



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY, POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Keynote Address

By

Mr Benson Matali,

at the Women in Biomass Industry Awards Ceremony 2020

NUST

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- Director of Proceedings,
- Distinguished guests,
- Director of Forestry, in the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
- Mr Progress Kashandula, Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Biomass Industry group,
- Distinguished German Development Cooperation (GIZ) Bush Control and Biomass Utilisation (BCBU) project management and members
- Members of Farmers Organizations and development Projects,
- Respective Women in Biomass Award Judges,
- Esteemed members of the media present,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure and honour to officiate at this important event of awarding women in the bush value chains sector and to acknowledge this initiative by the Namibia Biomass Industry Group in the German development cooperation funded project in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism on Bush Control and Biomass Utilisation in Namibia.

Participating in the Award ceremony Women of Biomass industry, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty eradication and Social Welfare seeks to demonstrate our commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is indeed a joyous occasion where we are witnessing the fruits of hard work, acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of women in the biomass industry.

Director of proceedings,

Namibia's energy needs in rural areas are largely met by traditional biomass fuel, which accounts for over 60% of rural energy needs.

Like in other countries, women in Namibia are responsible for climatically sensitive tasks such as securing food, water and energy, which ensure food security and household well-being (Aguilar, 2007). According to the Labour Force Survey of 2018, women employed in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector make around only up to 21.2%. This is the industry in

which biomass falls. As such, there is need to continue encouraging more women to venture into this industry and build their capacity for them to grow by adding value to their products for them to increase their returns and also access the global market. The Biomass industry is one of the industries that is dominated by men, and as such, it gives me pleasure that women in Namibia have finally entered into the industry and are doing well. Such women indeed deserve to be supported both financially and technically. Their capacity should be strengthened in order for their business to grow and become multi-national companies.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Gender equality is a multidimensional term assuming economic, cultural and social dimensions. In the context of Bush Control and Biomass Utilisation, Gender equality means that women and men have equal opportunities and enjoy the same status in the industry and that they can realise their full human rights, their potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, as well as to environmental sustainability and that they both can benefit from the results. Gender equality, therefore, is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men, and the roles they play.

It also means that women have the capacity to contribute to and benefit from social and economic activities on terms, which recognise the value of their contribution, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of returns. A Namibian woman is economically empowered when her economic status is transformed sustainably. The biomass industry is one of the enablers to achieve women's economic empowerment in Namibia. And Government is cognisant of the role women play towards social and economic development of our country however, more still needs to be done in order to ensure that both women and men are at the same level of economic empowerment.

Director of ceremonies;

Gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be achieved if men are not involved. As such, it is important that men are sensitized on the importance of women's involvement in the biomass industry. Moreso, Gender equality does not benefit women only but also benefit men. Which is why the participation of women and men in the biomass industry is critical for the improvement of their economic, social and political status.

Ladies and Gentlemen

While women's economic empowerment has been shown to boost economic growth and resilience, on the inverse, the loss to human capital wealth caused by gender gaps can cost the economy up to 14 per-cent of GDP. Which is why their involvement, and contribution to the growth of industries such as biomass is important. As such, the role Women play in natural resource and environmental management should not be ignored. Hence the importance of this event.

Director of ceremonies,

Globally, there is an increasing understanding that gender equality is an essential element for promoting social and economic development. Lack of gender equality between women and men implies that human resources are not being harnessed to their greatest potential for the development of the economy and society at large. Thus, gender equality in economic terms means utilizing both men and women in the whole process of development through employment, decision making, education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship such as the biomass industry.

Director of ceremonies,

Gender equality serves a number of aims. First, it contributes to optimal utilisation of the country's human resources by promoting women's participation and contribution to social and economic development alongside men. It promotes better utilisation of the country's financial resources by matching budgets to plans, priority programmes and projects while ensuring that the needs of women and men, girls and boys are given due attention. It further contributes to the attainment of suitable development goals especially Goal 1 on Poverty, Goal 2 on Zero Hunger, Goal 5 on Gender equality and goal 13 on climate Action.

