



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

REMARKS

by

Hon Ms Petrina Haingura

Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services

during the

GENERAL DEBATE

on the

APPROPRIATION BILL,

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

on

14 March 2013

Hon Speaker

Hon Members

The government of the Republic of Namibia is committed to deal with issues affecting national prosperity; hence the well thought budget

*U/B. under discussion, to plan because we have Vision 2030
The Govt didn't fail the nation, maybe RSP, NDP's*

I wish to put forward a few comments on the Appropriation Bill. Let me start by commending the SWAPO Party led Government for its caring nature. The budget under discussion will benefit all citizens, but in particular the youth, the elderly, women, and farmers. The budget is well-balanced and designed to add value to citizens' livelihood by putting dollars into people's pockets. It addresses pertinent issues and provides for progress in the areas of unemployment, poverty, education, health, et cetera. I'm adding my vote of confidence to that of other Honourable Members who addressed this Assembly before me by applauding the Minister of Finance, the PS, and all staff who were involved in the preparation of this people-centred budget. I also wish to thank the NPC for a task well done.

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The finances allocated to the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare should also be applied to teaching and training of entire communities, vulnerable groups, and other end-users of legislation, which legislation aims at the protection and furtherance of fundamental

rights. If we do not unwrap and make legislation more digestible for citizens, in particular vulnerable groupings such as women and children, such legislation is likely not to serve the end-users thereof. I am calling to mind gender-based violence, rape, baby dumping, and homicide, which conduct serves to erode the health of our society.

The government has passed legislation to protect women and children, such as the Married Persons Equality Act (Act No. 1 of 1996), the Affirmative Action Act (Act No. 29 of 1998), the Combating of Rape Act (Act No. 8 of 2000), the Combating of Domestic Violence Act (Act No. 4 of 2003), and the Labour Act (Act 11 of 2007), but despite these Acts, gender-based violence, violence against children, abuse of the elderly, and infringement on fundamental rights of vulnerable citizens still endanger the very meaning of ‘independence’ in our Independent Country. I am especially referring to inequitable treatment of women, whether they are married or in living-together relationships, subtle negation of affirmative action within the workplace, resulting in exploitation and workplace bullying, re-traumatisation of women and children when they complain about rape, domestic violence, and so forth.

In view of these social ills, why does legislation not bring adequate relief and redress? I am at liberty to say that these very end-users of legislation do not know their rights; they do not always understand the very legislation designed to protect them, and many of these victims

shy away from seeking assistance and protection, because ignorance of the law causes them to fear the judicial process.

Thus, I propose that a portion of the finances allocated to the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare should be applied to familiarize vulnerable groups with legislation that could protect them.

Applicable legislation should be made more digestible for ordinary women, children, and other vulnerable groupings. “*Knowledge is Power*” and the aim should be to empower and familiarize potential victims with knowledge of fundamental rights towards eradication of these social ills.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members,

I am thinking of ways to join resources across different ministries to address gender-based violence, such as;

- Inclusion of fundamental rights as a theme in the school curriculum, or as an extra-curricular study activity, so that by the time learners leave the school system, they are knowledgeable about the importance of protecting own and others’ fundamental rights, and understand the concept of accountability – where my rights end, others’ rights start;

- Workshops for women, children, vulnerable groups such as the disabled and elderly, aimed at improving their understanding of legal instruments available;
- Workshops for training social workers and police officers on sensitive interviewing of victims of child abuse, battered women syndrome, workplace bullying, and other forms of exploitation;
- Involving the media, particularly television, to explain legislation and curb irrational fears for the judicial system;
- I am thinking of industrial theatre, which is a tried and tested communication technology – and customized street theatre crafted to familiarize ordinary people with knowledge about legislation that could protect them; the benefit of industrial and street theater is that it takes the audience on a journey, engaging people emotionally and intellectually. It is a flexible and responsive medium, uniquely adaptable to the moment. Audiences typically feel motivated, educated and highly valued after shows.
- We all need to join resources to liberate the vulnerable people from abuse and interpersonal violence.

Hon Speaker! Hon Members!



Let me commend the government for building a Fresh Hub at Ongwediva in Oshana and Rundu in Kavango Region respectively. This initiative will undoubtedly assist those women and youth who are engaged in food production and marketing of their products, which had been a challenge to those small enterprises. However, to secure the success of this noble idea, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry should assist these communities in terms of training to gain skills and knowledge on how to increase production, and assist them with equipment and start-up capital. Under the dedicated supervision of the Agricultural Extension Officers, these small farmers will and can contribute to food production. I welcome the budget allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and it is likely that different Ministries can become successful twinning partners on this project.

In tying food production to the Ministry of Health and Social Services, it needs to be mentioned to this Assembly that malnutrition remains a concern among our children younger than age 5 years, and some regions are worse affected than others. Without question, what we eat affects our health and well-being. Dietary factors are associated with four of the 10 leading causes of death globally. Poor nutrition is linked to numerous chronic diseases in adults, and in children, poor nutrition can have long-term consequences for

children's cognitive development, school performance, and could cause problematic classroom behaviours such as inattention and lack of vitality needed to excel academically. Poor nutrition contributes to health care costs. The link between diet-related diseases, increased medical expenses, and lost productivity has been firmly established.

Hence, parents should be knowledgeable about good nutrition, the making of clever food choices that are affordable and accessible to ensure the healthy development of our children - the leaders of tomorrow.

I applaud the Office of the Prime Minister who tackled the issue of malnutrition, in collaboration with all line Ministries involved of providing food, technical know-how, and preparation of a balanced diet. It came to my knowledge that a ^{few} certain student is conducting postgraduate research on the link between children's usual daily diet, attention deficit disorder, and school performance in general. Our Higher Education Institutions should be encouraged to get involved in more similar research projects, thereby strengthening the hands of the line Ministries. In this sense, better nutrition can be achieved in a number of ways, such as:

- Cooking demonstrations to teach caregivers at grassroots and community level about preparation of a balanced, healthy diet;

- Pot-gardening and growing vegetables in their back yards to supplement a healthy, balanced diet;
- Encouragement of mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies;
- Collaborative efforts are needed in support of programs and policies to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Encouragement of school programs to replace junk food with healthful choices;
- Promotion of better nutrition through community education programs and media campaigns; and
- Implementation of target programs to eliminate inequities in access to healthful food.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members,

I conclude with an appeal to some honourable members, especially those on the other side, to refrain from making statements which are not true. One such example is the statement that “*corruption is*

allowed in this country” - nobody welcomes corruption - that is why the Anti-Corruption Commission was established to deal with this global problem. Participation in the “*blaming game*” is not benefiting anyone. Instead of engaging in a “*blaming game*” – let us pull our resources towards finding solutions to curb corruption.

The accountability Report was handed to us to study and to familiarize ourselves on “what” and “how” money was spent.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members,

We all know those sitting on the pavilion, blaming the referee or the coach when the home team loses the match – they passively engage in a “*blaming game*”, but never get involved in assisting the team to win. Crying crocodile tears will not help to win the battle – bringing solutions to this forum for discussion would be a valuable and much appreciated contribution.

I enjoyed the presentation of Hon. Bezuidenhout, who always proposes practical solutions. Let us not, as a matter of principle, oppose the contributions of other Honourable Members, such as Hon. Tjihuiko who said in his contribution that no jobs were created. On page 22 in the **Macro Economic Framework 2013/14 to 2015/16**, it is evident that 7,326 permanent jobs and 18,012 temporary jobs were created – a total of 25,338 jobs. Together, we CAN make a difference!

With these few comments, I support the Appropriation Bill.

Thank you.