



THE RALLY FOR DEMOCRACY AND PROGRESS (RDP)



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**Contribution to the Appropriation Bill for 2013/2014 by Honorable Minister of Finance,
Saara Kuugongelwa Amadhila**

By Honorable Agnes Limbo

27th March 2013

Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Members of this August House,

On the outset let me congratulate the Minister of Finance, Honorable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila for the timely tabling of the 2013/2014 Appropriation Bill.

My contribution to the general debate focuses on unemployment, poverty, housing, land distribution and household food security.

In her speech, the Minister has indicated that our economy has maintained annual average growth rates of five percent over the past ten years. At the same time, she has accepted that unemployment and poverty remained high. I am quite sure she would still be accurate had she opted to say that poverty and unemployment have deteriorated during the past ten years.

Having admitted that poverty has worsened among our communities throughout the country, we, as law-makers should agree that the majority of our people have not benefitted from the economic growth and thus, they are not in position to secure basic needs such as housing and food. We are all witnesses to the mushrooming shanty structure on the peripheries of all our major cities and towns where many people are surviving by scavenging at dumpsites where the affluent few throw away waste.

It is also logical to conclude that wide-spread poverty makes it extremely difficult for individuals and families to seize opportunities because of lack of access to information and the requirements are just out of their reach. It is needless to say that people find it even harder to acquire land as a means of production. Even those that are lucky to get resettled by the government can hardly afford to develop it due lack of skills and capital. Instead, some simply hire it out to the rich, including the previous owners, in exchange of money. In other words, resettlement without skills and capital is meaningless.

With regard to land for housing, we continue to observe that despite the vastness of the land, municipalities allocate tiny plots for housing development. ^{still} We fear that the motive behind this practice is excess profits by the local authorities who have been auctioning plots to the detriment of the people who are in need of housing. In this regard, I am quite sure that many people who have been lucky enough to acquire plots or houses at exorbitantly high prices will continue to carry the burden of paying off their debts for small houses built on these tiny plots. It is heartening, though to learn that, of late, the auctioning of residential plots has been abolished, hopefully country-wide. As much as we appreciate this latent decision, we feel that the majority of our people are already affected for the rest of their lives, ~~by the cost of housing.~~

The above picture points at a government failure to address the aspirations of the people as promised before and immediately after independence. Twenty-three years down the road, we are still talking about the old challenges as if we are not the same people who presided over the sorry conditions currently facing our people. If we fail again to pause and think deeply about the way forward, we are most likely to find ourselves in the same or worse situation five years from now.

I pleased to note here that for the first time, all of us appear to be in agreement when it comes to social problems afflicting our communities. That in itself is an achievement and at the same time, it is the clearest sign that we will seek ~~working~~ solutions together as a team. Having said this, I would like to support the colleagues who have identified possible solutions such as value addition to all our minerals, fish and livestock. For us realize this, we need to train our people in the relevant fields which are responding to the development needs of our country, including industrialization as envisaged by Vision 2030. If we are committed to this vision, we should be doing the right things over the remaining 17 years, otherwise, we'll be remembered in future only as people who were here to talk and enjoy themselves at the expense of the future generations.

We should also admit that this nation has bright citizens who can make meaningful contribution towards the development of Namibia if and when given opportunities and necessary support to play the roles. Furthermore, housing, as a human rights issue, should be treated with utmost urgency and commitment by the local authorities. In this regard, government should also consider subsidizing serviced land and make it available for housing development in all viable towns. As a matter of national priority, all the relevant ministries should come up with a training programme targeting all resettled crop and livestock farmers. This programme should be accompanied with capital support in order to ensure that resettled families become self-reliant and suppliers of food rather recipients of drought relief.

It is only when our priorities are put right that unemployment, poverty and all the attendant social ills will be the thing of the past.

In conclusion, I would like to urge the implementors of this budget to make sure that all projects and programmes are executed effectively and efficiently as planned.

I rest my case.