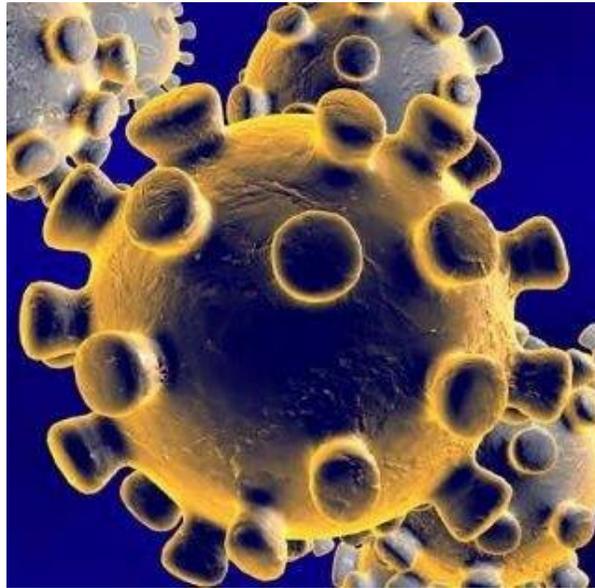


BEYOND COVID-19

'New Economic Opportunity, New Direction'



.....

ISSUED BY:

Landless People's Movement



joycemuzen9@gmail.com

0817616724

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION.....	3
3. MINISTRIES AND SOE REALIGNMENT.....	4
4. EMERGENCY GRANT AND BASIC INCOME GRANT.....	5
5. AGRICULTURE.....	5
6. FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.....	6
7. COVID-19.....	7
8. SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES.....	8
9. PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS DURING A LOCKDOWN.....	9
10. SHELTER FOR HOMELESS.....	10
11. CONCLUSION.....	11

COVID-19: PROVIDING PERSPECTIVES AND ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the global economy, with real prospect of catastrophic consequences for developing country's economies. Namibia is no exception. The Namibian GDP has been slippery since 2015 with growth reaching up to 6.1% in 2015, deteriorating to – 0.1 in 2018, and is expected to further record decline for the next five years (LPM manifesto, 2019). Economic penalties due to Covid-19 local and global economic and social lockdown are ascending as the finance Minister illuminates figures between N\$ 1,7 billion and N\$ 2 billion lost per week.

The Namibian Government must take bold decision to rescue the most vulnerable from hunger, disease, loss of income and potential deaths. This must all be done while ensuring that the economy does not collapse. Collapse of Namibia's economy is real, and if it occurs, we stand the risk of confronting greater and unprecedented socio-economic and political upheaval and instability since the advent of colonialism in Namibia. We therefore need a sustainable strategy to deal with COVID-19 without severely affecting our fiscal sustainability, while simultaneously re-calibrating economic sectors that will deliver on sustainable jobs, food security and enhancing peace and social cohesion.

One key lesson for this government, with a 30-year record of economic mismanagement, is that in good times you need to save, so that you can use your savings in bad times, to be sustainable. This is common sense for any household and should be applied to a small economy, such as Namibia. Reckless spending on TIPEEG and Mass Housing left this country in a dire fiscal situation, without showing much for such spending.

Our economy declined by 0.7 percent over the last three years, on average. In 2019 alone, the economy contracted by 1.1 percent. Our debt-to-GDP levels are now the highest ever, with a possibility to reach levels that could become unsustainable, driving us into a fully fledged fiscal crises. Our children and grandchildren will be left heavily indebted.

The memories of millennials are now filled with crises, after crises, with no prospects of a brighter future in their minds, in the medium term. But we simply cannot continue on this trajectory and should develop policies for COVID-19 without compromising our future. At the same time, responsible leadership is required to develop economic and social reconstruction policies and prioritize key strategic sectoral resuscitation framework, geared toward reaching the largest possible population of society in order to lift our people out of poverty. Interventions in rolling-out a grant system responsibly and with conditions of training and human resource development, are one of the central constitutive approaches of LPM.

Fiscal sustainability and prevention of COVID-19 casualties, are not mutually exclusive. If we take difficult but sensible decisions, we can ensure that no lives are lost, while having fiscal sustainability and future growth.

