

They shared very similar problems regarding access to information. Right from the onset it became clear that the lack of access to newspaper, radio or TV resulted in them not always having access to information about their rights. One of the biggest problems in the informal settlement is that there is no electricity. Some of the women mentioned that even when they did have money to buy a newspaper, most of the newspaper vendors prefer to sell them elsewhere. Other complaints were that some did. Some of them did not have money to buy a television set. They are well aware of their daily basic struggles they are constantly facing as community members and also as women from underprivileged backgrounds.

Most of them also shared the same sentiments of not acquiring information and not knowing where to seek help, when they found themselves in situations where their rights were violated. Others felt that information about human rights and women's rights was only communicated to them and they were not

involved in decision making. They felt they could contribute meaningfully, as they know what they need.

The community in Greenwell Matongo has a police station to assist the community members in combating crime in the area. The police station's services, range from writing reports of stolen items, certifying copies of documents, laying charges, reporting crimes, patrolling the area and also ensuring that the community members are safe and protected (Greenwell Matongo Police Station, 2015).

However, the women did not feel that the Police is always helpful and protective of the inhabitants of the informal settlement. One woman mentioned that she did not see the role of the police station in Greenwell Matongo within the community. The women knew of various incidents where the police station seemed not organised, like the absence of report forms, which is one of the most common forms used as people report their cases. Another known case was a battered woman who sought protection from the police in the middle of the night and was sent home.



The Greenwell Matongo Police Station (photo by L. Newaka, Jan. 2016)

Conclusions

This section gives an overview of the findings of the communication barriers that were identified within Greenwell Matongo and thereafter, recommendations that these women would like to see being implemented in the near future by the government of Namibia to enhance communication within their community. This study revealed that the majority of the women who participated in the research did not know most of their human and women's rights, while some did not know about the existence and role of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. With regard to equality of men and women, the right to Higher Education and the right to be employed, the study revealed that the vast majority of women were of the opinion that men's access to these rights prevailed. One of the many communication barriers revealed by the study was the absence of radios and/or televisions in the respondents' households. This resulted in the respondents experiencing problems in acquiring information about human rights and women's rights in particular. During the study it was noted that some participants claimed to know their human rights and women's rights, but they failed to answer some of the questions pertaining to those rights. Their own perception of the role of a woman's right to higher education also influenced and reflected in the way they understand and communicate, for example, with the police. It was revealed that sometimes

the Greenwell Matongo Police Force has a rather passive approach towards reports of abuse or other rights violations. It was revealed that some of the participants that took part in the research did not feel safe within their neighbourhood because even if they sought help from the police officer, they were often sent back without assistance.

Several factors, which hinder the Greenwell Matongo women's acquisition of rights violation information, were discovered. The inaccessibility of electricity was another factor that contributed to the women not having access to information about their rights. With the availability of electricity, these women can buy themselves affordable radios and listen to various educative programs as well as news. The third factor was language barriers as some of the women only knew how to communicate in their vernacular, which most newspapers do not accommodate. In the cases where vernacular was accommodated, the women were illiterate, hence, they were ill-informed. Women who did not know how to read and write were left out in acquiring information about their rights. The study further revealed that the participants wanted to be involved in decision making. It was also discovered that some of the adverts about the services of the Ministry of Gender equality and Child Welfare were ineffective to these women because they were broadcast in English, which most of the women did not understand. This kind of communication should be done in the various vernacular languages and by means more accessible to these women, such as mobile texting, posters, brochures, and community and school meetings. It can be concluded that communication needs to be improved by eliminating any kind of barriers to effectively educate and create awareness of Human Rights and Women's Rights to women in Greenwell Matongo.

The study reveals that the women in the informal settlement of Greenwell Matongo need to be informed and educated about women's rights. They also want to be involved in decision making by various organisations in Namibia, most importantly, the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare*. It must also be stated that the problem is manifold and complex. However, small changes, which do not entail any costs, can be a start making a huge difference in these individuals' lives.

Recommendations

In general, it is recommended that the MGECW should continue its current efforts to educate and support women living in the informal settlements. The recommendations below regarding policy as well as for practice are critical. However, some of the services should be expanded and dealt with urgently to ensure the communication and protection of human rights to women living in the informal settlements.

Recommendations for policy

1. The survey showed that face-to-face community meetings with representatives of the MGECW were among the recommendations made by participants. Such platforms could be quite helpful with regard to communicating their plight. The MGECW would be able to gather information for further decision-making and consequently improving these women's situations. It is therefore recommended that such gatherings with women in the informal settlements should be included in the strategic communication policy.
2. Another platform for awareness creation and advice with regard to human rights and women's rights mentioned by the participants were places of worship. It is therefore recommended that the ministry includes collaborations with various denominations in their policy in an effort to create platforms to address issues related to Human Rights.
3. The basic human right to have access to electricity, housing, shelter and food should be strengthened by the Namibian Government. The Namibian government has a role to play to ensure that households in the informal settlements be provided with basic infrastructure, such as sewage

and electricity as they would make informal settlement areas safer for the more vulnerable women and children.

4. A close collaboration between the *Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare* with the *Namibian Police* is recommended to ensure the protection of women in Greenwell Matongo and other informal settlements. A start could be to facilitate specially trained female officers at the police station to deal with domestic violence disputes. It would make a huge difference if the women of the informal settlements could approach a police officer without having to fear rejection and being ridiculed. By doing this, the Police would see a drastic image change for the better because the police are supposed to be the protectors and friends of the community.

Recommendations for practice

1. Toll free number: It is strongly recommended that the MGECW continues to provide telephonic consultation in all vernacular.
2. The ministry should further expand their television infomercials to other media houses, such as *One Africa* which is available to most Namibians who receive NBC television services as well.
3. The ministry should continue to bring Human Right awareness to all regions, especially remote villages and settlements. Interpreters should be made use of for the major spoken languages such as Oshiwambo, Otjiherero and Damara/Nama when such outreach programmes are conducted.
4. The Namibian Police has already made an effort to build a police station in or near informal settlements. It is therefore recommended that the officers need to be trained and sensitised to the issues of women, children and men regarding the protection of their Human Rights.

Biodata

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