



for the best websites

Coalition presses for study on BIG - by Irene !Hoaës

14 May 2010

WINDHOEK – The Basic Income Grant (BIG) Coalition wants the President to call a consultative forum to seriously look into the BIG proposal.

The call is that institutions such as the National Planning Commission, Bank of Namibia, the Ministry of Finance, the former Namibia Tax Commission (NAMTAX) and the BIG Coalition get to do a three-month in-depth study of the pilot project at Otjivero and advise Government.

“Whatever comes out of that study, we will accept,” Bishop Zephania Kameeta said on Wednesday.

Since the proposal was suggested, Government has never officially given its view or given real attention to the proposal.

Kameeta is adamant that with the BIG project, Namibia is able and can achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

He said Namibia’s priority to buy luxury cars costing millions of dollars for its high officials is an insult to the poor and unemployed people of the country.

“It is an insult to the young men and women who go out without food and come every morning until noon to stand at traffic lights looking for jobs. They are not lazy, they are hunting for jobs but don’t find them because there are no job opportunities,” said Kameeta, one of the leading figures in the BIG Coalition.

The coalition made the remarks in response to President Hifikepunye Pohamba’s statement on the BIG initiative.

The President was asked about the BIG initiative in Parliament during the State of the Nation Address recently, whereupon he responded, “money cannot be dished out for free to people who do nothing”.

According to the coalition, the statement implies that the poor and unemployed are to be blamed for the situation as if they are the cause of poverty and unemployment.

The proposal for a Basic Income Grant in Namibia was made in 2002 by the Namibian Tax Consortium (NAMTAX), a Government appointed commission.

The consortium made the proposal for a Basic Income Grant in light of the high poverty levels and the unequal distribution of income in Namibia.

The proposal is that a monthly cash grant of not less than N\$100 be paid to every Namibian citizen as a citizen’s right.

Every Namibian would receive such a grant until pension age from where onwards he/she is eligible to the existing universal state old age.

The money of people not in need or not in poverty would be recuperated through adjustments in the tax system.

“Are the resources of this country only to be used by the rich elite at the expense of the poor and the unemployed? Is asking for little seed money exploitation? Is it expected that the poor can break away from poverty without any economic empowerment?” were just some of the questions posed by the coalition.

The coalition said unemployment had drastically increased to 50 percent, while 24 percent of children under the age of five are underweight, increasing dropouts and failure rates, especially of grades 10 and 12 and a growing influx of desperate rural poor to already highly indebted villages and towns.

According to the coalition, living conditions of people at Otjivero had drastically improved as the unemployment rate has dropped from 60 percent to 40 percent, food poverty from 72 percent to 16 percent, self-employment increased by 300 percent, school dropout rates reduced from almost 40 percent to zero percent, and child malnutrition dropped from 42 percent to 10 percent.

“Development of a local economy and very importantly, the people regained their human dignity. Is that not reason enough for the speedy implementation of the BIG?” the coalition asked.

The BIG coalition has also been invited by the United Nations, whereby Kameeta is invited to make a presentation about the BIG. A number of countries have also shown interests in the BIG idea.

The coalition is also busy forming branches in all towns, in order for people to put pressure on their elected leaders to demand for the implementation of the BIG.

Kameeta said he receives daily calls from Namibians all over the country, wanting to know when the BIG will come to their towns and villages.

The Otjivero residents are currently receiving a bridging allowance, of only N\$80, since the pilot project is over and not enough funds are available to continue the project.

According to the coalition there is a huge number of influx of people from other areas to Otjivero, in the hope to also gain from the N\$100.

However, only people who were resident at the time that the project started are receiving the grant.

Spearheaded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), this proposal was taken up by the Namibian civil society and has evolved into the BIG Coalition.

The Basic Income Grant campaign is to date the biggest civil society project united in fighting poverty and work towards economic empowerment in Namibia.

In April 2005, a broad-based civil society coalition consisting of the Council of Churches, the umbrella body of non-governmental organisations, NANGOF, the umbrella body of Aids organisations, NANASO, the labour umbrella body, NUNW, the Legal Assistance Centre, National Youth Council and the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) have formed a coalition to advocate the implementation of the BIG in Namibia.

The Secretariat of the coalition is hosted by the ELCRN's desk for social development, which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the campaign.

[Back to Top](#)