We as the LPM propose the following interventions:

A. SANITATION AND HOUSING

1. The Namibian Governments efforts to address basic sanitation and hygiene has been a crippling failure. This true for both in rural and urban settings. The gross failure to adequately and timeously address the humanitarian and economic conditions of our people in informal urban settlements exposes them to the highest COVID-19 rate of infection, in spite of a lockdown. In fact, in some instances, the lockdown itself could be a facilitator of infections, given the way in which these settlements houses are situated.
2. There is a complete lack of adequate sewage disposal in most rural communities and mostly informal settlements throughout Namibia. Therefore, we propose that the State makes immediate provision for water and sanitation for these households, by:
 - Massive housing investment of N\$5 billion for over a period of 5years, under a “decent housing” approach. Local authorities through MURD will be mandated to be the implementing bodies. There should be:
 - No National Housing Enterprise involvement.

3. We will be able to resolve in a meaningful way the sanitation and water issues. At the same time, we will be able to create a property class within the informal settlements, and eventually formalize these effectively. The driving idea behind the housing plan is also to create jobs for jobless persons, while reconfiguring the face of human settlement along a human rights discourse, in restoring humanity's dignity. No foreign companies shall be involved in this endeavour, strictly Namibian companies and the SMME sector corporates.

B. MINISTRIES AND SOE REALIGNMENT

1. Immediate freeze and reassignment of assets of loss-making SOE's such as Air Namibia, Trans Namib, Road Contractor Company, AMTA and AGRIBUSDEV. We take the view that these institutions are best suited at the current juncture to be departments within O/M/A's. This approach is also relevant to NSFAF, which merely administers bursaries of state.
2. Considering the predictably economic fallout resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we can ill-afford the wastage of resources through maintaining non-performing SOE's entities. The workers need to be incentivized for a period of six months in order to protect the workers from further vulnerability. We need to be able to make difficult decision in order to put Namibia back on the path towards economic recovery and growth.
 - All ministries to be audited to remove wastage, as well as duplication, to align the national spending with our policy priorities.
 - Air Namibia fleet A330 doing international routes has to be redirected or other airlines take over the lease agreement which will end in 2024. Look at giving it an opportunity to mitigate loses and change it into a regional airline
 - MICT to be made into a department, for structurally it serves no purpose in the State affairs and remains one of the largest government wastages.
 - Ministry of SOE's equally is an unnecessary expense that should be removed.

C. EMERGENCY GRANT AND BASIC INCOME GRANT

1. The Emergency Income grant is a good initiative, but helping a few unemployed will not be a relief to households. Nor is it sustainable. Many households, even before COVID-19 struggled to meet their monthly expenses and could not sustain their families. Therefore, as a country we cannot only look to those that lost jobs. We must expand the support of unemployed to households, which can be supplemented with food parcels to the vulnerable communities receiving income below a certain threshold. This is a palliative mitigating initiative. The emergency grant is also not clear on what the determinants are based that arrive at the N\$750 figure. Such haphazard policy-making is dangerous and toxic.

2. As LPM, we propose:

provision of weekly food parcels for extremely poor households for six months. The State can liaise with industry partners in agriculture in order to procure food parcels for the most vulnerable segments of Namibian society. In addition, food parcels for households can be directly sourced through communal farmers in each region, through regional officers, but with exemptions of the normal procurement procedures for timely interventions. This will not only support households but will be an immediate relief to the farmers that have produce at the moment but cannot supply the agriculture market due to low demand caused by COVID-19.

Unemployed youth should be identified and provided with food parcels worth N\$500 monthly for six months. Failure to aid unemployed youth, perpetuates a class difference within the households. Society doesn't recognize the unemployed youth and tend to focus on the elderly and we believe that should change.

We propose a **Basic Income Grant of N\$1500**, different from the once off payment for the employed that lost income. The Basic Income Grant will be administered from ages 16-59. The BIG should be attached to beneficiaries actively searching for jobs, as well as

engaging in compulsory vocational education programmes of the State. Upon receipt of a job, the beneficiary will exit **BIG**.

