

OBSERVER

CONNECT

MARCH - APRIL 2020

GEINGOB DOWN IN ROUND ONE

... TKO OR JUST CATCHING HIS BREATH?

**Graham Hopwood -
Geingob's new faces**

**Mathew Haufiku -
National Assembly
enigma**

**Joseph Diescho -
Cabinet/Ministry
reductions**

**Dr Mary Seely:
hero of the dunes**



N\$20



Okakarara
Town Council

OKAKARARA
TOWN
COUNCIL

Farewell



As we bid you farewell

Okakarara Town Council would like to thank you for your guidance and vision during your time at Cenored, Thank you for your contribution towards the development of Okakarara

KUVEE KANGUEEHI

OBSERVATION POINT

Thank you for choosing to read the March-April 2020 edition of Observer Connect Magazine. *Geingob down in round one: TKO or just catching his breath?* presents interesting analysis and commentary.

While Covid-19 is the biggest story of 2020, the 30 year milestone for the country and this year's inauguration and new Parliament still affect the daily lives of Namibians. President Hage Geingob carries the weight of the nation on his shoulders at the most trying time in the country's short history.

At the time of going to print, Namibia has 11 confirmed cases with the number, sadly, expected to increase. The world is on edge, economies are reeling, people are frightened, commerce is under siege, and world markets are falling. In Namibia, various regions are on lockdown, people are working at home or on forced unpaid leave, and the borders are basically closed. The tourism industry and other sectors are in turmoil and facing economic devastation. See our "Daily Observer" at observer.com.na for up-to-date commentary about current events from our editorial team.

Our magazine covers current affairs, not only one event no matter how major. In our review of media highlights of Geingob's first term (i.e., round one) from March 2015 to March 2020, we recap the president's milestones. Is Geingob able to turn the country around? Are the weaker results of his first term, only a chance for him to catch his breath and come back swinging?

We present analysis from Graham Hopwood in the lead story, giving his brief review of the new ministers appointed and some who are no longer in Cabinet.

Senior political writer, Mathias Haufiku was asked to examine the incoming National Assembly. What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Dr Joseph Diescho offers us a review of reduction in the number of Cabinet members and merger of various ministries. Will this make a difference in Geingob's second term, i.e., Geingob's Round Two?

Our politics and government section also carries a thoughtful piece by Henning Melber. He considers our current party-based representative structure. Does it echo the voices of the people? Does the rise of independent candidates signal the need to consider direct election of Parliamentarians and local government office holders?

Our pages once again welcome Swapo Party stalwart, Citizen Nahas Angula. We asked him to give us his personal thoughts on Swapo in 2020. Does the party that spearheaded the liberation of Namibia, have what it takes to tackle the problems that face the country in 2020?

Dr Mary Seely is quite simply one of the most amazing people we have ever interviewed. This now-retired scientist, researcher, and environmentalist is a hero of the dunes. For more than 50 years she has led the way in science and serious research. Her story is inspiring.

With a nod to the prevalence of social media in our lives, we reacted to an unspoken reality that has emerged. There is a generational divide on social media. Instagram is "hot" and Facebook is "not." We asked our young writers analyze Instagram vs Facebook. We had to laugh while reading this one; their points are so true.

With COVID dominating the headlines, corruption travesties like Fishrot are on the back pages. A review of the current happenings in the fishing industry scandal that rocked the nation in November 2019 is in order.



Our business section features an exciting cosmetics SME owned and run by Sophia Snyman. Her business, Desert Secrets, creates rich-smelling, skin-smoothing products from naturally Namibian materials. Her story about running an SME is a lesson for would-be entrepreneurs.

The science and technology review for March 2020 is marked with an article by Dr Smita Francis. She celebrates UN World Engineering Day. Also, she reiterates the importance of engineers, particularly women, who make everything work.

Donna Collins and Rémy Ngamije take us to Swakopmund's 'Kristall Galerie' and the world of challenges for book writers, respectively. The information presented is enlightening.

Arts and entertainment feature Namibian-born hip hop artist, Jyz Yorke. This young entertainer has much to offer with his musical sounds and poetic lyrics. He says, "I don't make music for God, I make it with Him."

Our edition wraps up with a fiery Parting Shot delivered by Dr Kuiri F Tjipangandjara. His five-year toe-to-toe legal slugfest with NamWater shows one man's tenacity to fight for his rights. Read and learn; you will be shocked.

We urge all of our readers to pay attention to public health alerts regarding the COVID 19 pandemic. Follow all lockdown guidelines if applicable to your region. Be patient and stay calm. Watch your money carefully, spend judiciously and wisely. Economic recession has already damaged Namibia, after COVID, it will be worse.

We thank those who sent in comments about our last edition and encourage those with ideas and opinions to contact us at jackie@observer.com.na.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Observer Connect

Published by: The Windhoek Observer
c/o John Meinert & Rossini Streets,
Windhoek West
PO Box 2255 Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: +264-61 411 800
www.observer.com.na

Editor-in-Chief

Kuvee Kanguuehi
editor@observer.com.na

Senior Editor

Jackie Wilson Asheeke
jackie@observer.com.na

Marketing and Sales

kenneth@observer.com.na

Photos

Dirk Heinrich, Carmen Begley and others as credited

Printed by John Meinerts, Windhoek

Contributing Writers

Joseph Diescho, Graham Hopwood, Henning Melber, Mathew Hausiku, Rémy Ngamije, Thandiso Kawerama, Wetumwene Shikage, Clementine Tjameya, Donna Collins, Kuiriri F Tjipangandjara and Citizen Nahas Angula

Send all comments and letters to jackie@observer.com.na

The *Observer Connect* team thanks all who graciously granted interviews for this edition

Purchase price - N\$20

Subscription information available upon request (061-411-800)

Observer Connect is available at all major retail outlets. If it is sold out, please contact (061) 411-800.

No part of this magazine or its contents may be reproduced for sale or public use without the expressed written permission of the publisher.

When quoting the articles, please give credit to the author(s), title of the magazine, the edition and publisher.

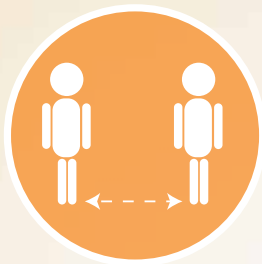
Disclaimer:

Opinion/Commentary pieces are the points of view of the author and are not necessarily those of Paragon Media, the *Windhoek Observer* or *Observer Connect Magazine*.

- 3** Observation Point
- 4** Table of Contents
- 6** Hopwood: Geingob deploys a few new faces in 2020
- 8** Geingob's first term highlights 2015-2020
- 11** Hausiku: Namibia's 2020 National Assembly enigma
- 13** Diescho: Cabinet reductions fall short of the mark
- 15** Melber: The limits to good democratic governance
- 17** Angula: SWAPO Party 2020 - a portrait
- 19** Fishrot Status 2020: the aftershocks continue
- 21** Sophia's desert secrets
- 23** Social media generation gap: Instagram vs Facebook
- 25** The quiet hero of the Dunes: Dr Mary Seely
- 28** Nothing moves without us - women in engineering
- 31** Crystal Gallery dazzles with jewels and gems at the Coast
- 33** Jyz Yorke: Making music for God
- 35** FNB: Tips to achieve financial independence (Advertorial)
- 36** NUST: Networking creates opportunities (Advertorial)
- 38** Writer's Dilemma: "do I write or do I eat?"
- 39** FLASHBACK - from the *Windhoek Observer* archives
- 41** Namibia in Numbers
- 44** Africa in the news
- 46** Coronavirus - biggest news of March - April 2020
- 48** Parting Shot - Justice prevails for Tjipangandjara vs NamWater
- 52** Omhalanga Mills invests millions in new plant (Advertorial)

THE ENERGY TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IS IN YOUR HANDS

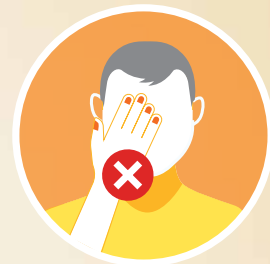
Keep yourself healthy with these guidelines to prevent Covid-19.



Maintain social distancing.



Avoid physical contact.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.



Avoid crowded places.



Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Wash your hands frequently for a minimum of 20 seconds.



Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.



Avoid touching surfaces in public.

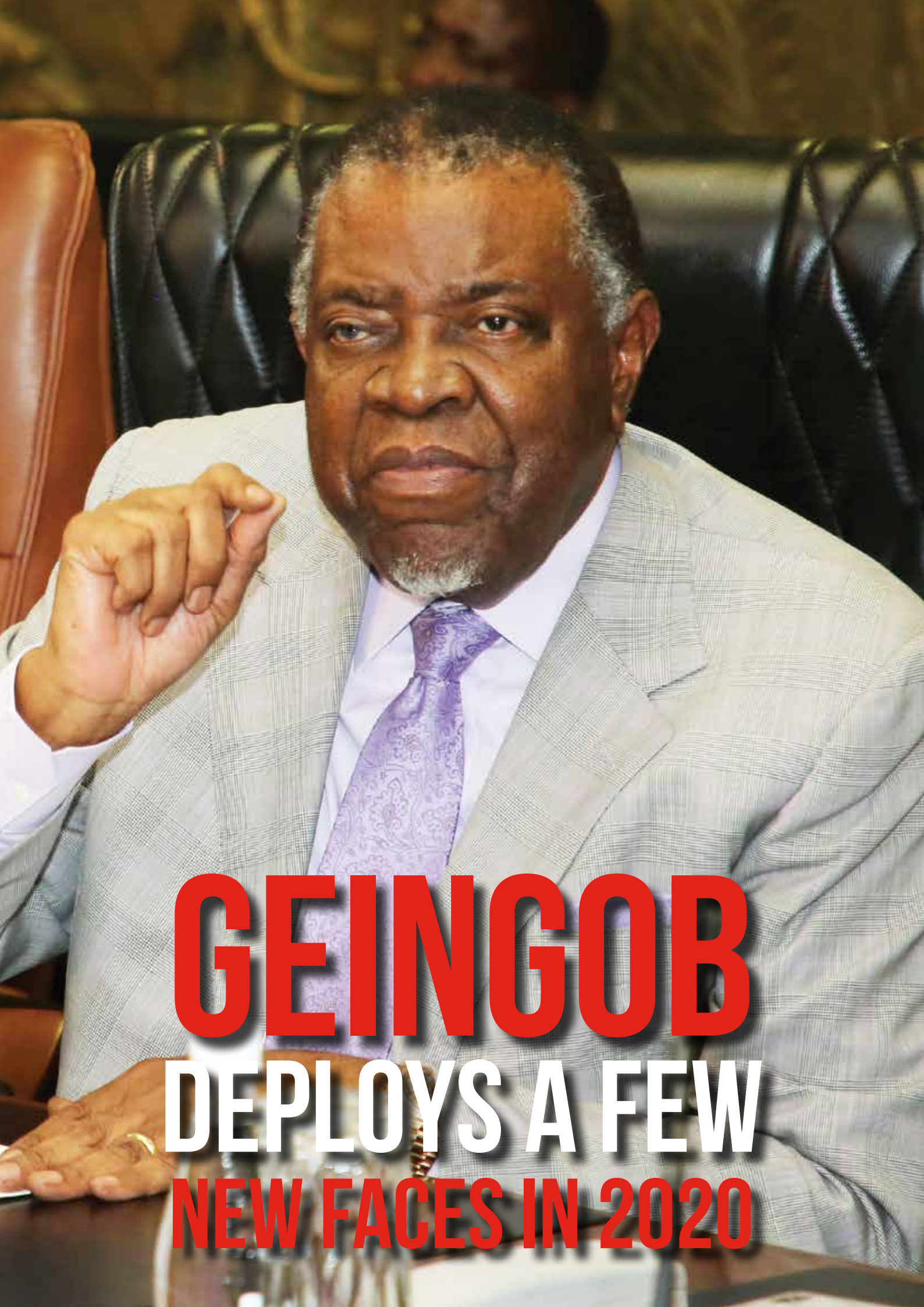


Seek medical assistance immediately when showing symptoms.

