

**Hon. Lucia Witbooi, MP: 2016/17 National Budget
Contribution 8 March 2016**

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

On the budget before us today, allow me to first and foremost commend the ^Mminister of Finance and that of National Planning Commission, the Consultants and their team for drafting this important piece of legislation and for being innovative in identifying some areas on which policies are to be made to curb possible threat to our economy.

The consensus among fair and right thinking Namibian^S is that the 2016/17 ^BBudget is a positive proof that many of the government's key policies were and continue^X to be successful, and are bearing fruits.

✓ The budget before us₃ is also a testimony of our government's commitment to fiscal prudence. The fiscal consolidation plan and tax reform measures announced in the budget speech ^{are} ~~were~~ game changers for the country. Indeed so, Honourable ^SSpeaker, Namibia is measurably better off today than it was 25 years ago, even much better 5 years ago, and more so₃ a year ago such that even a blind person can attest to that. Thanks to the targeted

fiscal intervention^S through the various Budgets since the birth of our beautiful Republic.

Government continues to allocate funds where it's^{it is} needed^{and} most in line with the pressing matters of the day. In this manner, the Minister should be commended for upholding the Government's inclusive growth agenda in, ^{and} via this Budget speech. At the centre of this Budget is a consolidated pro-growth dimension. The funding strategies proposed in this Budget are the right ingredients that Namibia needs to achieve the optimal recipe that will be able to help government respond to the structural challenges that affects^X the development potentials.

Speaker, Hon.
Hon. Members

Recognising the importance of budgets, ^{and as...} many governments undertook to incorporate "a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes as appropriate in order to promote equitable, effective and appropriate resource allocation; and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhance women's empowerment" as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action:

As a Parliament, ^{we are the} a country's most representative institution. ^{We are the} ~~peoples house and therefore~~ we have a prominent role to play in the budgetary process.

It is within our mandate to scrutinise and evaluate budget proposals to ensure that they adequately reflect the government's implementation of its commitment to gender mainstreaming. To this end, I call all members to critically aim at seeking a deeper appreciation of the policy measures proposed in the 2016 National Budget.

Honourable Speaker, Hon. Members,

From the above mentioned remarks, ^{it is} it's clear that ^{is} it's important to scrutinise this budget from a gender perspective. You may wish to ask, **Why is examining the budget from a gender perspective so important?**

The budget is by far the most important legislative act that any parliament adopts in the course of the year, because it involves the taxation of the people, using the taxpayers' money for the good of the people. It is extremely important, as you all know that the people's elected representatives have an opportunity to debate that and to influence that policy, so that it truly reflects the wishes of all the people.

Hon. Members,

The budget is of course about figures, but it is foremost about people and their needs and who, better than us (Members), the people's elected representatives, know what the people's needs are and can make sure that they are well reflected in the Budget.

If we are concerned, as we are, about the people's needs, we must be concerned with making sure that the budget is gender sensitive because the budget does not, in any country, affect men and women, boys and girls in the same fashion. If a gender balanced environment is not achieved, the country becomes a breeding ground for poverty *because in most countries, women are the majority*

"Poverty is like punishment for a crime you didn't commit."

Namibians cannot continue to be punished for the crime they didn't commit and that is why government's efforts to eradicate this social evil must be supported by all peace loving Namibians.

In this regards, the government should to be commended for its steadfast focus on social wellbeing of its citizen. Since government declared war on poverty, substantial amount of funds have been rightfully allocated to the social sector. This is in recognition of the fact that unless the poor masses

are lifted out of poverty, there can never be a *peaceful & inclusive* **"NAMIBIAN HOUSE"**

On the pillars of social welfare development, is **education, health care and social safety nets**. On this front, I note with great interest the N\$16.2 Billion allocated to Education. This allocation has the potential to enhance access to tertiary education by expanding funding opportunities for students, and most importantly support Innovation, Research and Development. I urge Namibians to take advantage of the government's endeavour to enable every Namibian child to have free access to quality education.

The government is to be commended on the achievements it has made on the fight against social inequality in Namibia.

As part of the fight against this evil, I commend government for increasing Old Age Pension by an additional N\$100.00 to N\$1,100.00 per month. What is even more exiting and encouraging is the fact that government have already made provisions for an additional N\$100.00 per month in the next budget. *cycle*

Government continue to set itself new target in line with the emerging trend. Hence the budget should not be static ^{but} dynamic. This budget before us is expected to move in line with some of these targets.

Amongst the noteworthy targets ^{are} include; A new target of 165,000 ^{000?} out of 300 000 orphans to be placed on grant system by 2018/2019; A new target of 500 out of 956 634 children (Census, 2011) to be placed in Foster Care by 2018/2019 based on the Child and Care Protection Act (CCPA) Act no.3 of 2015; A new target of 55 000 vulnerable children living in poverty out of 956 634 children ^{as per} (Census, 2011) by 2018/2019 is set. It's important for us to make sure that these targets are met by aligning the Budget to them.

Honourable Speaker, Hon. Members,

The way forward is clear for us, but we know that it will also be ^a bumpy ^{road}. Our budget should take into consideration of the ever changing challenges.

Firstly, the daily accidents on our roads continue to leave many families shattered with no hope of a better tomorrow. The bread winners are stolen from these families leaving huge vacuums with no one to feel the vacuum. I believe that somewhere in our budgeting process we can find space and ensure that the pain brought by these roads accidents is avoided. **Secondly**, the escalating cost of living, as measured by the inflation rate, dictates that social grants be adjusted and linked to these developments. The latest inflation figures, 5.3 % (January 2016) is the point in case. This figures simply says, every grants that Government provides has lost 5.3% of its buying power and therefore requires that it regularly be adjusted, to reflect the realities of the day. **Thirdly**, gender based violence remains a thorn in our flesh. Budgetary requirements need to be beefed and aligned, so it can better respond to this social evil.

case in point
Hon. Members

Let me conclude by stating that the budget before us is a true representation of our people's need and must therefore, be supported and endorsed as a true reflection of what our people really needs. Therefore, I encourage each one of us to focus our energies on giving solutions

rather than fault-finding, so as to guarantee through the oversight, representational and legislative mandate, we, as Parliamentarians have a role to play in making 2016 a year of economic growth and success.

I encourage all members to ensure that this particular budget and the budgets ahead, incorporate a gender equality dimension into the budgeting process and the policies that underpin it, in order to promote equality between women and men.

WITH THIS I SUPPORT THE BILL.

I thank you