In addition, Gender equality contributes significantly to economic growth through increasing the stock of human capital, physical capital, market competitiveness, environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity. It also enhances human capital more women and men in our communities can undertake and encourage higher-value economic activities such as biomass.

Director of ceremonies,

Gender equality and Women's empowerment improves women's and men's efficacy, agency and decision-making power capacitating them to engage more gainfully and sustainably in economic activities that would contribute to the social and economic development of the country. When women and men are empowered politically, socially and health-wise, and are free from Gender-Based Violence, they will be able to participate more fully and gain benefits from the natural resources and the economy.

For us a country to achieve full economic growth, there is need to empower both women and men and eliminate inequalities, through policy and programme actions that recognize the barriers to women's full participation and impediments that limit them from gaining economic benefits from their labour. In order to achieve sustainable women's economic empowerment, there is a need to empower women in all areas of their life.

Moreso, gender equality and women's economic empowerment as critical to fulfilling one of SADC's main objectives as stated in Article 5 of the SADC Treaty (1992), ***to 'achieve sustainable development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard of living and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration'***.

If women and men are both given equal opportunities in the bio-energy industry such as charcoal, wood fuel briquettes/ blocks, and wood gas, this would create jobs and address the challenges of unemployment, it would also address the feminization of poverty in Namibia.

Gender equality leads to enhanced capacity of low-income women and men entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, increase their income and create sustainable decent jobs for themselves and their communities.

Director of ceremonies

Ministry in collaboration with the UN Women and De-Beers Group partnered in a Programme called Acceleration of Women-Owned Micro-Enterprises (AWOME). The programme focuses on providing women entrepreneurs such as those in the Biomass industry with knowledge and skills in the areas of marketing, record keeping, stock management, costing and business planning. This is a tailor-made programme, which focuses on supporting 500 women-owned micro-enterprises from two regions of Khomas and Erongo. It is aimed at:

- enhancing the capacity of low-income women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, increase their income and create sustainable decent jobs for themselves and their communities;
- developing the capacity of government and local organizations to support and implement gender-sensitive micro- entrepreneurship support programmes.
- supporting the adoption of a gender-sensitive capacity building model that is responsive to the circumstances of micro-entrepreneurs.

Director of proceedings

The Ministry reorganizes other role players such as line ministries, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, institutions of higher learning, media, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Faith-Based Organisations and development partners such as the German Cooperation for taking up gender mainstreaming seriously and incorporating gender in their policies, strategies, plans and budgets.

The Ministry continues to applaud stakeholders such the Namibia Biomass Industry Group for pursuing gender-mainstreaming programmes and activities which takes into account women's and men's concerns and their experiences as an integral dimension of the design, implementation and evaluation of such programmes. The ministry further recognizes the role that Namibia Biomass Industry Group play in strengthening the capacity of women to contribute and benefit from the economic activities in the countries.

In relation to the Biomass, the MGEPEWS supported two female owned project. One of them is the Mekondjo Charcoal Fridge Income Generating Activity. This project converts old electrical refrigerators into charcoal ones. The project is located in Okakarara constituency, in Otjozondupa region. Another one is an IGA in Epukiro Constituency in Omaheke region.

Director of ceremonies, allow me to say that

- Being a recipient at these awards demonstrates that all women have the potential to be great achievers in all aspects of life.
- There is a need for the winners to continue diversifying their products and increase the value of the products

- Today is your day, as we celebrate your achievements
- Congratulations on your achievement as women of substance who have shown substantive leadership and innovation in a patriarchal society
- Congratulations on venturing in industries such as biomass, which is one of the industries that might be dominated by men
- You have set an example that women can be successful entrepreneurs
- Congratulations on making a mark in terms of the contribution you have made toward the social and economic development of our country
- Please share best practices with other women to accelerate the biomass industry and add value to the production
- Keep up the good work
- Wish you success in all your future endeavours as you continue to grow your business

I thank you!!!