If you suspect any cases of COVID-19, call the Toll Free Number 0800 100 100



National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia
1 Aviation Road Petroleum House
Private Bag 13196 Windhoek
www.namcor.com.na



GEINGOB

DEPLOYS A FEW

NEW FACES IN 2020

... but deadwood remains

There's no doubt that the new cabinet announcement was a public relations coup for government amid a lot of other bad news including the COVID-19 pandemic.

By introducing the charismatic and more than capable Emma Theofelus (23) as a deputy minister, President Geingob quietened the criticism (at least for the moment) that he is out of touch with the youth.

The appointment of Yvonne Dausab as Minister of Justice was another PR success. While her reputation with the private sector remains problematic due to her helming of the drafting of the Namibia Equitable Economic Employment Bill (NEEEB) she does bring a fresh face to a ministry that has been dogged by incompetence and corruption.

The inclusion of an opposition leader also as deputy minister may grab the headlines but can't conceal the fact that much of the old guard who haven't really performed over the past five years are still there.

As in the past - the need to reward loyalists and achieve an ethnic balance across cabinet has trumped qualities like capability to deliver.

The appointment of the untested Iipumbu Shiimi to Finance is certainly risky. He may have technical expertise as the former BoN Governor but is seen in some circles as a 'yes man' who can be manipulated by his colleagues and interest groups.

He is haunted by the SME Bank debacle - in particular the fact that the Bank under his leadership eventually approved an ownership structure that involved the corrupt Zimbabweans who siphoned hundreds of millions of dollars out of the country.

He has also taken the job that no one else wanted. The finance portfolio was always going to be difficult but now he has to deal with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis on top of Namibia's failing economy. It's going to be very difficult for Shiimi to balance the need to provide an economic stimulus against the imperative of controlling Namibia's debt situation.

The appointment of Albert Kawana as Minister of Fisheries is worrying. He has been sent there to cover up rather than clean up and has already refused to reveal even basic information like who actually owns fishing rights and quotas.

Doreen Sioka has failed miserably in leading the campaign against gender-based violence yet she remains as Minister of Gender Equality.

Few tears will be shed over the departure of Alpheus !Naruseb, who is being investigated for corruption and Tjekero Tweya who as trade minister did little apart from unnerve investors with his reckless rhetoric over the past five years.

It makes sense to keep Dr Shanghula at Health during a public health emergency. So far, he has been a calming presence and seems to be committed to communicating the key facts on COVID-19.

The appointment of Esther Muinjanguie is a smart political move which conveniently means that if Nudo is in a formal alliance with Swapo there is a 2/3s majority.

Overall, this has the makings of a decent cabinet team although it would have been stronger if the President had been slightly bolder in clearing out some of the remaining deadwood.

The overarching problem remains however - that even the best team in the world would find it difficult to tackle Namibia's economic weaknesses, the escalating debt, and now the COVID-19 crisis on top of it all.





GEINGOB'S ADMINISTRATION:

FIRST TERM (21 MARCH 2015 - MARCH 21, 2020)

President Geingob won the 2019 presidential elections and will serve for a second term. He will be inaugurated as president on March 21, 2020 – the 30th year since Namibian independence. The Observer Connect magazine has noted below key milestones during Geingob's first term in office.

Reflecting on the second term of a Geingob Presidency, we must ask: Is Namibia better off in March 2020 than it was in March 2015?

Below are year by year highlights of President Geingob's first term in office. You decide.

2015

- Inaugurated as the third president of the Republic of Namibia after receiving over 87 percent of the direct vote for the office
- Addressed issues such as poverty, tertiary education costs and corruption in his first SONA and stressed the importance of building the 'Namibian house'
- Announced that poverty will be wiped from the face of Namibia by 2025, which would be the end of a second term as president, should he win re-election
- Bans foreign trips for top government officials in an effort to have them focus on issues relating to the country
- Announces the 14 governors who are to serve as political heads of the regions
- Established ministry of poverty eradication and social welfare
- In the same month, he delivered his first state of the nation address "fellow Namibians, the future is bright, Namibia is on the march and on the move"
- Instructed (then) minister of urban and rural development Sophia Shaningwa to make housing more affordable
- Called for Ministers to submit plans of action for their respective ministries the next five years
- Declared, as promised, that he is worth N\$50 million while his wife Monica has assets ranging from N\$45-60 million having been a successful businesswoman before she became First Lady
- First Lady reveals she is in the process of resigning from ten companies which could reduce her net worth by 50 percent, depending on market values on the day the assets are liquidated
- Set a deadline for the ministry of urban development to provide proposals pertaining to the suspended mass housing program
- Reaffirmed the government's willingness to meet with Affirmative Repositioning (AR) despite their members' dismissal from the SWAPO Youth league
- Held meeting with AR leaders at the State House and reached an agreement to service 200,000 plots, a task that will take more than ten years to complete
- Said he would ensure that all new government buildings would be accessible to people living with disabilities
- Proposed that municipalities write-off

historical arrears to aid senior citizens struggling to pay off debt

- Asked the Namibian people to meet the government halfway when it comes to the development of the country 'expecting the government to go all the way in assisting you is not realistic at all'
- Pledged 20 percent of his salary that would go into a scholarship fund that will aid impoverished children
- Warned about the implications of youth unemployment
- Laid down the plans for food banks
- Increased water and electricity allowances for politicians
- Travelled to a total of 19 countries over the course of the year and qualified for N\$ 2.4 million in cash for travel allowances
- Proposed solidarity tax
- Tried to rein in spending as revenues from the Southern African Customs Union dropped, yet the Geingob administration stuck to controversial projects such as the building of a new parliament building for over N\$2 billion (\$132 million)
- Made speeches about worsening drought conditions across the country

2016

- Opens the third session of the sixth Parliament; he highlights some of the government's achievements over the past year
- Acknowledged during his second SONA that after all the speeches of 2015, his second year in power will have to be about implementation
- Donated school shoes to 228 Tsumkwe San Primary School learners
- Promises that there will be 1,480km bitumen standard roads
- Unveils black economic empowerment law which requires that all new business have a minimum 25 percent shareholding held by the previously disadvantaged
- Met with members of the private sector to have a discussion on how they can help alleviate poverty
- Officially launched the Harambee Prosperity Plan
- Urged banks to help contribute to economic development
- Explained his involvement in the highly controversial Sunrise Investment township project where he and his family are set to receive significant profits from upscale housing built on land he co-owns with his former wife. Controversial Chinese businessman Jack Wang is involved in Sunrise Investment as a partner with Geingob. Wang awaits trial on income tax evasion charges on revenues exceeding N\$2 billion.
- Addressed the nation at independence celebrations at the independence stadium, encouraging the nation to be proud of the 'Namibian House' that was being built

- Called for an end to corruption during the 6th annual general heads of anti-corruption commissions from other countries

- Declared drought in Namibia as a state of emergency and provided aid of N\$90 million to those affected

- Commented on how rich nations avoid conversation on money attained from developing countries at a World Leader's Summit

- Approved 6 percent increase in politician's salaries

- First Lady Monica Geingos officially launched One Economy Foundation

- Launched the winter charity drive as well as pledged N\$20,000 per month to the One Economy Foundation

- Urged banks to play a role in economic development

- Answers to his involvement with African Sunrise Investments

- Leaves for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) - trip lasts 24 days - though he only attends General Assembly for two days

- Signed three laws: Namibia Investment Promotion Act, the Business and Intellectual Property Authority Act and amendments to the Anti-Corruption Act

- Told unsatisfied teachers that striking would not get them an 8% increase to their salaries

- Said tax heavens are causing problems as they harbour stolen African wealth during a speech at Columbia University in the USA

- Fired deputy minister of land reform Bernadus Swartbooi following his refusal to apologize to Uutoni Nujoma for comments he made calling the Minister an "incompetent" and a "fool."

- Travelled to a total of 12 countries and qualified for N\$700,000 in cash travel allowances

2017

- Told the United Nations that failure to reform and grant Africa a permanent seat on the Security Council with veto powers could result in the institution not being respected

- Presented the State of the Nation Address where the public expected to hear encouragement in light of the failing economy, drought and rising unemployment

- Became the third president of SWAPO after winning by a large margin at the party's 6th Congress

- Described the late, great hero, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, who died June 9 at age 92, as a "symbol of defiance against tyranny and oppression," in a speech he gave at the liberation struggle icon's state funeral

- Announced during the Brexit debates that Britain remains an important trading partner for Africa, as most countries are Commonwealth members and share common laws on trade and governance practices

- Declared that Namibia's economic challenges offer an opportunity to demonstrate strong and

united leadership

- Opened First Swapo Central Committee (CC) meeting under his presidency. The CC meeting is also attended by Founding President Sam Nujoma while Former President Hifikepunye Pohamba, Swapo Vice President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and Deputy Secretary-General Marco Hausiku tendered apologies

2018

- Became the Chairperson of Southern African Development Community (SADC) during the SADC Summit which was convened under the theme: "Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development"

- Announced that government will declare a humanitarian crisis on the situation of housing in informal settlements and mobilise resources to address it

- Toured the Havana informal settlements in the capital city of Windhoek where the hepatitis E disease broke out

- Presented the state of the nation address where the public expected to hear his program against corruption, plans for reduced public sector employment, plans for more serviced plots as previously promised, and plans to restart Mass Housing Project to have more low-income houses built

- Reshuffled Cabinet after allegations of corruption. Presidential Affairs Minister Frans Kapofi became the new minister of Home Affairs. Deputy Home Affairs Minister Erastus Utoni became youth minister. The ailing Minister of Industrialization Immanuel Ngatjizeko was the new presidential affairs minister (soon to be retired from public service completely for health reasons). Minister of Mines and Energy Oberth Kandjoze was reassigned to the National Planning Commission as its director-general. Albert Kawana moved to the attorney general's office while Attorney General Sacky Shanghala was assigned to be justice minister. Tjekero Tweya, who was information minister was reassigned to the ministry of industrialization, and his position was been taken over by Stanley Simataa.

- Travelled to 16 countries in seven months. He spent 64 days abroad and qualified for an estimated N\$850,000 in travel allowances

- Demanded that the commissioning of the proposed Namibia-Botswana to joint venture desalination plant to be done as soon as possible

- Held discussions with the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, at Buckingham Palace in London

- Refutes reports that the government went "begging for loans from China" - A local daily newspaper alleged that Geingob would use his state trip to ask for loans for capital projects, such as airport upgrades. The President clarified his intentions, saying that agreements, including financial ones, signed with the Chinese government, were based on the sound relations enjoyed between the two countries.

- Called on business people to translate policy statements into concrete action

- Conferred the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, First Class, on visiting former president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

- Feared and announced that without technology and immersion in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Africa will lag behind the rest of the world

- Reportedly warned politicians in the southern African country to guard against using the land issue for political gains. He also began a one-year term as chairperson of the Southern African Development Community

- Attended the UN General Assembly

- Said the decline in global foreign direct investment is driven by inward-looking policies rather than economic cycle - protested that Namibia has high GINI Co-efficient, the gap between rich and poor, thus, assigning middle-high income status to Namibia is incorrect. It damages the country's access to much needed foreign assistance

- During his state visit to Namibia, commended President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga for maintaining unity in Kenya

- During his state visit to Namibia, commended his Rwandan counterpart and Chairperson of the African Union, Paul Kagame for the manner in which he led the institution's reform

- Attended the AU extraordinary session were African leaders discussed progress made in the reform of the African Union Commission, at its extraordinary session

2019

- Reminded ministers that 2019 will be a "Year of Accountability" at the first cabinet meeting

- Cautioned Cabinet ministers about the misuse of government vehicles

- Opened the 9th session of the 6th parliament under the theme, "Promoting Integrity, Accountability and Professionalism

- Consulted parliamentarians to spare 2 percent of their salaries to help develop the economy

- Addressed people at worker's day commemoration in Katutura

- Declared a state of emergency over drought

- Travelled to Ruanda to attend the 12th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTA)

- Accepted resignation of Katrina Hanse Himarwa from the Education Ministry because she was convicted of corruption

- Appealed to world leaders to involve the youth in combating climate change

- Sent condolences to Zimbabweans after the death of Robert Mugabe (he died on September 6th 2019)

- Participated in the first Russia-Africa Summit, which seeks to progressively develop comprehensive cooperation between the Russian Federation, African countries and leading organisations in Africa.

