



CHILD WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

What is the Child Welfare Advisory Council and what would it do?

A Child Welfare Advisory Council would be a government-appointed body with the task of promoting the rights and interests of children in society. It would be somewhat similar to Namibia's Labour Advisory Council which advises on issues relating to the Labour Act.

The draft Child Care and Protection Act gives the following key functions to the Child Welfare Advisory Council:

- ④ to advise the Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare on child welfare services
- ④ to advise any government body involved in implementing the Child Care and Protection Act
- ④ to recommend new laws or amendments to existing laws on child welfare
- ④ to design programmes for the protection or care of children
- ④ to monitor the implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act and related laws
- ④ to encourage the involvement of non-governmental organisations and members of the community at large in matters relating to child welfare.

Every government ministry that performs work related to child welfare would submit a report on its implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act to the Council each year. In turn, the Council would submit an annual report to the Minister of Gender and Child Welfare. This report would also be tabled in Parliament. Through this reporting system, the Child Welfare Advisory Council would monitor the national implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act and related laws.

Who would be on the Child Welfare Advisory Council?

The draft Child Care and Protection Act says that the Council would be composed of 15 members appointed by the Minister of Gender and Child Welfare:

- ④ 8 government stakeholders
- ④ 4 private sector stakeholders
- ④ 3 community stakeholders.

The chairperson is chosen by members of the committee. At least eight members of the Council must be women. The basic terms of office are three years, with the option of re-appointment.

The public stakeholders would be chosen from a list of nominations submitted by interested parties to the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare. This means that representatives from churches or traditional authorities may be chosen to sit on the council, but this is not guaranteed. Some countries make sure that certain interest groups are represented, by requiring that some Council members are drawn from churches, traditional authorities, social services and sometimes international agencies such as UNICEF.

What do other countries do?

Kenya, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone are examples of African countries with councils on children's services. Zimbabwe's council has a budget and can fund activities and programmes relating to child welfare. Kenya's council is involved in planning, financing and co-ordinating child rights and welfare activities and can make regulations. The council in Sierra Leone has supporting structures in each village and chiefdom. Should Namibia's council draw on any of these examples?

Please turn the page to find out how to contribute your opinions to the public debate on this issue.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED CHILD WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Does Namibia need a Child Welfare Advisory Council?

- ④ Are there any existing bodies which could carry out the proposed functions and duties of this Council? Or is it best to have a new body focusing only on children's rights?
- ④ If Namibia establishes a Children's Ombudsman, will there be duplication between the roles of this official and the Child Welfare Advisory Council?

Should the Child Welfare Advisory Council have more specific functions? Should it have stronger powers?

- ④ Should the Act specify the representation of particular stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, churches, social workers, NGOs or international agencies such as UNICEF?
- ④ Should there be specific structures at the regional or local level to help implement and support the work of the Council, or are there existing structures which can play this role in Namibia?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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