D. AGRICULTURE

D.1 COMMUNAL LAND DEVELOPMENT

Communal land development should be expanded to the Northern Communal Areas. Thus, urgent stimulus needs to be given to bring in agriculture infrastructure for farmers north of the redline for the Namibian meat to further compete in global markets. Kalimbeza Rice project will be transformed into maize production scheme, while new bore holes, windmills, general farming equipment, irrigation systems, fencing, solar panels power, water storage facilities, rain water harvesting, seed and fertilizer, dipping holes, kraals etc. Tobacco plantation in Zambezi should be cancelled and that land used for food production. Water infrastructure should be put in place to adequately develop communal land. German funding could be sourced.

D. 2 LIVESTOCK RESTOCKING PROGRAMME

Additionally, stimulus packages in form of restocking of cattle and other livestock, in draught stricken farming areas, must be provided to farmers. For instance, Meatco is currently importing cattle from Botswana which can be avoided by restocking the cattle in Namibia. Too many Namibians lost their entire herds during the past drought. Such Namibians need their livelihood to be restored urgently to avoid the deeper pit of poverty swallowing our people in rural Namibia.

D.3 MODERNIZING AND DIVERSIFYING AGRICULTURE

Namibia needs to advance in modernizing and diversifying the agricultural sector that is primarily based on livestock and few agro-economic activities. The sector needs to be boosted with special focus on food production creating food security. Therefore, **N\$5 billion** per year should be injected into the agricultural sector. For instance, The Neckertal Dam south of Keetmanshoop is readily available for irrigation utilization. Thus, we propose the government should purchase irrigation land and start irrigation.

Furthermore, the Naude Dam should also be expanded, and the Hardap Dam irrigation needs to change its irrigation system of flood irrigation system to drip system. This will

avail additional 1000 hectares. In addition, small scale farmers should be provided with soft loans worth 1 million at a 2 % interest rate for irrigation and extensions, and livestock restocking.

E.4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

E.1. EDUCATION

The lockdown includes the closure of schools and universities. The World's Health Organization estimates that the higher education institutions closures would impact over 90% of 1,5 billion of the world's student population.

Namibia has to quickly dash toward:

- Online learning as an avenue for exploration, so that schools and universities should deploy online-learning on full scale in the medium to long run to meet the global demands of IR4.
- Telecommunication companies such as MTC, Paratus and Telecom will have to apply zero-rate policies (data free) to allow students to download the learning material. The schools and universities will have to give authorized URLs to the service providers so that only those with ULS will have access to this service.
- Open information centers with facilities to allow students to exercise online learning with the supervision of the law enforcement officers.
- Churches in rural and peri-urban areas should be temporary turned into information and schooling centers with internet facilities where these students and teachers are able to access online learning and online teaching. Each church can accommodate a number of students, but under strict health and safety regulations (social distancing). Mobile players like MTC and Telecom will have to boost connectivity issue so these students access the learning material.
- Worst case scenario where access to internet is minimal and students are unable to access online learning, provision should be made for these students to put their studies on hold and continue when the virus have been contained without any prejudices.

F. COVID-19

F. 1 POTENTIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN COVID-19 AND 5G

At the dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we have witnessed the birth of the 5G which created a contest between China and America. However, statistics indicate that for the American economy the 5G will create 3 million US jobs adding \$ 500 billion to the US GDP (Verma, 2019). 5G is designed to carry extraordinarily high amounts of information per second, the 5G waves do not penetrate through walls effectively thus, millions of 5G antenna are planed proximately.

Research states that the 4G which has also been installed in Namibia causes a decline in male fertility rate, as fertility is likely to be affected by the intense exposure to heat and extreme exposure to pesticides, radiations, radioactivity and other hazardous substances (Kesari, 2018). Conspiracies linked the 5G installation to the spread of COVID-19 as areas with 5G seemed to have a spiralled infection rate.

The MM-waves used for 5G causes outer millimetre of the body because of the absorption of 5G radiation, Pr. Martin Pall emphasises that the 5G does not coincide with the biological safety guidelines, and therefore should not be implemented (Pall,2019). In a recent Press release MTC denies claims of 5G being linked to COVID-19, but confirmed that efforts will be made to install 5G in Namibia, regardless of the various health hazards caused by the 5G. It is with this statement that we question the government on weather MTC has the authority above the Ministry of Technology and Communications to be stating such ambitions.