- Told people, "Swapo is not a party that campaigns on empty promises"

- Asked party supporters to give Swapo another five years to maintain peace, stability and unity

- Stated that Swapo loves its people and uses its resources to help its people and has "zero tolerance against corruption"

- Declared 27 November as a public holiday to allow Namibians to participate in the presidential and national assembly elections

- Launched the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) National Governing Council of AU which aims to target youth unemployment in 2020

- Said that Fisheries Minister Esau and Justice Minister Shanghala should do the right thing and resign after the fish scandal was known

- Said the Fishrot scandal gives him sleepless nights

- Said that the local and international media are attacking Namibians and the ruling party in particular, by only exposing the people who had been receiving bribes in the recent fishing scandal exposé

- Was re-elected as Namibian president with 56.3 percent, 31 percent fewer votes than he received in November 2014

- Told cabinet ministers who publicly condemned the fishrot scandal to resign if they don't trust how the government is dealing with the matter.

- Visits the informal settlements affected by Hepatitis E outbreak

2020

- Declared 2020 as the "Year of Introspection"

- Said he will downsize the cabinet and have equal gender representation in parliament

- Stated that he is "a different Hage" and has heard the complaints of the people

- Claimed that he will not make any international trips until June 2020; sent Vice President Nangolo Mbumba to AU Summit in Addis Ababa for a week, along with several ministers; a trip that cost the government nearly the same amount as if Geingob went for himself

- Advised ministers (again) to refrain from fruitless international travels, they should only travel when it's essential and beneficial to the country's national interest

- Called on cabinet ministers to stand firm, strong, proud and defend the government against those who seek to weaken it

- Stated that those who will be part of the next cabinet are expected to declare their assets publicly

- Stated that Fishrot accused as innocent until proven guilty and would not condemn them on the basis of the strong, documented allegations against them

- Made a surprise visit at Katutura hospital and stated that the hospital was satisfactory. He made his observations during his first visit as president to the largest hospital in the capital city. In spite of serious infrastructure deterioration, leaking ceilings, cracked plaster, bug infestations, missing medicines and medical supplies, insufficient hospital beds, overworked nursing staff, patients sleeping on the floor and other constant challenges, he said the hospital was satisfactory.

NAMIBIA'S 2020 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ENIGMA



- Only one founding parliamentarian left
- Swapo to make do without two-third majority
- Class of 2020 keen to cut their political teeth

The current tug of war for political power in Namibia is a litmus test for the evolution of the country's legislature and the future of lawmaking in Namibia. Senior political reporter, Mathias Haufiku explains why in this in-depth analysis.

With 36 of the 96 incoming MPs set to make their debut in the 7th National Assembly, many are expecting to see a drastic change in how parliamentary affairs are conducted.

Despite such expectations, one cannot help but think of the quote, "the more things change, the more they stay the same". The quote is in reference to situations where there appears to be meaningful change, but many underlying fundamentals remains the same.

In our case, one will be ignorant to think that the new crop of MPs entering the legislative system will effect instant change. The fundamentals such as bureaucracy, technological shortcomings, legal competences and poorly researched speeches will still be the order of the day.

Outspoken incoming MPs such as Henny Seibeb and Bernadus Swartbooi from the LPM are expected to light up the House with their firebrand politics.

This time around, there will be more parties represented in the National Assembly. The incoming MPs will be representing 11 political parties, compared to 10 in the 6th Parliament.

Christian Democratic Voice Party(CDV), Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters(NEFF) and the Landless People's Movement will be the new kids on the block as they make their parliament debut.

The gender equality agenda is also well on track with 43 females forming part of the 96 lawmakers that will serve during the 7th National Assembly. There are however parties with no female representation. These are rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), SWANU, NEFF and All People's Party (APP).

While there has been a stark shift in the pattern of governance and the robust nature in which the business of legislatures are executed. At best, one can characterise modern parliaments as boxing rings where punches in the form of well-researched motions determines who reigns supreme.

From the onset, there will be many unfamiliar situations in the 7th National Assembly. For the first time since Independence the ruling Swapo Party will not have a two-third majority in the August House. This development, according to political gurus, will force Swapo to think out of the box to convince opposition parties why proposed laws tabled by the ruling party should be adopted, unlike in the past where the ruling party could bulldozed its motions through.

A classic example of how much Swapo abused its two-third majority was in 2014 when it hastily amended the Constitution within a matter of weeks, a move that resulted in the expansion of parliament and several electoral law changes. The opposition could not do much but make political noise as it did not have the numbers in the House.

Also, this time around, only one of the 72 founding members of the National Assembly will be sworn into the 7th Parliament. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah was part of the First National Assembly in 1990, albeit without voting powers, when Founding President Sam Nujoma appointed her as one of his eight appointees.

Clearly, there is a correlation between the level of intellectual debates in the National Assembly and the interest of the public towards parliamentary affairs.

However, the lax manner in which National Assembly affairs have been conducted over the years has not done much to inspire members of the public to follow parliamentary proceedings.

This perhaps explains why the public gallery in the National Assembly is always empty, the section is only packed during the joint sittings such as the State of the Nation Address and the annual opening of Parliament. These two sittings are normally addressed by the State President.

After independence, Namibia was left with Apartheid laws that have to a larger extent gone against the values of a democratic Namibia, some of the notable ones include the Squatters Proclamation Act and the 1982 Protection of Information Act.

In 2015, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) legal forum proposed that the Squatters Proclamation Act No 21 of 1985 be repealed because "people should not be evicted

unless alternative provisions or alternative housing had been made for them by the relevant authorities, usually municipalities". This Act provides for the removal of persons unlawfully present on land or in buildings, and for the demolition of structures which are unlawfully erected.

In 2018 the Namibian Media Trust called for the 1982 Act to be repealed because "the potentially serious criminal penalties attached to the Protection of Information Act in particular have a chilling effect on the work of journalists reporting freely in the public interest, and further flies in the face of our democratic values."

Parliament has over the years failed to speedily deal with outdated laws which in some cases has constrained governmental policies.

This predicament is a result of the interlinked setup of both Cabinet and the National Assembly whereby ministers who sit in Cabinet are the same people that decide on laws in the National Assembly.

While it is widely agreed that Parliament is a pivotal tool of any democracy, the Namibian legislature has over the years operated like an extension of the Executive branch to rubber-stamp decisions taken by the Executive.

Can the incoming legislators change this to give true meaning to concept of separation of powers between the three branches of government?



LPM	Swapo	PDM	CDV	NEFF	RP	Swanu	RDP	NUDO	APP
4	63	16	1	2	2	1	1	2	2

CABINET REDUCTIONS

IN 2020 FALL SHORT OF THE MARK



Dr Joseph Deischo

President Hage Geingob means well with his New Year's message undertaking that he will reduce the size of his cabinet. All right-meaning citizens understand that the sizes of both our legislature and executive are disproportionate to the size of the population. The costs involved in this imbalance are simply unsustainable. I sympathize with the President, but I have serious reservations about his ability to execute his intentions.

We in Namibia are unrealistic when we think of ourselves as a nation amongst nations. To all intents and purposes Namibia is smaller than the population size of Pretoria, not to mention Johannesburg, and Pretoria has only one executive mayor. We are a sovereign nation yes, but we tend to overestimate ourselves and in the process we lose sight of our potential and competitive advantage.

In our laziness to think and plan strategically in accordance with our strengths we use our meagre resources wrongly by eating up everything at the expense of sustainable development. We have seen over the last five years how good his declarations were, but not accompanied by action or result. He promised to have a cabinet based on qualifications in CVs, yet what we saw was mere recycling of incompetent and ineffective comrades for reasons other than what he told the nation.

Official corruption has more than tripled, yet not one minister was fired. They are reshuffled or allowed to 'resign' with the thanks of a grateful nation. He praises his appointees who are guilty in the eyes of the law and even protects them. He pays lip service to the rule of law whereas there are known citizens that he ordered to be victimized without due process.

He has promised a lifestyle audit for his executive, yet nothing was done at all. He enunciated reconciliation for other African nations but he does not practice the same stance of forgiveness in his own country. He constantly says Africa is in the 'rise' whereas he sinks Namibia by undermining the efforts of those who should equally contribute to the wellbeing of the nation. For instance, he has refused to have a dialogue with opposition leaders in the country and

continues to belittle them as insignificant players. Geingob told the nation last year that he cannot send his peers home without jobs.

Against this background it is difficult to see how he will honour his own promise. First, the context in which cabinet posts are distributed is virtually prohibitive. In better democracies the number of cabinet positions is determined by law, and an individual president cannot change it to suit his situation. The President or Prime Minister in such functioning systems has the responsibility to find the best men and women for the established positions. Unfortunately in Namibia the president can arbitrarily decide how many ministers he wants, and creates them without regard to the development requirements of the nation.

Second, the president sits with more than fifty good comrades for whom cabinet positions must be created. Here it is all about who is a good and loyal comrade. Competency and skill do not matter. This makes it very difficult for President Geingob to decide whom to send home and whom to keep, and how to countenance this decision. Thirdly, there are comrades in cabinet posts who claim to have better credentials as fighters for our liberation than the President himself. These folks are there not because they can deliver services, but because they sacrificed too much and must eat now. Removing them willy-nilly might just be the tipping point for the end of Geingob's leadership of Swapo. This factor is complicated dither by the rampant corruption in the government.

Sending these corrupt officials onto the streets might just open up the floodgates for more back-biting and revelations about who was corrupt together with them. In this regard, Geingob is extremely vulnerable and can be exposed by former colleagues who have been eating with him or with his knowledge or under his instruction.

Then comes the sharp double-edged sword of tribe and ethnicity. Namibia has failed to develop a formula with which to deal with the imbalances of tribal numbers. The difficulty for the President is figure out who from the tribes who voted for or against him as a

reward or punishment. These tribal enclaves are waiting to see if their faces are in the new and smaller cabinet.

Further Geingob's commitment to gender balance in line with the 2013 resolution of Swapo to go 'zebra' is not supported by his own conduct in Swapo. If he was committed to this, his first Vice-President would have been female and the Deputy Prime Minister a male. To turn around now and go against his own record will require of him to be truly a changed man, and there would political and financial consequences.

Lastly, he had a better chance at introducing the kind of reform he is talking about now when he had a much wider mandate and credibility. Geingob will have to commit political and class suicide to significantly reduce the cabinet as there are ministers and deputy ministers who depend on their jobs to sustain their lifestyles and places in the society.

Interestingly Geingob does not have a critical mass or following in the party based upon the values and precepts of the party or the constitution. His support base relies on political and financial benefits they get from/through him, or their calculations of self-interests. Those whom he can get rid of will flip on him and become his nightmare.

Therefore it is unlikely that Geingob will cut the cabinet significantly. He is likely to tinker here and there with the obvious dead wood, and recycle and recolor same old wine and pour it into different bottles.

We wish the President well in his final attempt to redeem his legacy. The nation has more reason to be sceptical than to trust that this time around business will be unusual. For now, the President needs support to do the right thing, which requires going against the grain and doing something truly in the interest of the country rather than the party.

*Dr Joseph Deischo is a Namibian writer and political analyst. In 1988, he wrote *Born of the Sun*. He is a respected professor, educator, public speaker, former executive director of the Namibian Institute for Public Administration, and political pundit.*



**THE LIMITS
TO GOOD
DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE**

... examples from Namibia

Henning Melber

Namibia maintains a comparatively high score in terms of democracy and governance. Since Independence it ranks among the top five African performers. But at a closer look, as in all democracies (in as much as in any other political system, for that matter), not all is honeymoon and roses. Often, the devil lies in the detail.

Let's start with the widely praised Constitution. As stipulated in Articles 35 and 37, all members of Cabinet and Deputy-Ministers appointed by the President have to be among the 104 Members of Parliament (MPs). The 96 elected and eight appointed by the President (with no voting rights) limits the choices. In some other democracies, even highest-ranking positions in government can be filled by individuals who are neither in Parliament nor members of any party.

