

# To BIG Or Not To BIG

THESE days most people argue for the BIG initiative to be implemented in Namibia. Most Namibians know the value of N\$100, when reading the SMS pages of *The Namibian*. Sometimes I get the impression that our leaders do not know the value of N\$100. The union is supposed to protect the man on the street, is it not?

Well, if you listen to the argument of the government, you cannot just ignore it. The old saying: "It is easy to give a man a fish, but if you taught him who to fish, you do better." There is a lot of truth in this saying, but then you must make it possible for the man to fish. It does not help you to teach him to fish in the desert, or to suck the lives out of the ones who can fish successfully. 266522 people in Namibia had a job in 2004, which was about 15% of Namibia's total population. This number grows to 269491 in 2008. Thus meaning that the government and private sector were successful in creating 2696 new jobs. That is a 1.12% growth in four years. Mister President, you and your cabinet did not do your jobs. At this rate of full-time employment creation of 1.12% in four years, even 2030 will be too soon to make a difference.

Let say we are 1.9 million people in Namibia and we divide it by two. That leaves us with 950000

people. According to the Electoral Commission, depending on which one of the three voters lists you want to work on, this leaves you with Namibia's adult (voter) population. Let us divide it again by two. It leaves us with 475000 people. This figure you can say excludes the pensioners. So Namibia's worker corps is equal to 475000 people. At a rate of 1.12% per four years growth it means that it will take Namibia 309 years from 2004 to come to full employment.  $(2696/4=674 \text{ p/a})(475000-266522=208478)(208478/674=309.3146)$

I do not know another word to describe the above mentioned other than as incompetency on the part of our government. They do not want to empower the people with education; they do not want to empower the people by creating jobs, and they do not want to empower the people by giving them N \$100 per month. Or must we wait 309 years?

What if they give households that employ people to work in and outside our homes a tax break? For example if I have study policies which I pay for my kids' education, I get a tax break on this amount that I pay per annum. The same applies if you have a pension fund. Say I employ two persons to work full-time in my house and garden and I pay their Social Security. Every end of the financial year I can go

to the Social Security Commission to receive a letter that I am in good standing with them. According to this information I can get a tax deduction from government. Instantly you will create more work under better conditions for all Namibians. There are currently 25000 domestic workers in Windhoek. Say we can double that with tax deductions. Then it will mean that the household is the second biggest employer in Namibia.

What if the government gave companies tax breaks if they employ young people or start internships in their companies to help upgrade the skills of young people? Say for example you must keep the youngster for minimum of two years in your employ. What if the government increases the pensions to old people with N\$100 per month? How many people get supported by these pensions? How many grandkids stay with their grandparents because of this pension? In history we see when times are tough governments start to build more infrastructure because you can employ a lot of casual labour. Why does our government not support local companies to start building new and upgrade existing infrastructure? Or are this jobs meant for the Chinese?

**Theuns Dreyer**  
Via e-mail