- We recommend that we strictly focus on improving strategic sectors that will strengthen the economy, before jetting to advanced technology that does not coincide with the development stage of the country.
- **Biological safety and environmental impact assessment studies** must be commissioned, before drastic measures of implementation of 5G can be considered.

G. SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

Small and Medium Enterprises (Informal Sector). This sector along with the tourism sector is the hardest hit. We propose that Municipalities and Regional Councils do assessment of the extent of the economic crises within this sector in all regions within a month. Within the stimulus package offered by Government a significant amount should be directed to resuscitate the informal sector through direct subsidies, allowance and no interest rate loans. Commercial banks cannot continue to finance these industries at interest rates closer to Prime rates, especially if Government is availing funds to support these industries.

Our kapana vendors, hair salons and informal markets are facing severe and dire financial circumstances. With strict guidance from health officials, we should allow partial operations of certain informal business with a set number of clients per day. Ministry of Health should provide sanitation, masks, and all other necessities to ensure that the virus is not spread. This will be a welcome relief to many informal businesses.

Franchising Bill must be tabled in Parliament so we allow interested Black industrialists and entrepreneurs to access some of the high-value end franchise licenses to employ more unskilled and semi-skilled labour. This will also bring to an end monopoly franchising in certain retail and food industries. Further, a Cabinet Moratorium could be passed on some essential goods in the interim.

H. PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS DURING LOCKDOWNS

The nature of COVID-19 has led us to rethink how health provision is provided to the most vulnerable. The current system is not beneficial to all in particular the poor and most vulnerable communities of Namibia. Therefore, we need to ensure that the medical service provision covers everybody and gives equal chance of detection, treatment and care to all Namibians.

The following are key proposals that will help with this coverage, but also ensure that we are able to tackle future viruses such as this:

- Develop hospital capacity with more ICU beds and ventilators in other areas of the country. The establishment of field hospitals and makeshift ICU's must be prioritized particularly in big urban cities such as Windhoek, Walvis bay, Oshakati, Keetmanshoop etc. This would require immediate identification of suitable facilities in the region.
- Employ Health extension workers whose contracts were terminated in 2018. These Health Extension Workers should be used to expand testing, basic health and hygiene education and health care for high-risk individuals (elderly and immune compromised patients)
- Communal House-to-House testing must be introduced and screening must be intensified, rather than the tracing of identified people possibly exposed. This will help us to ensure that a bigger number of people are tested and the samples can ensure that the current numbers are really low
- Tests must be expanded in order to test every Namibia within the next 2-3 months
- All Constituencies must have emergency treatment and quarantine facilities
- Strict border control and testing at all Namibian borders
- Make masks mandatory in all public areas
- Provide standing budget to all Disaster Risk Management Committees in all 121 Constituencies
- Those who can work from home must continue to do so
- All entry points to all cities must be controlled with sanitizer.

I.SHELTER FOR HOMELESS

- Dilapidated and abandoned government houses and property must be revamped in order to provide shelter for the Homeless.
- The Government should engage with churches, local authorities and private sector on modalities of providing sustenance to the Homeless.

- There should be a specific designated fund established, through which the central government can incentivize local authorities in order to provide basic services to the homeless.
- We also propose a new city development in Windhoek. This is meant to turn informal settlement areas into a new City with better State funding and thereby removing social and economic barriers that occur in Windhoek

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current crisis has illuminated all the deficiencies of a dysfunctional State with an inadequate public health system. Furthermore, the crisis has demonstrated that we need a fundamental intervention to counter COVID-19, which will protect the vulnerable and middle-class during pandemics and natural disaster from further deprivation and financial calamity. The Central Government must communicate openly and honestly with the public in order to restore trust. The work of Parliament cannot stand still as this has a negative domino effect on the entire country and industries. Innovative methods must be employed on how parliament can resume and continue with the important legislative duties conferred by the Constitution.

We are aware that the above will require additional resources, but it is important that we do so in a fiscally sustainable manner:

1. The Minister of Finance must provide current deficit and debt projections for this year after the N\$8.1 billion stimulus package.
2. Postpone capital projects for the rest of the year and support the above health initiatives and interventions as proposed.
3. Solicit low costs funding at minimal interest rates, from international institutions i.e. AfDB, that can be repaid within a reasonable period without significantly expanding fiscal debt.