

“Go for it! – Access to Basic Education in Namibia”

from the series: Education and Globalisation

Author: Nicola Reyk

MUSIC.....

VOX POPS:

(Claudia)

“My name is Claudia, I am 17 years old. I want to go to school, I want to be a lawyer – laughs - I want to become a lawyer one day.”

“They should become doctors, they should become nurses, they should become lecturers. They have to run their own affairs in the near future, they are our future leaders, they must be in that position to do that.”

(father)

“I want my children to be learned, that’s all. I take care of them and I will maybe die soon, nobody knows. And I want them to continue with school until they finish the school; it means that they will have jobs in the future.”

MUSIC....up

TEXT: “Go for it!” – “Access to Basic Education in Namibia”

“A Co-production of German Radio DEUTSCHE WELLE and NBC Radio”

MUSIC....

ATMO: (teacher:)”This is my dog – (pupils repeat:) this is my dog...He eats a bone – he eats a bone...and drinks water – and drinks water...He plays with a ball – he plays with a ball”

TEXT:

Grade two students in Mangeti Primary school are learning English. This is a school in a very remote Area of Namibia’s north-east. The land is dry and sandy, dotted with thorny bushes and occasional trees. A gravel road connects Mangeti Dune to the next town, which is a three hour drive away. Most of the people living around Mangeti belong to the SAN community, one of the oldest tribes in Southern Africa. The SAN people traditionally are hunters and

gatherers. They live in small villages deep in the bush. When their kids come to Mangeti Primary school, they come to a world that is totally different from the one they know, a world that speaks an unknown language. Many of them don't know a word of English, explains the young teacher Valchery:

CLIP:

(teacher: They just repeat. We are struggling with them, because they cannot even read. They cannot read, they cannot write. But in the morning when I come in and greet them in english, they say: good morning, Miss and they sit down again, that is all.)

MUSIC: Teacher, teacher, teacher...give us education...

Fades under text

TEXT:

For the government of Namibia, the education of all Namibians is a high priority. 20% of the annual budget is set aside for Education. The Namibian Constitution, formed in the Year of independence 1990 states that:

SPEAKER: "All persons shall have the right to education"

and:

SPEAKER: "Primary education shall be compulsory and the state shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia."

In it's efforts to bring education to their people, the Namibian Government is not alone. Many organisations and donors from all over the world help to build up the educational system. But still the goal is not easy to achieve. To provide education for all, you have to have the right infrastructure: you need enough schools and classrooms. Those are being built or renovated all over the country. The Federal Republic of Germany is a big partner here, in the year 2003 alone, more than 20 Million EURO of German Development Aid were used for school-building projects. Another 20 Million EURO have already been assigned. The international AID is being put to good use by the government, says Alfred Ilukena, Director of the NIED, the Namibian Institute for Education and Development:

CLIP:

"We have done a lot, though a lot still needs to be done, but I think we have invested heavily in the development of infrastucture such as schools, provision of furniture; but over and above it is also the provision of materials, so you need to develop those materials, weather supplementary or whatever, you need to develpo those materials."

TEXT:

At the NIED, language experts are also developing dictionaries for all the official languages in Namibia. The aim is, to teach children in the first 3 primary school years in their mother tongue. It will make it easier for them to get a good start in education, but for some of the minority languages, up to now, textbooks simply didn't exist.

It is another German project to create new school-books with simple stories that are then printed in English as well as in 6 minority languages. George Mades from the GTZ, German Society for technical co-operation explains:

CLIP:

“Research and experience in the last 30 years have shown that the alphabetisation of kids at schools works mainly in mother tongue. It is very complicated if you imagine that you send a kid to school who speaks only a certain language, let's say: Otchi-Herero, and then this kid would be taught in English or in Africaans. You can imagine, they are not understanding anything.”

TEXT:

The stories in these books are designed to be exciting and fun for the children, so that learning how to read becomes an adventure, rather than just a school duty:

ATMO: Lion roaring....fades under TEXT

SPEAKER: “The Big lion that long ago killed a horse in our village. Long ago when we had just come to live in our village, I saw something that was really not good. It was early in the morning when we had put the horses out to graze. But a lion put a spell on us so that we forgot about the horses and instead thought they would come home by themselves to drink. The lion which had come to kill the horses came from Klein Dobe. It knew that it had put a spell on the horses, so it had nothing to fear. All it had to do was to chase a horse. It separated that horse from the others by magic so that it was alone when it went to where it would die.”