For the President, the only option to add competence to elected MPs would be to appoint non-partisan individuals as non-voting MPs. This could expand the pool of expertise available for the allocation of ministerial portfolios. S/he (assuming that the President could also be female, which should be taken for granted these days) is also not forced to appoint ministers exclusively from the own party.

But since a two-third-majority was secured in the 1994 elections, all government positions have been occupied by party members. Their assignments are part and parcel of an inner-party co-optation and reward system and less so based on other competences. With the new centrifugal tendencies emerging in the elections and the more diverse Parliament sworn in on Independence Day, a more open and embracing approach might be not a bad idea.

This would however not iron out another flaw. Even with the increased size of 104 seats in the National Assembly, the appointed members of government (deputy president, prime minister, deputy prime minister, ministers and deputy ministers) in current numbers amount to roughly half of all MPs. But Parliament as the Legislative (the body which passes laws) is supposed to control the Executive (those in governing positions). This is almost impossible in any case, as long as the dominance of one party continues with close to two-thirds of the voting MPs.

The only difference to the legislative periods from 1995 to 2020 is that SWAPO cannot alone adopt any constitutional amendments. But the party's MPs would have to hold account members of the executive in government.

Given that most of them are actually wearing both hats, it is ridiculous to expect that they would control themselves. While

the announced downsizing of Cabinet is a welcome and long overdue step – not only for fiscal reasons – it will not solve this problem. Namibian democracy lacks parliamentary accountability. Standing committees have never performed according to expectations, including oversight of government policy, thereby failing to strengthen checks and balances.

On the regional level, institutionalised democracy was even reversed. In 2010 a law abandoned the election of regional governors from the midst of regional council members and handed the power of appointing any person of choice to the President.

This was in breach of the Constitution. At the time, Minister of Trade and Industry Hage Geingob argued in Parliament that this “would strengthen the unitary nature of the state, and make positive contribution to the concept of taking government to the people”. Only the constitutional amendments of 2014 made necessary adjustments. But this form of “taking government to the people” took some democracy from them.

Another flaw is in the party-internal electoral system. Party lists – be it for the National Assembly, the Regional Council or in local municipalities and other communal bodies – are established mainly through centralised procedures (in SWAPO for the national elections by the electoral college, named “the pot”).

The degree of local party level participation and ownership is limited and often further restricted by undue interference from the top leadership levels. Since the electoral system is based on voting for lists and not individuals, the parties decide on the ranking and by implication who is elected. Correcting preferences at the grass root level by interference from above is a practice not limited to the dominant party and a sign that democracy is not doing that well generally among Namibian parties.

This does however not eliminate the options for individual candidates in presidential and local elections. Because of a loophole in the electoral law, even members of political parties can run as independent candidates. Party members campaigning as “independent” candidates are a peculiarity of democracy the Namibian way.

How such candidates once elected reconcile their party affiliation with the declared independence (meaning autonomy), on which voters base their choice, remains a matter to be seen.

It is noteworthy, that also an independent candidate elected as president would need to limit her/his choice of government to the elected and appointed MPs. Would then an “independent” president, who remains

member of a party be truly independent? Not to forget: if the National Assembly would find a cause for impeachment, it could remove the office holder by a two-third majority independent of the electorate's vote. How then could a president run affairs independently?

A helpful reform aiming at more participation from the ground might reduce – albeit not necessarily solve – the problem of frustrated party members turning their back on the leadership without abandoning the party. Party lists should be compiled in processes, which include more decision-making power from a local and regional party base.

This might allow more diversity on a party list, though it still denies the option for voters to elect lower ranked members on a list by allocating votes to them and not the list as such. In some other democracies this is a choice the voters can make, thereby electing a lower ranked candidate into office over and above a higher ranked one.

An alternative to a country-wide proportional electoral system (where votes are for a general party list) would also be the first-past-the post principle based on electoral districts. In each of these a party or independent candidate would be elected by direct vote.

This strengthens a form of direct democracy through accountability of the elected to the local constituency. But this system is not without flaws either. As the results of the last elections in the UK showed, the outcome might favour a party with a huge majority of parliamentary seats because its candidates managed to come first-past-the-post (with a simple majority), while the party in terms of national votes remains far from an absolute majority.

The Conservative Party is nevertheless now able to rule as it pleases. Similarly, the US-American presidential electoral system can also produce results, which favour candidates with in total less votes from the electorate than that of others. Based purely on the number of votes cast in the last presidential elections for the candidates, Hillary Clinton would have been the elected president, not Donald Trump.

These examples show that democracy not only in Namibia is a complicated and imperfect matter. It remains vulnerable to abuses, manipulations, and gerrymandering. Not to forget: Democracy is under permanent siege by those in control over a society. As Winston Churchill stated in the House of Commons in November 1947: “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”



**SWAPO
PARTY 2020
- A PORTRAIT**

Citizen Nahas Angula

I have been asked to paint a portrait of SWAPO Party in 2020 for this edition of the *Observer Connect* Magazine. At the outset I confess that I am not a good artist. In addition I am not privy to the current inner Party thinking.

The SWAPO Party is a legacy and heritage of all patriotic Namibians. We owe it to the Party that Namibia today is a proud Nation despite a myriad of challenges the we face.

The current SWAPO Party image is best portrayed by the protagonists of the organization, especially its spokespersons. Let us review some of their pronouncements in recent times.

In October 2019 the Secretary General of the Party, Sophia Shaningwa, told those present at the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) offices that the Party was going to deal with Independent Presidential candidate Panduleni Itula because, "... we have all the money."

We, as SWAPO members, make monthly contributions to the Party. If we knew that the Party has "all the money", at least some of us who are retirees could have requested for conditions regarding our monthly contribution.

We are now more- wiser: The Party has all the money! Since SWAPO is a product of international solidarity one would have expected such money to be used for worthy causes, such as making a monthly contribution to some of the liberation struggle veterans who find themselves in conditions of near destitution, rather than threatening political rivals.

Similarly, in February this year, Secretary for Information and Mobilization, Hilma Nikanor, told the media that despite the loss of its

two third- majority in the National Assembly, SWAPO is still in "...control of the national cake." Such pronouncements paint a picture of a Party which is more interested in being in charge of the national resources rather than true to its constitutional mission.

The SWAPO Party defines itself in its constitution (1998) as "...a mass based political Party born and steeled in the crucible of a popular and heroic struggle for national independence". The Party constitution further clarifies that the Party "...is founded on the principles of democracy, solidarity, freedom, social justice and progress".

Looking at the cardinal aims of the Party and the pronouncements of the current leaders, one is left with the question: are these leaders speaking on behalf of the SWAPO Party as defined in its constitution or something else!

The impression one gets is that the Party now represents the wealth-seeking class and has abandoned the ideals of solidarity, progress and social justice. This is where the problem starts. The mass based political Party appears to have been captured by the comprador elites using its noble history for private gain.

The recent developments surrounding the suspected corruption in the Fishing Sector, the Fishrot scandal, seems to confirm this trend. Up to now, the Party spokespersons have not, out of courtesy, informed its members about the position of the leadership regarding the Fishrot. Now as the 'grapevine' has its field day, all Party members are suspected of being accomplices to the alleged crime. This attitude portrays a bad picture of our Party.

Some young members of the Party are up in arms with protests. Under frustration some voted for Opposition Parties during last year's elections. How does one explain a

situation where an Opposition Party gained sixteen seats in the General Assembly from five seats it held previously!

It may create a good feeling in some to characterize youth frustration as "tribalism", "Savimbi syndrome" and other epithets. Youth anger cannot be wished away. It must be addressed.

The Party should return to its constitutional ideals of democracy, solidarity, freedom, social justice. Democracy demands that the Party's internal elections should be free and fair and not tainted by money and other inducements. Leaders should be elected on the bases of proven commitment, dedication, experience, loyalty and competence. The spirit of solidarity and comradeship should be rekindled. The notion of social justice implies that Party cadres should dedicate their energies to serving the public good rather their individual selfish cravings. Ostentation and greed must be shunned.

As the nation is going to celebrate its thirty years of nationhood, all citizens should honour, dignify, and respect this day of patriotism, commitment and sacrifice. This is not a day only for swearing in a new President. It is a day to remember, commemorate and celebrate our nationhood for which the SWAPO Party sacrificed so much. Their blood should continue to water our future!

Citizen Nahas Angula is well known to all Namibians. He is a former Prime Minister and a former minister holding various portfolios since Independence in 1990. He is a distinguished elder states man of the ruling party, SWAPO where he served as 'Teacher' Nahas in the days of the Swapo educational centers in exile during the struggle. This small clip is not enough to tell the rich story of the contributions to the nation by Nahas Angula.

“ Leaders should be elected on the bases of proven commitment, dedication, experience, loyalty and competence. The spirit of solidarity and comradeship should be rekindled. The notion of social justice implies that Party cadres should dedicate their energies to serving the public good rather their individual selfish cravings. Ostentation and greed must be shunned. ”



FISHROT STATUS 2020: THE AFTERSHOCKS CONTINUE

Compiled by Wetumwene Shikage

A November 2019 global investigation by Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit in tandem with WikiLeaks, Icelandic news media and the local daily Namibian newspaper lifted the lid on corruption in Namibia's fishing industry. Currently, nine people sit in jail charged with fishrot related crimes.

More arrests are possible as this story has a second and third life. Several others are currently being questioned and investigated. March 2020 is the eve of Namibia's 30th independence celebrations and the swearing-in of President Hage Geingob for his second term. What is the status of the different aspects of this earthshaking high-level corruption scandal?

Fishrot recap

Al Jazeera aired a documentary, *The Anatomy of the Bribe* on 1 December 2019 on global networks. The investigative documentary showed how the Namibian Fishing industry was exploited at the highest levels. Funds have been illicitly skimmed from fishing profits and put into the pockets of a few young wheeler-dealers. While these few got rich, hundreds of fishing industry jobs were lost.

The National Fishing Corporation of Namibia (Fishcor) was founded to ensure black empowerment in the fishing industry. Currently, it is at the epicentre of the Fishrot scandal. Its top officials stand accused of dishing out tens of millions in payola to the corrupt ministers and business people involved.

The Al Jazeera Investigation is based on documents leaked by Johannes Stefansson to WikiLeaks. He was a former employee of the Icelandic fishing conglomerate Samherji. This company is one of Iceland's largest fishing interests.

Namibian legal-eagle, Sisa Namandje's name has been mentioned in the Al Jazeera investigations. Reports have surfaced that his law firm may have accepted N\$17 million in fishrot funds on behalf of clients.

Since that initial report, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has confirmed that it is investigating another law firm, Ellis Shilengundwa Incorporated. They are questioning funds deposited into their bank account by Fishcor to be paid out to clients.

Reportedly, the ACC is looking for Marén de Klerk from the Windhoek-based law firm De Klerk, Horn & Coetzee (DHC) Inc. He is a Namibian lawyer linked to N\$90 million paid out in dubious transactions from Fishcor. The ACC says he is in South Africa.

Lawyer Sacky Kadhila Amoomo has also been exposed by his alleged receipt of millions in diverted fishrot tainted money to be forwarded to clients. The details of this investigation are still underway in March 2020.

The fallout

Former minister of Fisheries Bernhard Esau, former minister of justice, Sacky Shanghala, former chairman of Fishcor, James Hatuikulipi, Esau's son-in-law, Tamson Hatuikulipi and former Fishcor CEO, Mike Nghipunya have allegedly benefited from kickbacks paid in Namibia and Dubai. With sunglasses, expensive shoes and tailored suits, they all sit in prison awaiting trial.

Initial reports alleged that Esau, Shanghala and James Hatuikulipi were the movers of the fishing scam between 2014 and 2018. This scheme was used to divert money to individuals, and reportedly the Swapo Party. The money was paid through the Icelandic fishing company, Samherji.

The Fishrot scandal involves kickbacks and questionable fishing quota transactions. The amounts involved could be between N\$150 million and N\$2,5 billion.

Shanghala and Esau shepherded a change in the Fishing Act through Parliament in 2015 given more power to Esau. Fishcor then was given a 15-year fishing quota worth N\$1,8 billion by the fallen former fisheries minister.

Parts of that fishing quota were taken from other companies such as Namsov Fishing Enterprises - which employed about 650 people in 2014. These workers lost their jobs.

