



Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, NAMIBIA

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The Gender & Inclusivity Project, a component of the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI), is led by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa in partnership with Gender at Work (G@W), Jive Media Africa and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). G@W's unique methodology, Gender Action Learning (GAL), together with the Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA) process designed by the HSRC, supports a unique participatory process that responds to councils' needs, builds partnerships and encourages ownership of the change process.

Promoting science to excluded communities – and inspiring future scientists

Initiatives such as 'science centres' and the sharing of scientific 'success stories' can build awareness and a culture of inclusivity – from school level – within the STI landscape among socially-excluded communities.



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Recognising the problem of gender and inclusivity in the Namibian scientific landscape, the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) Gender & Inclusivity Project change team devised a plan to expand its awareness programmes around research, science, technology and innovation by identifying and engaging communities and marginalised groups who were excluded from previous activities.

Stories to inspire

A key component of the plan involved the selection and profiling of successful Namibian scientists representing marginalised groups such as women, youth and people living in remote areas. The idea was to use their stories in science centres and in outreach programmes to inspire and inform the next generation of scientists.

The plan initially anticipated physically reaching out to all community members interested in science who are not able to take advantage of information and science facilities owing to their geographical location or because of cultural

norms. The NCRST change team envisaged a series of presentations, competitions and real-life activities to show aspiring young researchers just how fun science is and the fact that everyone can do it.

Challenges and successes

Due to limited resources and capacity, the team was forced to amend the scope of the original plan, but nonetheless started the process of capturing success stories. The team interviewed a woman scientist who developed a method of preserving agricultural produce that does not rely on a refrigerator and a shy young boy from a remote village who won a science promotion programme competition – the first Namibian mathematical Olympiad – and is now tutoring his peers in maths.

In the process we learned more about the support needed for people from marginalised groups to thrive as scientists and were struck by their commitment to giving back to their communities.