ATMO: stands and fades

TEXT:

But even the most interesting textbooks won't help, if the children don't have access to them. And that has been one big problem: to make education possible for each and every child in Namibia. For many of them, it is very difficult to go to school, the Director of NIED, Alfred Ilukena tells us:

CLIP:

“We are also responsible for equal access to education by all and that has been a challenge, because there are certain groups that are even further disadvantaged than the rest of the communities that we deal with. And these would be communities like the SAN people, you know, communities like the Ovahimba, communities like the farm labourers, communities that are based on gender like the girls, communities that we look at like those who live in squatter areas, communities like the street kids.”

TEXT:

Each group must be addressed in a different manner. For the nomadic people of the Ovahimba tribe, mobile tent-schools were created, so that the schools would move with the learners' families as they follow their cattle throughout the seasons. Anywhere else in the country however, the schools are not mobile, and often the learners have to come a long way to reach the classrooms. That is especially true for the children of farm labourers. The parents of those kids are mostly very poor and without means of transportation. Frik von Solm works with the Institute For Educational Development IECD in Windhoek. He visits farm-schools throughout Namibia on a regular basis and helps to advise and train teachers as well as farmers and the learners' parents. Frik knows the situation of those people, because he is a farmer himself. He owns a farm 160 km east of Windhoek and has taken responsibility for the education of all the 11 children of his labourers. He pays their school fees and takes them personally to school after home weekends and holidays. Frik remembers his own childhood when he had to walk for hours to reach his school and he says nothing much has changed for farm-children since then:

CLIP:

„Many of the areas you have the small ones in grade one, grade two, they have to walk 10-20 km each morning, so the schools are starting already an hour late to allow the kids to be in time. I mean, the situation is: there is no toilet facilities, there is no food, even no water at the schools, so each child has to carry a little water bottle running to the schools. And the small ones it is a long distance, they will be home even at dark,“

TEXT:

In most cases, the parents at home are illiterate and can't even help the children with homework. Because they are poor, they can't afford to pay the school fees or uniforms, and the cost of the school hostels is too much for them. So, just like in colonial times, it often depends on the good-will of the farmers whether the children of their labourers go to school or not. Also, most farm-schools only provide education up to grade 6, or even grade 4. After that, the learners have to go to the next town for further schooling. For many of them, that is not possible and their education stops here, says Lloyd Ulrich of the IECD:

CLIP:

Mit den Farmkindern ist es so, dass die Farmkinder - aufgrund ihres Zuhauses - den Sprung von der Farmschule zu einer städtischen Schule kaum schaffen. Und weil Eltern auch zur unteren Einkommensgruppe gehören auch gar nicht die finanziellen Mittel haben, brechen die Farmkinder die Schulbildung in den meisten Fällen ab. Diesen Sprung aus einer geschützten Welt in eine Welt, wo sie sich in der Minderheit befinden, das schaffen sie nicht. Genau wie die SAN.

(Voice over: Because of their background, the farm children hardly ever make it from the farmschools to the regular schools in town. Their parents don't have the money to send them, so most farm children drop out, just like the SAN.)

ATMO: MUSIC SAN-song in Mangeti school

TEXT:

In the schools-yard of Mangeti Primary School, SAN-girls are performing a traditional dance. Their small bodies are shaking all over with the fast rhythm. You can see in their faces that they enjoy the singing and dancing. Mangeti Primary is a so-called cluster centre school. Around the cluster centre, near remote villages are 5 small schools, some no bigger than just one classroom with one teacher responsible for the learners there. All those schools are also part of Mangeti Primary. The centre school is well equipped, with proper buildings, one big new hostel and an older one, so that the girls and boys can live in separate quarters, there are 7 teachers here and a very committed principal, Rudolph Ugelwi:

CLIP:

“We as teachers we cannot just teach them the various subjects, no! Our task is also to teach them how to behave when they are outside, how to behave in various places. In the dining hall, at the hostel, when they are in the classroom or in the community and so on. That is our task. Sometimes when they are here, they really don't know how to behave, so sometimes we have to start from the scratch.”

TEXT:

Just as the farm-children, the SAN learners are disadvantaged in many ways, they are generally from very poor families and they live in the remotest areas of Namibia, often where there is no kind of infrastructure, no electricity, no water pipes. The SAN are the aborigenees of Southern Africa. Traditionally they live in harmony with nature. They shy away from conflict and form a close-knit community where family means everything. But throughout their history, the SAN tribes have been marginalized and abused by the other communities around them.

CLIP:

“ Basically, people have no time for bushmen, they are the most marginalized of the community and like most communities all over the world - we all do it in different countries, we have one group in our country that we look down on, we have no respect for and we illtreat and abuse verbally. And for Namibia, it is the SAN.”

