

Basic Income Grant Coalition Campaign Declaration

This Declaration summarises the shared consensus, critical demands and commitment to Basic Income Grant implementation.

1. For the past 30 years, far too many Namibians have been living under inhumane and degrading conditions. We have been struggling to meet our basic human needs but were confronted without a decent income, decent roofs over our heads, clean water and sanitation. Our human rights are violated by our leaders who have failed to improve our lives after independence. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Namibia continues to be among the countries in the world with the lowest living standards and extreme differences between the rich and poor without genuine efforts being made to tackle the problem. No leader of high values should overlook and tolerate such failures.

2. The Covid-19 pandemic has made things worse for us. It has added to our burden of day-to-day struggle for survival. Many of us have lost our jobs due to the pandemic. Many Namibians are employed in the informal sector which they desperately depend on as their only source of income. The lockdown has cut us off our only source of income since we have not been allowed to operate in order to sustaining ourselves. It has increased our poverty and hunger and has robbed us of the ability to provide decent lives for ourselves as human beings. Our leaders do not offer us long-term relief as we continue to struggle daily for survival, even though we have put our trust in them hoping that they will safeguard our wellbeing.

3. For the past 15 years we have fought to have the universal Basic Income Grant (also known as BIG) introduced in Namibia to protect us from poverty and ease our day-to-day struggles for survival, and to make it possible for all Namibian families to live dignified lives.

In his inaugural speech in 2015, President Geingob declared 'war on poverty' with the aim to eradicate poverty. Comparing the Namibian nation with a house, he said that under his rule "Nobody in this house must be left out." As a person who out of his pocket financially contributed to the Otjivero pilot study carried out during 2008 and 2009 in Otjivero-Omitara, there was widespread expectation of President Geingob implementing BIG as the key to achieving his poverty eradication promise.

4. We are tired of living in poverty. Otwaloloka, E //ui, Shitwa Kangwi, Tsau da go, Ons is moeg, Tuaurua, Lukatezi, Twaroroka. We demand that the government meets its obligation as per Article 95 of the Namibian Constitution, and in line with President Page 2 of 3 Geingob's promise of eradicating poverty, by urgently implementing BIG through a cash payment of N\$500 per person per month to people between the ages of 19 and 59, in order to eradicate poverty and provide decent living standard for all Namibian families.

5. Young people, who are mainly affected by joblessness, are the majority and most important people in our country. Therefore, their future needs to be secured. Our leaders must commit to implementing BIG as a youth centred social protection scheme to support young people who are jobless and promote youth development.

6. It is not true that BIG leads to irresponsibility. It is not true that BIG leads to laziness, or alcoholism. Findings of the BIG pilot study that was conducted in Otjivero-Omitara show that all residents below the age of 60 years who received BIG payments made good use of the opportunities presented to them. They took the initiative to improve their livelihoods. BIG is much more economically and socially sensible than the Food Bank which is haphazard, degrading for the recipients and has not reduced poverty.

7. BIG is our human right as it eases pressure on us through providing us with the opportunity to meet our basic human needs so that we can live a life in human dignity. BIG has the potential to break the shackles of poverty and end hunger. It eases pressure on individuals who are burdened with financially supporting their many family members as a

result of them being sole earners of income such as pensioners, condemning them to poverty and deprivation. BIG offers economic freedom and an opportunity to people to pursue their life choices and fulfil their potential, leading to happiness. BIG offers an opportunity for "homemakers" to be compensated for the important unpaid care work that they do. Poverty and the extreme differences between the rich and poor is a threat to our country's peace, security and stability, as evident in the wave of crime engulfing our country. BIG can protect our society from being torn apart by social tensions.

8. We have been unnecessarily struggling to survive due to our leaders' unwillingness to put long-term social protection schemes in place to end our suffering. Poverty can easily be prevented as proven by the old-age pension which is guaranteed to all people aged 60 and above regardless of their background, and the once-off N\$750 Emergency Income Grant that the government rolled out in March to cope with the economic slowdown. Leadership is about empowerment and lifting others up. It is not measured by one's own advancement, but how well one advances the lives of your fellow citizens. The role of a leader requires constant sacrifice for the common good.

9. It is time for government to ensure that we all benefit from the proceeds of our natural resources through the implementation of the BIG. It is time that Namibia's Page 3 of 3 Namibia Diverse Women's Association (NDWA) ELCRN Desk for Social Development KAYEC Breaking the Wall of Silence (BWS) mining and fishing industries that make billions of profits pay their due share of taxes. Tax evasion and illicit financial flows result in the loss of billions of much needed income that the government could finance the BIG scheme with which is a crucial step towards eradicating poverty. The old-age pension scheme and Emergency Income Grant has shown that the implementation of BIG is possible.

10. The fight for our rights is not over yet! Our leaders' promises of protecting us from poverty and improving our lives have been nothing but lip service. We now demand the implementation of BIG as our human right! It is about time that all Namibians organised

themselves to demand for the implementation of BIG. Silence will not win us anything. As the saying goes: “Whatever you are not changing, you are choosing”.