Acting Fishing Minister Albert Kawana told retrenched fishermen in Walvis Bay in December 2019 that they would get their jobs back, "with immediate effect". This promise is questionable as there are no such jobs in the fishing industry. The government cannot force private sector companies to hire anyone.

The 'Fishrot Files', published by WikiLeaks, contains emails, memos, PowerPoint presentations, company financial records, photos and videos. This data shows how Samherji colluded with senior political and business figures in Namibia to gain preferential access to the country's lucrative fishing grounds.

The leaked bank records show that hundreds of millions of dollars flowed into companies owned by Shanghala and Hatuikulipi. Some of the bribes are disguised as 'consulting fees' or 'rent.'

Charges in court

The legal attempt to get the High Court to restore two of the fishrot accused's access to frozen bank accounts went down in flames. This failure is set to cost two of the men (James Hatuikulipi and Tamson Hatuikulipi) hundreds of thousands of Namibia dollars in fees.

In the settlement, the Hatuikulipis and companies in which they have interest with former justice minister Sacky Shanghala and Pius Mwatelulo, must pay the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) and its director's legal costs N\$350,000 by the end of March 2020.

They were also ordered to pay the legal costs of the others mentioned in their ill-fated legal move.

The fishrot millionaires are fighting from their jail cells to get access to their funds. By the end of March 2020, this seems to be unsuccessful.

To add to the legal woes of the accused, the Inland Revenue Department has also intervened in respect of at least one of the accused's accounts. They have informed Bank Windhoek that they want N\$55,4 million. These monies are allegedly for back taxes owed by a close corporation of Mwatelulo, Otuafika Logistics CC.

Fishcor MD Mike Nghipunya is facing three charges. They include fraud, contravening the ACC act and money laundering.

Former fisheries minister Bernhard Esau, ex-justice minister Sacky Shanghala, James Hatuikulipi, Tamson 'Fitty' Hatuikulipi and Pius 'Taxa' Mwatelulo were recalled to appear in Court as they were facing new charges, with regards to the alleged corruption scam. Initially, the five were charged with counts ranging from corruptly using their offices, to fraud and money laundering. All accused will appear again on 23 April on the new charges. As of the publication of this magazine, there are now nine men arrested in connection with the Fishrot corruption scandal.

In addition to the first six accused in the fishrot corruption scandal, there are three more accused. They are Nigel van Wyk and Jason Iyamboas well as Sakaria Kuutondokwa Kokule, who is a member of the Namibian Police Reserve Unit. Van Wyk was arrested in December 2019 when he was allegedly caught trying to remove evidence from the house of accused Shanghala.

Both Iyambo and Kokule were arrested in January 2020. They are charged with attempting to bribe an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) officer.

Iyambo and Kokule are charged with allegedly offering a N\$250,000 bribe to ACC investigator Junias Ipinge. Reportedly, they asked for him to remove ATM cards from the evidence. The two men also each face a second charge of obstructing the course of justice for the same offence.

The nine men are being kept in police custody at the Windhoek Central Correctional Facility. They are all represented by various Windhoek-based defense lawyers. Senior Public Prosecutor Rowan van Wyk represents the State in the matter.

Samherji - the scene of the crime

A detailed review of the fishrot mess from an outside-of-Namibia perspective is contained on www.undercurrentnews.com/2020/01/06.

The Icelandic fishing company is accused of paying millions of dollars in bribes to

Namibian cabinet members and businessmen for fishing access.

The whistleblower, Johannes Stefansson, was himself allegedly part of these deals. He served as Samherji's project manager in Namibia until leaving the role in 2016.

The company's co-founder Thorsteinn Mar Baldvinsson has resigned as CEO as the scandal broke in November 2019. He is alleged to have met Esau on at least two occasions in Namibia.

Samherji is now running to close down its operations in Namibia. Two vessels owned they own, the Saga and the Geysir, have left Namibian waters unexpectedly.

Their third vessel, the Heinaste, was seized

by Namibian authorities in February as part of the ongoing Fishrot case. As a result of the situation with all three vessels, more than 200 fishermen are jobless; more fishrot scandal victims.

In light of this compilation of fishrot information, Observer Connect asked political commentator Ndumba Kamwanyah his views on the subject. He said that this huge corruption deal did not only affect the economy, but it is affecting the lives of Namibians socially and emotionally.

"The Fishrot scandal has caused a wide range of negative impacts on the country. There are a lot of companies linked to the fisheries ministry that did not get their contracts because of this corrupt deal.

"Let's consider the workers who lost their jobs because of the scandal. Workers in the fisheries industry were retrenched in large numbers. They have been robbed of their rightful income which they used to take care of their families. They are affected emotionally because they can no longer provide for their families. This shows that the Fishrot does not only affect the economy but the society as well. This is why some of these workers resorted to suicide.

"So overall, I would say the fishrot did not just affect the economy in 2019 only. There are social and emotional implications as well."

Additional reporting by Clementine Tjameya, www.observer.com, www.namibian.com.na, and www.undercurrentnews.com



Bernhard Esau



Sacky Shanghala



James Hatuikulipi



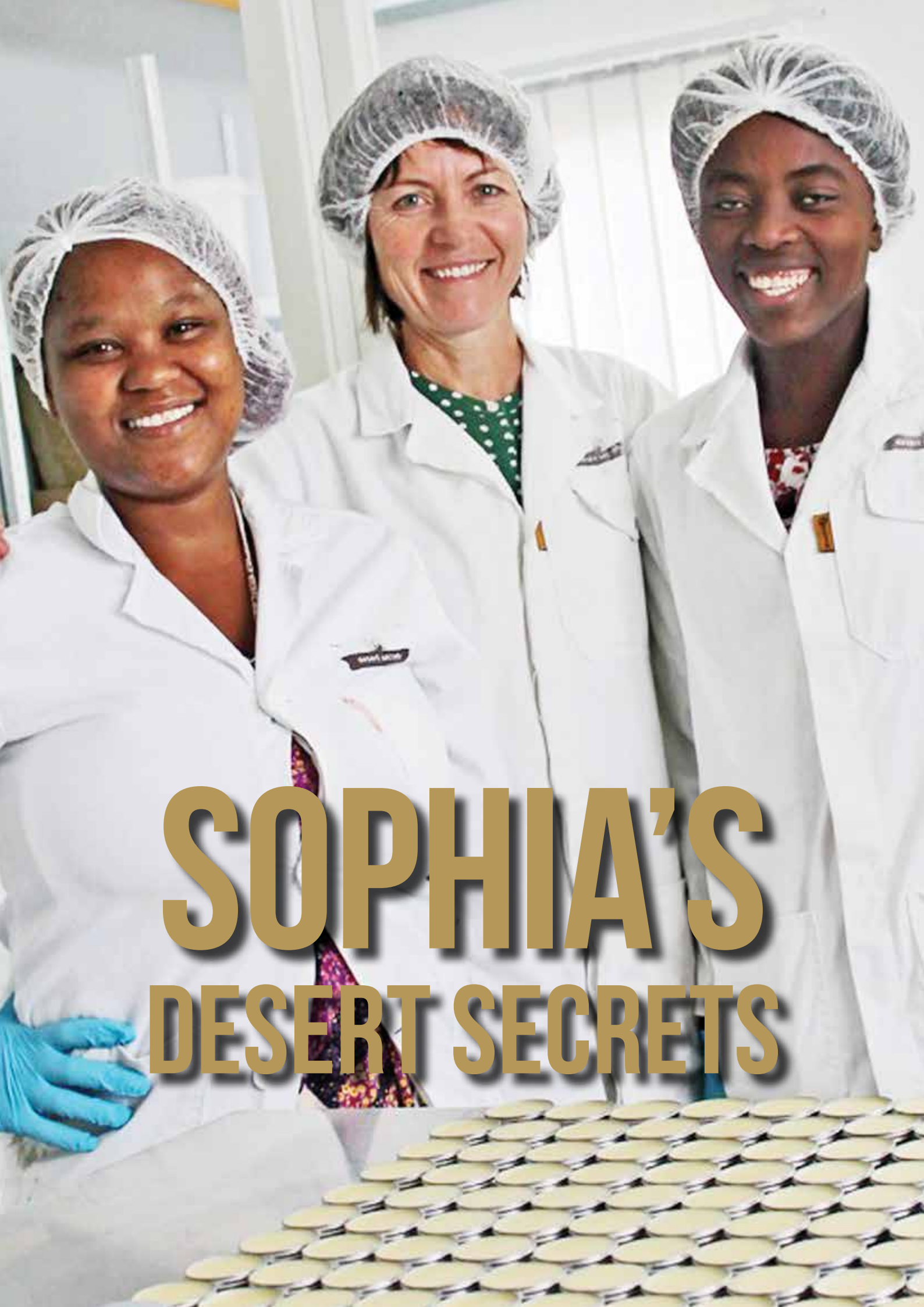
Ricardo Gustavo



Tamson Hatuikulipi



Pius Mwatelulo



SOPHIA'S DESERT SECRETS

Thandiso Kawerama, Wetumwene Shikage, and Clementine Tjameya

Inspired by the mystery and magic of the ancient Namib Desert, Sophia Snyman (SS) grew up in Namibia, in an area bordering the Namib Desert. The founder and owner of the SME, Desert Secrets, CC a naturally Namibian organic body cosmetics company, she was always intrigued with the scents after a winter rain shower. This daughter of the Namibian soil let her nose lead her to the plants; some smelled more herbal, others fresh and flowery.

Reporters from the *Observer Connect* (OC) magazine caught up with her to delve into how she took a chance, left a full-time job and started using natural ingredients, carefully selected, to produce natural cosmetics products for sale to the public.

These are Sophia's desert secrets.

OC: How did it come about for you to leave your job in the tourism sector to be the creator and owner of your own business? Leaving a fulltime regular job with a steady paycheck is a risky thing to do.

SS: About eight years ago, I worked for the First National Bank (FNB), in the tourism division in tourism financing. Working in the tourism division was a job I absolutely loved to do. I actually learned so much. But then, I realized that I did not want to work for someone for the rest of my life and then decided to follow a passion I had for plants and natural products. All my jobs were tourism related and now most of my clients are tourists; it is sort of interrelated.

OC: When did you start your business officially?

SS: I entered a competition in 2013. It was a contest about who could utilize Namibian essential oils the best way. These oils are readily available in Namibia and the contest outcomes would support the Opuwo facility, belonging to five conservancies.

Participants were required to make body care products with an essential oil, which is distilled at the Opuwo Processing Facility, managed by the various conservancies in the area. I was one of the two finalists in the competition and received additional training as part of the prize. I refined my formulations and learned more about perfume-making. The project was launched as a competition to encourage people to use essential oils in making cosmetics.

After my success in the competition, I was

hooked on making a cosmetics product with essential oils natural to Namibia. I believed in this produced and began formulating my business plans.

OC: Tell us more about this passion and how it inspired your work.

SS: My mother inspired me with this passion as we both had the same interest. Since childhood, in the area I grew up there were a lot of nice smelling and fragranced plants. My mother and I would go for walks, she showed me many plants and helped me distinguish their smells. This greatly intrigued me. She told me about a training course which she saw posted in the *Country Life* magazine. This training included lessons on how to distill essential oils from plants and make your own natural cosmetics. My mother and I both went on the training course and from there on, I was more and more inspired.

OC: Did you immediately start with the production process after the course?

SS: We first decided to start experimenting. We had a small distillery which we used to extract the oils from some of the indigenous plants in the Aus area.

In Windhoek, I experimented in my kitchen trying to make all kinds of products. I was always keen on solid products. I did not want to use water because with water in my body care products because then, you would need to use preservatives. My aim was to make and keep the products as natural as possible. My first product was definitely solid. It was a solid hand cream and solid body cream. Later on, I made solid perfume, I loved bath salts and scrubs and made those too. I started with the easier products which were my key interests.

OC: You mentioned that most of your customers are tourists. Did you face any challenges with Namibian customers?

SS: Generally, natural ingredients and products are more expensive. You cannot compare them to products on the shelves of main shops. I knew there would be a very limited market for Namibians to use them. I knew that only a small percentage of the market would be able to afford it. This is why I went straight to the tourism establishments.

OC: How do customers get products?