TEXT

...says Yvonne Pickering from WIMSA, an organisation that is helping the San people all over Southern Africa. WIMSA is short for Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa. It's main aim in Namibia is to educate young SAN boys and girls, so that

they can become leaders and role models for their community. These students need special attention and help, because on top of all the other problems that SAN learners have to overcome, they also face ridicule and prejudice when they interact with other Namibians. Many people still call them bushmen and they mean it in a very negative way:

CLIP:

“The name bushman equates to poor, poorest of the poor, the most worthless, subhuman, not quite very nice, thank you very much And you really don’t get bothered with bushmen, why on earth should you get bothered about what happens to them.”

TEXT:

People from WIMSA are bothered about the fate of the SAN people. Yvonne and her mobilizers go to the schools and look for talented SAN students whom they will coach and support throughout their education, trying to make sure that those San kids make it to highschool or even college. They find the money to pay for their expenses and they give them counseling when the learners feel they can’t go on. There are a lot of SAN students with talent and ambition just waiting for a chance like that. We found them in all the schools we visited, like these students in Mangeti Primary school, they all had dreams about an educated future:

CLIP:

“ The reason why I like education is, because I heard from other people that it is good and you can become something in your life. So I want to become a teacher and teach my own people and also people from other tribes”

“My name is Dalan, I am 15 years old, I want to be a policeman and support my families and my parents.”

– My name is Eliza Simon, I am 17 years old, I want to learn something about school, I want to be a nurse.

MUSIK: Education is good....

TEXT:

But out of every 10 SAN girls in grade7 or 8, at the moment, only 1 or 2 make it to grade 10. One of the reasons for the high drop-out rate especially amongst the San girls is their coming of age. As soon as they reach puberty, they are confronted with a whole new set of problems. Starting with very practical issues like not being able to afford to buy soap or toiletries, as Yvonne from WIMSA knows:

CLIP:

“You go through puberty, ok, you are menstruating, you don’t have the money for towels etc. , you are in school – so you disappear for 2-3 days, // they don’t have the

money for toiletries. Can you imagine what is happening in a group of girls and what is being said? I mean, girls are girls the whole world over.

TEXT:

Still, they can make it – if they have somebody who supports them and motivates them to go to school, in spite of all difficulties. The families play a very important role here. And more and more parents realise the importance of education for their childrens' future. But not everybody cares about their future. As soon as the San girls reach puberty, they become objects of sexual desire in the eyes of many men. One easy way to seduce the girls is by giving them alcohol to drink. Principal Linta Chipango at Tsumkwe Secondary School sees it happening every day. Especially over weekends, the promoters of different beer brewers come to Tsumkwe and set up a disco – and obviously they couldn't care less, if their customers are minor girls who should be concentrating on their schooling.

CLIP

“As long as they are around their musik is playing and sounding very far – so that is quite disturbing. In an area like this one, we trying to uplift our fellow-citizens, they should be like any other citizen, but if you come with an activity which is to pull back, to me that is something which is not very, very good! If you see small children in the wrong place, point your finger and make sure that it is stopped!”

TEXT:

As we talk to the principal in her office at Tsumkwe Secondary School, a father comes in to discuss his daughter, who is staying away from the hostel at nights to go and have fun around the drinking places. He is desperate and doesn't know what to do. Those people, he says, are misleading our kids:

CLIP

“It is this disco, they have a lot of noises which children like. And when they start to play (music) the children say: lets go there and sometimes they go the whole night. I thought that my children have to be learned, but when I see this problem comming now, it makes me really angry.”

TEXT:

Some families are so afraid that their girls might get involved with men from outside that they decide to marry them off to SAN boys at the age of 13 or 14 years. Those girls drop out of school then – just as the girls who start dating on their own and become pregnant. In Tsumkwe Secondary School, Linta Chipango talks to her girl-students about the dangers of SEX – and that includes the danger of being infected with HIV/AIDS. Before the learners leave the school for a long home weekend, she reminds them to come back to school next week:

ATMO: assembly – principal’s speech

“you must be in the school by Monday, all of you! And you people with your hair – I am advising you already: you won’t have a competition of your heads and dressing, you are competing on books!”

MUSIC:

TEXT:

After seeing the Junior Secondary School in Tsumkwe, we want to know, what the people in the small villages around Tsumkwe think of education. To reach those villages you have to turn away from the main gravel road into the bush and follow narrow, winding sand paths. On our way, we see elephant droppings and some huge trees that the elephants have pushed down. Then we come to a small village. 15 huts with grass roofs are built around an open space where a few horses are tied to the trees.

The people come out of their homes to greet us with friendly smiles.

