



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

AT THE

LAUNCH OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION, KUNENE REGION

BY

HON. ZEPHANIA KAMEETA

**DEPUTY MINISTER, POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIAL
WELFARE**

KHORIXAS TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS

3RD DECEMBER 2018

- Hon. Marius Sheya, Governor of the Kunene Region;
- Your Worship the Mayor, of the Town of Khorixas, Councilor Elizabeth Geises;
- Hon Elias /Aro Xoagub, Khorixas Constituency Councilor;
- All Regional and Local Authority Councilors here present,
- Amb. Angel Dalmau, Technical Advisor to the Food Bank Programme ,
- Mr. Adreas /Howoseb, Chief Executive Officer for the Town of Khorixas;
- Captains of Industries here present;
- Reverend Salomon Swartbooï of the ELCIN Church;
- All other religious leaders here present;
- All Esteemed Leaders of Traditional Authorities here present
- Dear staff members of Government Office/Ministries/Agencies here present,

- Distinguished invited stakeholders,
- Members of the media
- Dear Brothers and Sisters.

1. Today marks yet another milestone in the quest to ensure that no Namibian goes to bed hungry or dies from hunger; with the launch of food distribution, as part of one of Government's programmes aimed at addressing hunger poverty.

2. Household food insecurity is one of the major underlying causes of malnutrition, a situation that has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to consider household food and nutrition security as a basic human right. Addressing poverty hunger in Namibia, therefore speaks to the basic building blocks of a caring nation.

3. Hunger is the lowest level of poverty, it is only logical that His Excellency the President, in the Harambee Prosperity Plan, tasked the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare together with other key Government Offices/Agencies/Ministries (OMAs) to address hunger poverty.

4. The establishment of Food Banks, is one such way of addressing hunger, especially in the urban and peri-urban areas. Other programmes include improving agricultural productivity, school feeding programmes and the provision of food during natural disasters such as droughts and floods.

5. The first ever Food Bank programme in Namibia was launched by His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob on the 30th of June 2016 in Windhoek. This was followed by the distribution of dry food items in seven Constituencies of the Khomas region as part of a pilot programme.

6. The pilot phase of the Food Bank programme was concluded and the Ministry conducted an assessment in collaboration with the University of Namibia; to mainly evaluate the impact of food bank on household food security and to guide future operations of the food bank programme in Namibia.

7. Key findings of the assessment of the Khomas region food bank pilot programme revealed that:

- The food bank intervention has a significant impact on household food security;
- The food bank scheme is effective in addressing hunger especially to beneficiaries with no formal employment, given the current socio-economic situation of the country,
- About 90% of the beneficiaries were food insecure before the food bank intervention.
- After the introduction of the Food Bank, 62% of those that were food insecure, are now food secure.
- In terms of financial sustainability, the food bank programme will be affordable within the current budgetary allocations for the next three years, taking into account a 10% inflationary increase.

8. By the conclusion of the pilot phase of the Khomas region food programme, about **Fifteen Thousand Five Hundred and Nineteen** (15,519) households representing a total of **Sixty Seven thousand, Nine hundred and Eighty Seven** (67,987) individuals were benefiting from the food bank in the seven constituencies of the Khomas region.

9. However, after internal revision of the list of beneficiaries, especially in line with the preliminary figures of the National Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2015/16 and the findings from the UNAM evaluation report, the number of households was reduced by more than 5, 000 households.

10. In this regard, the Ministry in consultation with key stakeholders, has come up with more stringent criteria to ensure that only those confronted by extreme hunger poverty, benefit from the Food Bank initiative. The process of re-registering of food bank beneficiaries in the Khomas region has been completed.

11. Consequently, the revised criteria are used in the identification of beneficiaries as the Ministry embarks on the roll-out of Food Bank to other region.

12. I am therefore happy that today we are launching the actual distribution of food to the identified beneficiaries, because these is one of those programmes that should be implemented without unnecessary delays.

***Comrade Governor,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen***

13. I want to make it clear that we set criteria to guide and help us to make informed decisions. However the criteria we set ourselves should not be seen as cast in stone; especially in the case of poverty eradication, we cannot hide behind criteria or rules and let people die from starvation; this will defeat the whole purpose of the President when he called for the establishment of Food Bank. Therefore, we should be creative, pro-active and most importantly empathetic when dealing with the less fortunate of our society.

14. Allow me at this point to thank the Office of the Governor and the entire team for your prompt actions, to ensure that we bring changes in the lives of our people. It is a war we are fighting and therefore we cannot allow complacency, as this could have fatal consequences.

15. I know the concept of food provision and other social assistance programmes are often criticized as creating dependency, without putting things into perspective.

16. Just as an example there is no due consideration that the food bank initiative is a short term intervention to address household food insecurity, more especially in urban set-ups, where the poor and vulnerable do not have access to land to produce their own food.

17. The Government through the various OMAs remains committed to the maintenance of the well-being of the Namibian people, as enshrined in the country's Supreme Law, The Constitution.

18. Consequently, the Government through all its development vehicles such as the 5th National Development Plan (NDP5), the Harambee Prosperity Plan, The Blueprint on Poverty Eradication and Wealth Redistribution is committed to the implementation of sustainable development programmes and initiatives; to ensure that we attain prosperity for all Namibians.

19. I have stated on several occasions that in the Namibian context, you should be regarded as poor when you go to bed hungry, when you drink dirty water from a well with livestock, when the nearby bushes are your ablution facilities, when you cannot clothe yourself and do not have a decent shelter to call home.

20. Therefore, when the President decided that we should fight the war against poverty, he did not mean that we have to buy everyone luxury houses or cars, but to ensure that everyone has access to the basic necessity of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, clean drinking water and health services.

21. While education can clearly be seen as the ultimate solution to poverty eradication, if there are no equal opportunities for all, education will be evasive in improving the situation of the poor. In fact there is a direct link between low educational performance and malnourished children.

22. Furthermore, fighting poverty is fundamentally about promoting human rights, human dignity and social justice thereby ensuring that people have access to food, water, shelter, clothing and other social basic services.

23. As I conclude, I want to call upon each and everyone here present, including the Food bank beneficiaries, to join efforts and hands with the Government in rooting out abject poverty from our Nation.

24. Let us use the conducive socio-economic environment provided by our President and his administration, not to fight each other, but to improve our living conditions and that of our fellow citizens.

I thank you