

# HIPO evaluation 2012

## Commentary by Namas administration:

### **Introduction:**

The Namas administration would like to extend gratitude towards Bjørn Gildestad and NCG for the hard work they have laid down compiling the HIPO evaluation. NAMAS will make use of this report together with other sources/information when deciding on the way forward of the HIPO project to improve quality of life for the Himba, Zemba, Tjimba and Twa people in Namibia!

The main purpose of this paper is to comment on the issues described in chapter 8 "The way forward". The below points are the main focuses of this commentary:

- 1. Administration**
- 2. Organization structure and member follow up**
- 3. Plans and focus areas**
- 4. Cooperation**

### **Administration:**

***"The short-term and interim approach is to make use of the Adviser, since he for a period will be stationed in Opuwo. This could mean, however, that the Angola engagement should be put on hold until HIPO Namibia has gained momentum. The more permanent solution must be to strengthen the administration with a person that could play a pivotal role such as a Deputy Director. The opening up of this prospect could be a way of enticing qualified applicants for the position. The recruitment process should be launched immediately."***

### **Comment:**

NAMAS is somewhat surprised by the recommendation to strengthen the HIPO administration with one extra personnel. The report points out at one stage that the current administration is not utilizing its existing capacity. NAMAS is concerned that there is a greater need to look at existing HIPO administration routines, future organizational focus and the utilization of the current resources within the organization, rather than just add more personnel. We would like to get a deeper understanding of how the current HIPO routines are and what can be improved within the existing system. What exists of resources and competence within the current HIPO administration and how can these be utilized to its fullest? Namas feels that there are several aspects that should have been further pursued before recommending increasing the size of the administration.

## 2. Organizational structure and member follow-up

Namas would like to comment on the following are three paragraphs:

***"Actually a most serious challenge for HIPO is to preserve its legitimacy as a member's based organization. In spite of its achievements over the years, the present lack of engagement with and support from its members is alarming (chapters 3.2 and 3.3). The organization has not yet secured a firm foothold and is still in need of support."***

***"The presentation of accumulated membership figures gives an incorrect impression of large support. The HIPO Constitution does not mention the payment of fees among the conditions for membership, so it must be sorted out what qualifications should apply."***

***"With the actual large number of HIPO villages there is a danger of overstressing the organization's capacity. In addition to the staff visits, HIPO may have to make provision for alternative approaches, notably phone calls and by using the radio. It could be useful for HIPO to keep a log of all contacts with its members."***

### **Comment:**

These paragraphs describe two challenges: 1) The conditions of membership registrations and; 2) the follow up of the members.

Namas agrees with the descriptions in your evaluation in regards to the imminent need to have clear conditions for membership and control of membership numbers, as well as how the members are followed up and kept informed. The recommendation to use the radio and phone calls where possible is excellent. However, we believe there is a need to look at the overall "unit system" HIPO has. Managing 85 units seems too far a challenge at the moment, hence decreasing the number of units to approximately 30 would help considerably. Each unit could have their own local board, leaving the HIPO office as the overall coordinating body.

## 3. Plans and focus areas

***"The Annual Plans and Reports present outlooks for HIPO's future engagement (with lobbying, advocacy etc. see chapter 3.5) but the ownership of such ideas seems unclear. The present administration, stakeholders and members need to be taken on board. HIPO should therefore present an overall Strategy and Program including the priority fields of engagement for the next 5 years' period and the approach to carry out the program."***

***"The experience from recent years demonstrates the need for consolidation of efforts to fewer areas and initiatives. Prioritization is important to avoid the actual lack of achievement (50%), which reveals deficiencies both in***

***planning and implementation. But the Strategy must issue from an effort where the HIPO Board and members (CBC) are genuinely involved. It could be that HIPO has a future role in lobbying and advocacy (as Annual Plan 2012 suggests), but the members must be involved in the choice of strategy."***

**Comment:**

As recommended, HIPO should explore and contemplate their future existence. Questions like; "Is HIPO needed and in what way?" is necessary to ask. Lobbying and advocacy are "trendy" words well used in the development industry these days. However, to implement such tactics as part of a strategy depends solely on the internal qualifications for doing so.

NAMAS agrees fully that HIPO should make an overall Strategy plan for the next five years. A huge "clean up" is needed in the planning system and it is of utmost importance that HIPO choose wisely which areas to focus on in the next years to come. This planning process should start as soon as possible.

## **5. Cooperation**

***"A comprehensive cooperation with other organizations (in particular WIMSA and ILO) could enhance the capacity of HIPO and in particular improve its presence on the central and international arena."***

***"The pronounced policy should be to diversify and attract several donors, since the present funding suffices to cover only the basic parts of the administration costs, while there is need for expanding the activity. HIPO should cooperate with other NGOs on the development of strategies for soliciting funds from the donor community and other relevant national and international mechanisms."***

**Comment:**

NAMAS fully agrees that HIPO can benefit immensely if they go into partnerships with larger NGO's in Namibia and thus learn the "tricks of the trade" from them.

The point made that HIPO needs to diversify and attract other donors is crucial. NAMAS feels this should have been emphasized much more as HIPO's future depends on securing other external funding. HIPO needs a variety of donors in the future to ensure a healthy development of the organization and good and viable programs. NAMAS is very concerned that more than 50% of the NAMAS funding is utilized within the administration, as, to date, HIPO has not secured funding from other donors. The dependency on NAMAS threatens HIPO's future existence. We believe that a reduction of the full time administration would be the more viable in the short run in order to consolidate a new organizational set up. HIPO should employ according to activities rather than have a huge fixed cost per month.

## **General comments:**

***"HIPO's strength lies in the fact that it is a member organization through which local opinions are expressed. On this basis HIPO has made significant progress in the direction of becoming a credible spokesperson for its peoples. The organization fully deserves support and encouragement of its work in the coming years."***

Comment:

1. NAMAS agrees that HIPO's strength lies in that they are a member organization. However, you further argue that HIPO has made significant progress. We feel that this argument needs further explanations, hence we ask you to explain further what you mean with: "HIPO has made significant progress".

2. Further you question the withdrawal of the Advisor and HIPOs activity in nearby Angola. The Advisor has been in Opuwo full-time for four years from 2008 till 2012 and still does regular follow-ups. NAMAS will in any case look into how to support HIPO as best as possible, however without a permanent position as before.

3. HIPO's work in Angola might be a distraction to the organisation's own work in Namibia and hence affect the present situation negatively. Nonetheless, the cooperation between HIPO Namibia and HIPO Angola across the river and countries may achieve better effects on their collaborative work for improving the livelihood of their people in both countries.

## **Summary:**

The evaluation is raising many valuable questions and recommendations in regards to the viability of HIPO and NAMAS' role in HIPO's existence.

Hence, NAMAS needs to enter into serious discussions with HIPO and get their view on how they want to develop the organization for the benefit of the local community. The report is raising many recommendations for the way forward, which over time can be addressed. There are no easy and fast fix to HIPO's current challenges. In order to find the system within HIPO should develop, HIPO must enter into dialogue with the various non-governmental stakeholders in Namibia and not only with the local population, its members and local government. HIPO has to review their role and decide on which areas the organization can assist their people.

NAMAS also has to look into which role they should play in the further development of HIPO.