Around 20 kids are running and playing. We want to know why those children are not in school:

CLIP:

“The problem is that we don’t have acomodation there in Tsumkwe, and people are drinking and it is not save for our kids to be there, it would be better if they were staying with the parents there.

„lots of elefants, for the kids to move up and down is also dangerous for them, that is why they are sitting around with us here.

..really we don’t know, what can we do. Maybe we are thinking now of teaching them of gathering and hunting, because that will be the only option they will have.

TEXT:

Those SAN people living in the small villages in remote areas of Namibia don’t trust the schools to take good care of their children. They know of teachers who disappear for days to the next town and leave the learners completely on their own. They know of the dangers of alcohol and sex that are waiting for their sons and daughters in the settlements, and even if they want to send their kids to school, they don’t have any means of transportation and don’t dare send the small ones walking through the bush.

DISCO-MUSIC “Roots and Culture...

(fades under text...)

We visit Katutura, the north-western part of Namibias capital Windhoek. This is the city jungle and it can be just as dangerous for children as the bushland.

In Katutura, in there is a big squatter area, filled with small shacks made from metal sheets or even paper machee boards. Broken bottles, scraps of paper and plastic are everywhere. When

it rains it becomes a nightmare for the people living here, as the rain water gets in to the shacks and the mud floors are dissolving. This is how urban poverty looks.

The area is a home of more than 150 000 people and about 700 more flock in to the city every month to look for a better life, a job opportunity, a way to survive. Very few succeed and because of the high rate of unemployment, drugs and alcohol abuse, prostitution and crime are at an alarming rate and even among the young. At the end of the day many end up in prison to pay for what they have done.

TEXT

The many kids roaming the dusty streets of Katutura see crime happening every day. Without proper care, they are in danger of becoming the criminals of tomorrow. Some of the kids mothers are domestic servants who work from sunrise to sunset in the capital. Others are just frustrated and sell their bodies for sex. Many die of the HIV-AIDS virus and leave their kids behind with no-one to care for them. There are schools right in front of those kids, but for them they are totally UN-accessible just like in the remote regions of the country, because there is no one to take them to school. Some don't have the proper documents which are required for enrolling. And they don't have the money for school fees and uniforms. This situation has touched some of the people's hearts who used the little they had to set up pre-primary-schools with corrugated iron sheets to help the kids.

ATMO: music there in the jungle

CLIP:

“my idea was: there was this location with a lot of students walking in the streets. So I had an idea to talk with the community plus the parents and I started to build a kindergarten with a small class, without windows .

TEXT :

Says Veronica Shindoma. Some years back, she decided to build a small kindergarten. With the help of diplomatic spouses in Windhoek she could renovate and expand it to a bigger building with windows and some learning materials. There is even a small playground for the kids. But already the place is becoming too small again, because there are so many more kids knocking at her door. She tries to accommodate them all because she knows about the danger of being in the street. Some of the kids at the pre schools are actually old enough to be regular learners in primary, but they still stay at the kindergarten.

CLIP:

(Girl:) ABCDEFG.... My name is Samba I am 10 years old. (social worker:) this is one of the children who didn't have a chance to come yet to school...very likely the problem that the school fond couldn't be paid. But now, this year we got a donor for her and hopefully she can go to school."

TEXT:

This girl Samba is lucky to have found Jutta Rohwer, a german resident of Windhoek, who is collecting funds and running social projects in Katutura. She tries to help as many children as possible to survive and get a proper education.

MUSIC....

The aim in Namibia, however, must be to get each and every child to school. Education is a right, not a privilege: it should be available to all Namibian children, whether they are poor or rich, whether they live in the rural areas or in the cities.

The Access to education is primarily the government's responsibility, but the challenge is for all concerned parties: for the students to realise the importance of their schooling, for the parents to find ways to send their kids to school, for the teachers to motivate and support their learners and for all organisations which are willing to help, to contribute to the country's educational system. And it is happening: More and more people see that the key to a meaningful life and the key to the development of the country lies in the education of all.

CLIP:

" This is what I am preaching very oftenly in the classes for them. That they should keep it up, they should endure, they should go ahead, they must never give up, they must never stop – and one day they will have very important roles to play in their communities."

CLIP: Lukas

"My dream from the beginning was: I wanted to become a teacher. Now I have the opportunity. So I think, my dream is going to become true now."

CLIP: Faustina

"What we are trying to say, here: we in the ministry, officials, ok: we are running the show, but we realize that we need other people. And we are calling upon all the people who have an interest in the educational process to join hands with us."

MUSIC.....

You were listening to:

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A co-production of:

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Producers:

Nicola Reyk and Marina Matundu

Voices:

Nicola Reyk, Marina Matundu and Fanie Lategan

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