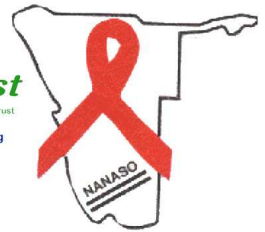




NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA
(NYC)



Basic Income Grant Coalition

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- Press Statement, 8th December 2009

Two year Basic Income Grant Pilot Project concluded - Dramatic effects on poverty and economic empowerment necessitate national implementation now!

The BIG Coalition has noted with disappointment that despite the impressive results of the BIG (Basic Income Grant) pilot project in Otjivero-Omitara, the Namibian Government has not yet committed itself to the introduction of the country-wide BIG. The results of the pilot project have proven the effectiveness of a BIG to fight poverty, foster social development and kick-start local economic development. The impact of the BIG was nothing short of spectacular: poverty levels and child malnutrition declined dramatically while school attendance and utilization of the local clinic improved. Likewise, economic activities increased significantly while crime levels dropped.

Based on the findings in Omitara the Coalition is convinced that a national BIG will benefit Namibians in all regions of the country. It is both beneficial and affordable and its implementation is thus a question of political will. The drawings of the school children bear witness to the tangible changes in people's lives. (Please see attachment.)

The recent election results have given the Namibian government a renewed mandate to govern the country for the next 5 years. As a direct means to alleviate the plight of the poor and to enable them to work themselves out of poverty, a national BIG is needed more than ever!

The delay in the national implementation is hurting the poor in general and the residents of Otjivero-Omitara in particular. After two years of implementation, the BIG pilot project comes to its planned conclusion in December 2009. As the BIG Coalition, we cannot stand by and let the residents slide back into the dehumanising levels of poverty that they experienced before the BIG was introduced two years ago. Thus, while demanding the implementation of the BIG nationwide, we will utilise a 'bridging allowance' to tie over the households for the time being. This is not a solution but merely a 'stop-gap measure' which cannot replace the BIG. The 'bridging-allowance' is limited to the participants of the pilot and limitations thereof both of the value of support to the individual as well as to the community are acknowledged. The welfare of the country's citizen is the responsibility of the Government. During the next one to two years we expect the Government to introduce the BIG nationwide, which will make the bridging allowance superfluous.

For the time being, all people, who have participated in the pilot project, will be paid the "bridging allowance" of N\$ 80,- into their NamPost accounts. While the amount is considerably less than that of a Basic Income, we hope to support the positive development gains by those, who participated in the pilot project and made it such a resounding success. The participants of the pilot project have inspired not only the BIG Coalition, but the numerous visitors from all walks of life, the politicians, journalists and TV reporters who came to the village and witnessed the changes and the renewed hope. Furthermore, the pilot project has gained worldwide publicity and is part of the global discussion on new approaches in development. In fact, Namibia has been put on the world map because of the people of Otjivero-Omitara. They have shown the world what can be done with very little money, but which is based on a human rights approach, a philosophy of equality and a theology of dignity. It is the sincere hope of the Coalition that this experience and the positive example will encourage others to demand what is rightfully theirs, namely "A BIG for all"!