SS: I decided not to have a shop. My retail product line can be found in some Super Spar shops and pharmacies. I have an agent who distributes the products. I also have an agent who takes care of the tourism

establishments and another one who takes care of the products to be in pharmacies.

OC: Looking back at where you started, how is your progress so far to where you are now?

SS: Right from the beginning, I decided to take it slow. You can only grow with the money that you have available. In the beginning I used my savings to sustain myself, because I had no salary. I had to make a living on my own and still start a business. Initially I did everything from home and I later realized that that was not ideal. There needs to be credibility of the whole product and how you produce it. Locals are very skeptical about Namibian products thus I established a good credibility so that people can trust the product and know that it is made of good quality.

I moved to a small premises after a year which was too small and then I decided to rent another place just next to it. I am currently at another larger one. I take small steps at a time. When I see that I have a bit of money, I do what I have to. The business is still small, but it is sustainable. It is important for me to be in control of the processes. When you lose control, mistakes are made which can cost you money.

Do not waste money on things that are only good to the image while they do not bring in anything. Rather be modest and deliver a good product. It will not profit you anything to have a fancy place with a rent bill so high. There is no purpose in that. Use the money to produce a good quality product. Get your packaging right and neat. I use old boxes which I collect all over and I make sure there is a good label on it and at the end of the day I make my profit. Be careful what you spend money on.

OC: How do you get customers to trust your product, knowing that there are some who would first want to see the product before they buy it?

SS: I make use of Tourism expos and trade fairs where people can test to see if they like the feel and texture of the product, smell and see the product. If they like the smell they come back to buy it. I was always open about the ingredients which I explain to them. I explain the processes that we follow. Because of my honesty and openness, people accepted the products quite well.

To request a product catalogue of Sophia's products, please send a mail to: desertsecrets@afol.com.na or www.facebook.com/desertsecrets



SOCIAL MEDIA GENERATION GAP: *Instagram* vs **facebook**



By Clementine Tjameya and Thandizo Kawerama

Social media is the biggest innovation of our generation. In the span of less than two decades it has become essential for communication on all levels across the planet. It is the main event in the digital age. As various social media platforms explode in popularity and users, a generational divide has emerged. People between the ages of 20 to 30 (the youth) are more attracted to more vibrant and innovative sites like Instagram while those who are older, apparently prefer Facebook. We wanted to explore this reality and begin a debate about the causes.

Please consider this our disclaimer. We are not researchers and have no scientific method for exploring this issue. We'll leave that to the eggheads and bean counters. We just want to talk about something

we noticed amongst our families and communities and want to open the floor for debate. Let us look at Facebook vs Instagram as our 'youth vs mature social media users', comparison points.

Facebook is a social media site founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his college friends in 2004. It is one of the pioneering sites that boosted social media into global popularity in the early 2000s and it currently boasts 2.4 billion active monthly users.

Instagram is a social media site founded in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. It gained popularity for its various picture filters amongst other unique features that set it apart from its competition, and has since solidified its position as one of the top 10 social media sites with giants such as Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat, it hosts 1 billion monthly active users.

In 2005-10 or so, Facebook was the place to be. People who are now in their 40-60 age groups would recall 'poking' each other to start conversations back then. There was an obsession about keeping your Facebook status up to date. Facebook addicts were stressed out about making sure that everyone was tagged in the group photo you took over the weekend. Many of these people mastered Facebook, made it their 'normal' social media channel and have remained in that space for a long time. They have no plans to shift from that space. They were quite comfortable in the Facebook world and they have no particular reason to make any changes. These folks are in their comfort zone after using Facebook for 15 years.

However, Zuckerberg's baby faced dwindling mainstream popularity in the 2010s. We believe that most of the younger generation, entering the Facebook platform when they were in junior high school through university years, moved from Facebook to more convenient and appealing social media sites like Instagram. In our opinion, this change became painfully and embarrassingly evident when our parents who nagged us about the amount of time we spent online suddenly sent us 'friend requests' on Facebook! Just as we will not hang out in a club with our Moms and Dads, we will not be on Facebook with them either.

Being smart of course, we keep Facebook accounts semi-active to give our parents some place where they think they can check on what we were up to. They boast to their friends about following their kids on Facebook. Actually, for those of the younger generation, we migrated to other social media platforms years ago and never looked back. For us, Facebook has cobwebs.

Younger people and those with faster-paced mindsets (regardless of age) have already grown accustomed to social media and have moved on to only using sites that match our personal preferences. It seems that our parentals and adults in our lives are just starting to get the hang of things on Facebook. They feel like they've achieved something 'hip' by just having a Facebook page, even though many of them have no idea of how to use the many features that Facebook has to offer. They come to ask us for lessons when they try and fail to upload photos or videos or make voice calls. We are reminded of older people who buy the latest iPhone but cannot read what is on the screen unless they have their reading glasses on and do not know how to adjust the font so that text is easier to read.

During the popularity shift in the 2010s, the older generation stayed on Facebook. Some of the 40+ generation or felt happy and 'modern' by joining Facebook just as the younger generation moved away from it. They now spend hours communicating with friends and family across the globe and marvel at features that allow them to connect in ways that were impossible 15 years ago. Some of the people who chide us about being online too much, are now on their gadgets for hours, wading through Facebook and responding to their friends.

Is there any truth to the perceived generational divide? Or is it just us raining on our older counterparts' parade? *Observer Connect* asked random people of different generations in order to note their opinions on this issue.

August, a guy in his early twenties says, "For me Instagram is classier. There is less reading and more viewing, which is less tedious. The sense of community on Instagram is more appealing as one can interact with people and celebrities on their live videos and all that. Facebook is more of just a social network which is like a less classy version of Instagram. Parents gravitate to it because it is more networking than socializing."

Adele is in her middle 20s and said, "Facebook was a place for us to have freedom away from our parents. And when parents joined in we felt like our privacy was invaded because most of us out there don't want our parents to know what we post about. I feel like this is why most young people started opting for Instagram and Snap Chat. It's also because Instagram is more of mostly updating pictures, and parents don't have time to constantly upload stupid pictures. Whereas on Facebook they can post something with no picture."

We also asked a lady who is in her early 40s, and she had the most hilarious response, "Instagram is too fast. It even plays videos while I didn't say so. I deleted that thing from my phone immediately because I'm sure it was stealing my data!"

A man in his late 40s said, "The youth don't feel secure on Facebook anymore because their parents are liking their posts. This is why they choose Instagram because it has features that most parents don't know how to operate with. I also don't use Instagram because I lack the knowhow."

One woman in her late 50's said, "Facebook is my first foray into social media. In the last few years, I noted that my kids never answer me when I message them and several of my nieces and nephews are no longer on Facebook. I cannot see what they are doing anymore, nor can I see their photos and comments. I asked them about this and they told me that Facebook is for older people who don't think as quickly any more. They are on Instagram. When I said I would look into being on Instagram they begged me not to do that!"

From our non-scientific study, there really does seem to be a age based gap in who uses Facebook vs who uses Instagram. Regardless of what site is most used, the precautions about protecting your data, identify and safety while on line apply.

Our view is that young people feel threatened that their parents are now on Facebook because they post things they are uncomfortable with the adults in their lives seeing or reading. Older people are referred to as BBSM- which translates to *born before social media*. The fact that they know how to use Facebook makes young people think that Facebook is not as special or cutting edge as they thought it was, so they moved on to Instagram. In time, they will move on to the next 'big thing' in social media.

Social media is a necessity in our day and age, and it's clear that older generation is waking up to that reality. This is great in many ways because everyone should be able to use all the opportunities that social media has to offer no matter the age.

Information sources include: www.searchenginejournal.com/social-media/biggest-social-media-sites





**THE QUIET
HERO OF
THE DUNES**

... A 50 year commitment to rainfall, gekos and beetles

Thandiso Kawerama, Wetumwene Shikage, and Clementine Tjameya

Questions: a) how much rain falls in the Namib? b) what is a *Pachydactylus rangei*? c) why does the *Peringuey's adder* have its eyes on the top of its head? d) how does the Namib sand snake get its water? And e) what is the thermal dance of the shovel-snouted lizard?

Dr Mary Seely, Namibia's premier desert ecologist, conservationist and environmental scientist will tell you those answers, so take notes:

Answers: a) Three to 15 mm; **b)** a web-footed Namib dune gecko; **c)** this snake's eyes are situated on top of its head, so it can bury itself into the sand but still be able to see and catch its prey; **d)** they get most of their moisture from their food, but they will also suck water drops that have accumulated on their own bodies when there's thick fog; and, **e)** to prevent their feet from burning, the shovel snouted lizards lift their feet off the hot sand - a front leg and opposite hind leg lifts on a rotational basis- like a dance step.

This incredible woman, scientist, committed advocate of critical thinking and learning, trainer, mentor, and lover of the Land of the Brave has committed her professional life to Namibia.

She has done more for this country than most will ever know. Dr Seely made her mark first as the director of the Desert Ecological Research Unit (DERU) at Gobabeb, then of its daughter institution the Desert Research

Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) which operates out of a Windhoek base but serves the whole country.

A highly accomplished researcher and desert ecologist, she has had a vibrant career that has spanned over five decades studying the ecosystems in our very own Namib Desert.

As university students learning journalism, her interview was one of our first. We were embarrassed that much of what she spoke about scientifically regarding our own desert, we did not know. After speaking with Dr Seely and doing background research for this article, now we know much more than we ever imagined.

John Pallet in an article for the Namibian newspaper some years ago wrote, "Mary has always rejected the ivory tower status of science, and insisted that research is wasted if its findings are not made appropriate and understandable for common men and women. Common sense, scientific integrity, humility and helpfulness to others are the qualities that describe Mary's working life. Above all, she is driven by a deep urgency to build capacity amongst all people to look after our natural resources for our own prosperous future." After meeting her, we couldn't say it better than that.

Dr Seely has been recognized for excellence in her highly competitive field. Besides holding director positions at two separate major research facilities in Namibia as well as serving on various boards and committees, some of her achievements include:

Conservationist of the Decade by the Namibia Nature Foundation, 2008

Farouk El-Baz Award for Desert Research, 2013

Recipient of Honorary Doctor of Science at Grinnell College, 2015

Recipient of three honorary professorships
Land Degradation Advisor to the scientific and technical advisory panel of the Global Environmental Facility

Co-author of more than 100 publications

Author and co-author of many books including, *The Namib: Natural History of an Ancient Desert*

...in the beginning, there was the sky, the sand and the sun

Dr Mary Seely was born 13 December, 1939 in California, USA. She studied biochemistry at the University of California at Davis where she eventually attained her PhD, an amazing feat after being denied entry into the university's forestry program because she was a woman.

In America, she met the Namibian man who would eventually become her first husband. Dr Seely held a post doctorate position in Italy for six months and returned to the USA before she decided to make her way to Southern Africa with her husband at that time. She made a decision to work with the desert research in the mostly unknown Namib Desert in the (then) South African colony of South-West Africa.



In 1967 she found herself on a ship leaving from the port of New Orleans that would eventually bring her to the very conservative, apartheid ruled South-West Africa to study under Dr Charles Koch, the guru of the Namib, at the Gobabeb research facility. She would be under his leadership and eventually grow to run the entire research facility (he moved to Swakopmund for medical reasons) until his passing in 1970.

In that same year, Dr Seely was tasked with picking up the baton from her mentor and becoming the director at the Desert Ecological Research Unit (DERU) at Gobabeb. She would go on to hold that position for 28 years. Surprisingly, she was only offered one year contracts for each of her 28 years. It is a testimony to her ability to withstand administrative obstacles in order to continue growing, learning and teaching as a scientist and researcher.

It took tenacity and courage for a liberal-minded, highly intelligent, young American woman to come to apartheid ruled South-West Africa in the 1960s. She took on a leading position at a renowned facility in a male dominated industry in a sexist society. It is a challenge that many of her peers would have found daunting, but Dr Seely dove into the deep end and never looked back.

This history of DERU gives important background on Mary Seely.

In 1962, DERU was founded as a centre for conducting research into all aspects of the arid systems of the Namib Desert. This center did research primarily based on conducting ecological, climatologic, geomorphologic, and geographical studies. When it began, the center was a satellite of the Transvaal Museum of South Africa.

