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BIG Sees More Employment, Less Crime

WINDHOEK – The employment rate has risen from 36 to 48 percent since the introduction of the Basic Income Grant (BIG), while the crime rate as-

sociated with poverty has decreased by 60 percent.

These figures were presented during a symposium on BIG in Germany. The symposium

was hosted by the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the United Evangelical Mission last Friday.

A media statement availed to Nampa this week said in January 2008, the BIG Coalition implemented the policy proposal in Otjivero-Omitara, a small village some 100 km east of the capital, for unemployed poor people to receive N\$100 every month.

According to a paper presented by the Project Director – Desk for Social Development in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Dr Claudia Haarmann, as well as Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, the

rate of malnourished children in the village has decreased from 42 to 17 percent, and parents now have enough money to send their children to school, with the rate of 90 percent ranging distinctly above the countrywide average.

“The interest in the project has translated into widespread financial support as well, enabling the successful implementation of the pilot project and securing enough finances for more than the anticipated two-year period. The interest has been overwhelming for the community in Otjivero and the BIG coalition as a whole,” they noted.

They told the gathering that the financial aid

also enables the people to get medical care in the event of sickness, as the rate of people going for medical care has quintupled since the start of the project.

According to the presentation, Frieda Nembwaya started to bake traditional rolls for just N\$1 each after she received the grant.

Currently, she is baking 200 rolls a day, seven days a week and people in Otjivero support her business.

She also added another business, and sells local sausages and recharge vouchers for cellphones.

“She is now moving, so much so that she wrote on all the sides of her newly-built zinc house: ‘Good life after

struggle’.

However, at the same time, the presentation indicated that it is noteworthy that BIG has experienced vicious attacks as well.

It mainly came in the form of very emotional and even racist remarks where, according to the presenters, they could feel that people felt threatened in their very economic and ideological existence.

At the same event, Director-General of the National Planning Commission, Dr Peter Katjavivi, explained that a country like Namibia needs structural transformation of the economy, that is, increasing output, employment, income, exports and government

tax revenue.

“In Namibia, this transformation has become a difficult task because of widespread poverty and income inequality. Since BIG programmes are anchored in the reduction of poverty and income inequality, they could support the structural transformation of the economy,” he noted.

Katjavivi added that in a conducive environment, BIG programmes can come together with Government, the private sector, Namibia’s development partners and other stakeholders who are committed to economic growth and development to achieve the ultimate objective of a peaceful, harmonised and stable economy. – Nampa



BIG has noticeably brought a big change in the lives of Omitara residents, as the happy faces of these Omitarans show. Simply put: they now get N\$100 a month which they never did before, a kind of manna from heaven.