The center's work continued after the 1970 death of its director, when Mary was asked to take over on an interim basis. Her efforts were outstanding and the research was sound, so she received those one-year contract renewals every year for 28 years. Dr. Seely said, "I didn't choose the research unit; it chose me."

Madam Doctor Seely

Dr Seely recalls that to her, the science wasn't her challenge, "it was my cup of tea." The biggest challenge was working in an industry dominated by males. Many from the conservative Afrikaner society whom she met couldn't accept that she was a PhD level professional and serious scientist. As her work and reputation began attracting up-and-coming female PhD candidate researchers from South Africa, there were off-colour jokes made about whether Dr Seely was running a "brothel" in the desert.

She also couldn't speak Afrikaans in the beginning and this presented a serious challenge, especially in the pre-independence days when the South African government was illegally continuing its control over South-West Africa. Some officials were very suspicious of the American woman and occasionally leveled veiled accusations about her being a spy or infiltrator.

Dr Seely was located in the South of Namibia and the bulk of the military clashes and oppression by Koevoet and the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) occurred in the North of the country. Nevertheless, the threat of conflict was still in the air. Dr Seely recalls being told by the South African authorities to report back to them, "if any foreign journalists or photographers come into their area to interview the Topnaars who lived nearby." In addition, she recalls, "We were told to stockpile food in case there was an attack," she recounts.

The birth of a new desert baby in 1990

The Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) replaced the DERU in 1990, after independence. The work continued, albeit no longer as a sub-division of the Transvaal Museum in South Africa. Fundraising from interested international partners and supporters became a successful focus of her work.

When asked about why she chose to study the Namib over any other desert in the world, she said, "The Namib desert is fantastic, with so many interesting aspects. It is sad that

there are people who don't know about this wonderful gem you have in your country; that is when we felt prompted to have various training programs and educational programs and it shifted from straight biology to being more educational. I think everyone should know about how fantastic the Namib is."

Over time, the top notch work being done at the research foundation caught the attention of any scientists all over the world.

Rewards from desert work

The most enjoyable thing Dr Seely said she experienced was working with a wide variety of people from all over the world. The DRFN attracts scientists from all corners of the globe. It is largely due to her influence and research that the world understands much more about the Namib.

It is from this international recognition and scientific research that the Namib Sand Sea* eventually became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dr Seely worked diligently on this effort and prepared much of the documentation and scientific justification needed for this unique global designation for a special part of Namibia.

**Namib Sand Sea*

Namib Sand Sea is the only coastal desert in the world that includes extensive dune fields influenced by fog. Covering an area of over three million hectares and a buffer zone of 899,500 hectares, the site is composed of two dune systems, an ancient semi-consolidated one overlain by a younger active one. It features gravel plains, coastal flats, rocky hills, and inselbergs, a coastal lagoon and ephemeral rivers, resulting in a landscape of exceptional beauty. Fog is the primary source of water in the site, accounting for a unique environment in which endemic invertebrates, reptiles and mammals adapt to an ever-changing variety of microhabitats and ecological niches. (whc.unesco.org)

“Far too many people who finish their university degree just want to be CEOs or MDs of something. In fact, they should start off at the beginning, learn how things are done. They must try to create and do something that will generate income.”





The DRFN established its office in Windhoek in 1995 and since then it has done countless projects to help with sustainable development.

Dr Seely is now retired but remains tireless in using her energy to help Namibia on the path to sustainable development. Her successor at DRFN is Dr Jon Henschel.

When asked about what she would suggest are the most important things to be addressed, she said:

“The first thing that must be done is to change people’s attitudes.

“Far too many people who finish their university degree just want to be CEOs or MDs of something. In fact, they should start off at the beginning, learn how things are done. They must try to create and do something that will generate income.

“Too many people want everybody (all their children) to go to university. And that is fine for some. But, they ignore the Polytechnic (now the Namibia University of Science and Technology-NUST), which is as far as I’m concerned, the place that had better graduates than the university because those graduates had hands on training and knew how actually get things done. They could apply their learning.”

“All these higher education institutions should be focusing on critical thinking. Nothing else! Don’t memorize what is in a book but learn how to think critically about what’s happening.”

“The second thing I would want to see is better salaries and education for teachers. This will encourage others to become educators. We see how the desire to be a teacher is fading every day. Teaching used to be a very prestigious job back in the day and now they pay them peanuts and make them live in horrible accommodation in rural areas. This cannot continue. Teachers must be valued if anyone expects to learn anything.”

Currently, Dr Seely is sorting, organizing and preparing material from Gobabeb and from the DRFN to be included in the National Archives. Last year, she gave a lecture at the University of Namibia, Henties Bay campus at their Research Conference.

Later in 2020, she will be attending one of the biggest International Conferences on Aeolian Research (ICAR 2020). The conference will take place in Swakopmund from the 12-17 July 2020. Dr Seely has the honour of being the patron of the event. More than 150 international scientists will be attending this conference.

Dr Mary Seely lives her life committed to sound, relevant research. In addition, her life’s example carries a message of women empowerment and tenacity in the face of barriers.

She is, and will always be, a quiet hero of the desert.

Check out Dr Seely on YouTube. Com, National Geographic: Creatures of the Namib Desert (1978) and a host of other documentaries, reports, studies and books that she has co-authored, provided research or recommended.

NOTHING MOVES WITHOUT US

... engineers make the world go 'round whether you realize it or not!

Dr Smita Francis

Engineers make everything work – nothing moves without an engineer to make it happen. This is a bold claim, but a true one. Engineers work silently to keep the technical wheels moving to enable citizens to lead their lives in sync with the explosion of new ideas, products, and methods in our evolving world.

The under-acknowledged field of engineering constantly needs determined innovators, new ideas and cutting edge creativity to improve the quality of life in all sectors of the economy. Namibia and all other countries around the world, must encourage youth to study and pursue engineering as a career. A particular emphasis must be placed on the inclusion of women who are currently under-represented in the field of engineering. Making a great idea come to life is a function of talent, not gender.

In recognition of the importance of engineers, UNESCO's 40th General Conference of 2019, proclaimed March 4, 2020 as World Engineering Day (WED) for Sustainable Development. The year 2020 marks the inaugural celebration of WED.

Namibia has carved a special place in the WED proclamation, as this resolution was presented by Honorary Ambassador Albertus Aochamub, Namibia's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO at the 206th session of the UNESCO Executive Board meeting. Namibia presented the resolution on behalf of a group of countries which included China, Dominican Republic, Tanzania, Madagascar, Nigeria, Mozambique, Liberia, Senegal, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

The need for WED arises from the fact that the role of an engineer in the socio-economic development of society is downplayed. Engineering is pervasive in modern society and is an enabler in every sector of society from communication, entertainment, finance, healthcare to industrial sectors like construction, transport and manufacturing. The role of engineering and engineers in society and their contribution to industrialisation and its impact on the socio-economic development of a nation must be celebrated and promoted.

Thus, the World Engineering Day is appropriately celebrated as 'World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development' and manifests as the celebration of engineers and their contribution to the quality of life.

The fundamental objective behind the celebration of WED is to create and promote awareness to the careers in engineering locally and globally. It is envisaged that the



WED celebration will create synergy amongst all engineering stakeholders' and including ordinary people whose lives are affected by technological advancements developed by engineers.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (technology) has taken the world by storm. Its enabling technologies including artificial intelligence, robotics, data computing, and the internet are indispensable value-adding assets to the way the world works. These technological innovations have revolutionized the modern world and will shape the future of all societies.

The forecast is that most future jobs in contemporary society will be technical. It is thus vital to promote and motivate the younger generation to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. This can be achieved by providing role models and by publicizing the contribution of engineers to the socio-economic and sustainable development of the nations of the world.

The WED Day is also an opportunity to engage with government and industry to address the need for engineering capacity and the quality of engineers around the world and develop strategic frameworks and best practices for the implementation of engineering solutions for sustainable development.

Take note: engineers and engineering play a major role in infrastructure development, transport and other sectors of the national economy.

The internet outage of January 2020 is a classic example of the impact of engineering. The network outage was caused due to the breakdown of the submarine 'West Africa Cable System' (WACS) which links 14 countries across two continents. Namibia was hit hard by this severe maintenance glitch. This break that caused a nearly

catastrophic network loss was restored with a collective effort of engineers.

The impact of engineering is visible in the Namibian transport sector. The transport sector plays a vital role in connecting the remote Namibian regions and its inhabitants. A well-maintained transport sector contributes directly to the economic growth in the regions. It is an achievement and work done by engineers that Namibian roads consistently feature amongst the best five in Africa as reported by the Road Quality Index for Africa.

Engineers play a key role in supporting the growth and development of essential infrastructures such as roads, railways bridges, dams, communication, waste management, water supply and sanitation, energy and digital infrastructure which facilitate communications.

Namibia's largest commercial port in Walvis Bay is a typical example of engineering impacting the economy of the nation. The port, with its world-class infrastructure and equipment, is serving a variety of Namibian industries for example petroleum, salt, mining and fishing industries, tourism, exports and transshipments. Namibia, already besieged by economic pressure, would remain in a depression without the engineers that make Walvis Bay function so smoothly.

Namibia in 1990, had a population of about 1.3 million. In 2020, the estimated population stands at approximately 2.6 million (the national census will take place this year with results compiled by 2021). The formal and informal population of Windhoek and its sprawling tin shack suburbs has likely quadrupled since 1991. The 2011 household survey taken by the government states that in the Khomas Region (where the capital city is located), the growth between census recordings in 2001-2011 was 3.1 percent compared

to 1.9 percent in the period 1991-2001.

Urban migration is a major problem and challenge for the infrastructure and service provision in Namibia. There is a need to ensure that all citizens have access to safe clean water, sanitation, energy and other basic human needs which can be addressed by the concentrated efforts of engineering.

However, there is a great deal to be achieved to address the challenging needs of Namibia that relate to water, energy, environment, expanding population of our cities, and resilience to natural disasters.

In March, 2020, in celebration of the WED a high-level panel discussion on "Contribution of Engineers to SDG in Namibia" was organised by the Namibia Women in Engineering Association in collaboration with Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and other stakeholders.

The outcome of the panel discussion unanimously agreed is that engineers are the backbone of industrialisation and should be cherished. Engineering needs to be marketed aggressively to highlight its impact in our daily lives. It is essential to bring in diversity in engineering and female learners should be motivated to take up engineering. Namibia needs an action plan for the policies, rules and regulations with a standardised monitoring and evaluation plan.

We want all students considering their career choices to hear this slogan: If you want to change the world for the better, become an engineer!

The author is the founder of the Women in Engineering (WIE) at NUST and the Namibia Women in Engineering Association. She is also the first female president of the engineering council of Namibia.



The image shows the exterior of a modern building. On the left is a red brick building with several windows. In the center is a tall, narrow, grey stone structure with a pointed top. To the right is a large glass facade reflecting the sky. Two white flags with dark blue geometric patterns are flying on poles in front of the red building. The text 'KRISTALL GALERIE' is mounted on the grey stone structure above a glass entrance. Large, bold, gold text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

**KRISTALL
GALERIE**

**CRYSTAL GALLERY
DAZZLES WITH
JEWELS AND GEMS**

Donna Collins

If you want to be dazzled by the array of astonishingly beautiful treasures that mother earth has hidden deep inside her belly, then a visit to the 'Kristall Galerie' in Swakopmund, will leave you spellbound.

The architectural design of this one-of-a-kind two-story privately owned Kristall Galerie spelt with a 'K', is in itself impressive. Its sharp angular design and prominent crystal like glass feature facade influenced by the prize gems that lie within - is a taste of what to expect.

But nothing prepares you for the "piece de resistance" - a towering Quartz Crystal cluster specimen, which is the largest in the world. The Kristall Galerie is in fact home to this incredible formation of gemstone, which was mined in 1985 in the Karibib district, and has been preserved for display by the owners, as a pride piece of Namibia's heritage for future generations to appreciate.

The caramel coloured prism of crystal cluster which is exhibited majestically in the foyer of the Gallery, is estimated to be 520 million years old, and stands an impressive 3.5 metres high. It is also three metres wide weighing 14.1 tons. It is the only one of its kind that has been found and preserved for display, after taking five years to excavate.

This is the largest of a collection, along with other striking exhibits of minerals and gems called "Earth Keepers". These museum pieces include a wide variety of quartz crystals and a rainbow array of tourmalines.

The Kristall Galerie was born from one man's life-long passion for mining and collecting gems and it was 22 years ago that Johannes Kleynhans opened the gallery, which today is run as a family business.

We chatted to his daughter and gallery manager Minette Greeff who, alongside her three brothers Marius, Dewald and Hannes Kleynhans, are in charge of the mining activities, as well as the fascinating turnout of crystals and gemstones displayed and sold in the gallery.

"We mine our own stones at various mines around the country, namely in the Karibib, Outjo and Otjavorongo districts," said Greeff, adding that the mining operation is an integral part of their core business.

"The gallery is not only unique to Namibia, but is the only one of its kind in the world, and we are very proud of what we have created from our manufacturing jewellery side, to the unique specimens on display," she said enthusiastically.

"We are also a major tourist attraction in Swakopmund. We are visited by many overseas holidaymakers, as well as being supported by locals, who are treated to a feast of magnificent gems, jewellery and exhibits," she added.

"We also like to share this experience with our youth to show them what lies beneath the earth's surface and in particular what is mined in this country," she added, saying that they offer special tours for school groups.

She went onto explain that a visit to the the gallery includes a tour, an insight into the manufacturing process, plus a browse through the three boutique shops, as well as the upstairs gallery viewing. Here, exhibits are accompanied by detailed information on each stone, as well as regarding the extraction of the stones at the mines.

There is also a Crystal Cave walk through, which is a replica of the original Otjua Tourmaline Mine with its twists and turns, and is one of the most intriguing parts of the gallery.

Within the gallery is a craft area curio shop which offers a wide choice of mementos from hand-crafted ornaments, to strings of beaded necklaces, and collectables to mention some. Here you can also find polished gemstone mementoes, objects of art, carvings and jewellery, all made from the wide range of semi-precious stones.

The La Tourmaline Jewellery Boutique is where a selection of individual pieces of designer handcrafted jewellery items are beautifully presented behind glass cabinets. This offers something for the connoisseur with only the finest cut and polished gemstones, some encrusted in diamonds and all set in 14 and 18 karat gold.

A recent addition is a second walk-in jewellery boutique, with more glass cabinets featuring more hand crafted pendants, rings, bangles, earrings and so on, which are crafted with a touch of African creation.

An on-site manufacturing studio with three qualified goldsmiths provide in-house training to a team of apprentices, and are responsible for producing some of the finest jewellery and gem pieces you will find.

Walking upstairs you are flanked by huge chunks of rock broken open to reveal the treasures that lie within, all in striking colours of the glinting clustered gems that form intricate bundles. All the while you are able to learn all there is to know about the different gemstones mined, and gaze at their splendour.

Kristall Galerie is open Monday to Saturday, from 09h00 - 17h00, and if you are interested in gemstones, the entrance fee is minimal for an experience that leaves you somewhat enriched and dazzled.





**“I DON’T MAKE MUSIC FOR GOD,
I MAKE IT WITH HIM”**

- J y z Y orke

Clementine Tjameya

The Namibian-born hip hop artist, Jyz Yorke real name Jedidiah Mureti, made his phenomenal entrance into the music industry when he released his debut album titled *We Almost There* (2018). Since then he fell more in love with music and released his second album *The Eye Problem* in November of 2019. This album increased his fan base and by the look of things it is a stepping stone to greater heights in his musical career. The Observer Connect magazine had a meeting with him where he got to talk about his career and the challenges he had faced since the beginning.

He grew up in Omaruru in a single parent home with his mother. He started his musical career from humble beginnings as a pianist in church at a very juvenile age. He was usually always alone after school and he used this alone time to listen to hip hop and later on began to compose his own songs. Over time he perfected his skills with the piano and learned how to play the guitar. His love for musical instruments ignited his passion for music, but things were not easy on him at the start.

"Starting off my musical journey was never easy," he is quoted saying, "Since I was in Omaruru which is a small town, there were only few producers and most of them didn't understand my sound. They were very difficult to work with because they couldn't understand my ideas, and I also didn't have money so it was hard to get a studio. It was even worse when I came to Windhoek because studio prices were quite high."

Despite the difficulties, his debut album *We Almost There* was a success and it earned him a lot of interviews with local newspapers and through this people got to discover about his music and couldn't help but fall in love with his sound. The album went viral very fast because before he released it he made a remix single in 2017, *This is Namibia*, where he

talked about the current political, economic and social issues affecting the country. The song has great visuals and beats and a lot of people were streaming it on social media and gave very positive reviews. This made Jyz Yorke known before he officially ventured into the industry.

Things were very tough for him in the starting days, and this was mostly because of the fact that he wanted to do hip hop while he was a church pianist.

"Since I am a Christian and a church pianist, I noticed that there is always that clash between hip hop and gospel piano music. For me that has always been tough because I was stuck in a place where people wanted me to do only gospel music but I wanted to do rap music. I am not dismissing God, but I wanted to talk about my life and you can't do that through gospel music."

Jyz Yorke noted that the clash between hip hop and gospel music is a very sensitive topic to him because there was a time when he felt like he had to compromise one for the other.

"I am the kind of person the likes to express myself and talk about my thoughts and feelings through my music. I want to talk about what is happening to me. This is why I don't go with traditional doctrines and beliefs because they would limit me. I feel like I should go with how I feel and that works for me. My music is not about the gospel but I feel like I still glorify God with it, because I although I don't make music for God, I make it with Him. I have God in my thoughts and I have God in me so whatever I am going to create, I will create it with God."

Apart from music, Jyz Yorke also has a passion for language and literature. He just finished with his Bachelor's degree in English at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). He says that studying

English has helped him a lot in his musical career because he knows more about the language and can make all sorts of rhymes to make his music more appealing.

One can vividly note how studying English has improved him as a rapper through his second album, *The Eye Problem*. Every track on this album purges a lot of emotions in the listener because the rhyme and rhythm in the tracks give so much emphasis to the message. He stated he wrote it from the heart and is opening up about things he has gone through in life. He confronts issues like depression, heartbreak and anxiety among other things.

The title and concept of the album was derived from a Chinese movies called *The Eye*. This movie follows the life of young lady who had problems with her vision. She got an eye donor and with the new eyes she could see well and could even see visions. Jyz Yorke relates to this because he an eye problem that is genetic and had problems with his sight since birth. He talks about all his struggles and how, despite them he still has the vision to change his life and make a difference in the world for the better.

The most interesting thing about this album is every second track on this album has a poem at the beginning.

The intros and outros are poems. Paris, a friend of his better known as O.P.K composed the brilliant poems and they fit into the songs perfectly.

The album was produced by LVMINVS who is very creative in his craft and recorded by Junior Cupper, a talented South African artist and designer currently living in Namibia.

This album is a must have. It appeals to a lot of emotions and awakens the rapper in you, even if it's a horrible one.

You can stream and download it on iTunes and Spotify.

“ Since I am a Christian and a church pianist, I noticed that there is always that clash between hip hop and gospel piano music. For me that has always been tough because I was stuck in a place where people wanted me to do only gospel music but I wanted to do rap music. I am not dismissing God, but I wanted to talk about my life and you can't do that through gospel music. ”



TOP 5 TIPS TO ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE



There are no short cuts to attaining financial freedom; it requires discipline and proper financial planning.

Elzita Beukes, FNB Communication Manager, said: “Financial independence is the ability to live a financially independent life that neither relies solely on debt as a form of survival or living expenses. The main reason most people grapple with the concept of financial independence is because of a lack of discipline.

“There’s no truth in the belief that you can only achieve financial independence when you are wealthy, it all depends on developing good money management skills.”

In order to see the full worth of your money, you must manage whatever little you have prudently on a consistent basis.

Achieving financial independence is an ongoing process; it’s a behaviour pattern that must be practiced consistently, Beukes said.

Here are some tips for achieving financial freedom:

Avoid using debt to fund your lifestyle

Never use debt to fund your lifestyle; the use of credit to fund a particular lifestyle will only move you backwards. Only fall on debt when you absolutely have to and also make sure you understand the impact of the debt on your finances over the long-term. Make both medium and long-term commitments to rid yourself of debt.

Cut expenses

Conduct a careful analysis of where most of your money is spent and you may notice there are expenditures that are unnecessary and can be removed from your list. This is all about gauging what’s important

enough for you to spend your money on. If you are spending money on things that have no direct benefit to your financial wellness, then you will never realise financial freedom.

Save and Invest

Start a savings and investment plan that will cater for your financial needs both over the short and long term. By putting money aside, you are letting your money work for you instead of just spending it compulsively.

Examine your financial decisions carefully

Before making any financial commitments look at your financial situation holistically, for example, instead of buying something you really want on credit, rather save for it. Remember that if interest rates increase you may end up paying more to settle that debt. It’s better to save for the items you want to buy, it’s delayed gratification but much cheaper.

Remain consistent

Staying financially independent is an ongoing process, even after you have realised your goal of financial freedom, you need to ensure it stays that way. Ensure that you stay abreast with economic conditions and how they affect you personally. Your financial needs will change according to your life stage; ensure that your finances are also modelled according to the stage of your life.

“A mind-set change is the first step, you must change the way you perceive money and what you aim to achieve with whatever amount you earn,” Beukes said.



*NUST Department of Alumni and
Foundation director
Kaitira E Kandjii*

NUST: Networking creates opportunities

Thandizo Kawerama

Youth unemployment is a big problem in Namibia. The 2019 estimate is that the youth unemployment rate is as high as 44 percent. Graduates of tertiary institutions are being pumped out year after year.

This signals that there are educational opportunities, but few job prospects. The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has opened the Department of Alumni and the NUST Foundation. This program will begin to address the problem of unemployed graduates. It will also develop a viable alumni association in the process.

The director of the new department, Kaitira E Kandjii, sat down with *Observer Connect* to introduce the department and its functions. He also presents insights on how it plans to aid the university's graduates through its future activities.

The Department of Alumni and NUST Foundation was launched in August of 2019 and is divided into two units, the Alumni unit and NUST Foundation unit. The two units act as separate entities that complement each other in their functions. They both work towards the common goal of creating opportunities for the university and its students through networking.

The director described the urgency to have a community of NUST graduates as one of the main motivations that lead to the formation of the Alumni Unit. "Since the inception of both Polytech and NUST, we have never had an alumni association. Our graduates move on with their lives and away from us. There was no formal institution with the goal of bringing them together. We decided to establish an alumni association."

It is important that institutions of higher learning maintain relationships with their graduates. Alumni networking can be beneficial. Alumni contacts can provide leads and guidance for current students looking for jobs.

"NUST has a database of 35,000 alumni; we have graduated quite a number of students. There is a need to harness their energy, experience, contacts, and skills so that they can also plough back into the institution."

Kandjii further explained that the Alumni Unit will serve to establish an alumni association for NUST. This association will seek to create opportunities for graduates through networking. "The function and objective of the association are to bring our graduates together. They will have a voice within institution affairs and the higher education sector. We also will create a platform where they can network amongst themselves."

The Alumni association will also be beneficial to students currently enrolled at NUST. The association will help encourage mentorship with distinguished NUST alumni in various sectors. We will use activities such as seminars, public lectures and workshops as outreach tools.

As of March 2020, the department will be hosting a campaign inviting all NUST graduates to update their credentials and contacts. The department will then be able to locate graduates and add their information to a database specifically for NUST graduates. The database will be used to organize future activities. These events and programs will help all graduates, to network with members within various industries.

The alumni association will have three categories: Full, associate or honorary members. This structure will help establish the needs of graduates in each category. Though there will be different categories of membership, the alumni body will be an inclusive association. Every member's voice matters.

The Alumni Unit will not have facilities to provide financial support for students. However, one of the institution's goals is to develop employment opportunities for students. "We will speak to different industries and try to develop internship or volunteer opportunities for our graduates."

Kandjii stressed that not all the opportunities will provide monetary compensation. The experience obtained, practical skills learned and networking will be extremely valuable. This will be a great step towards finding satisfying and compensated employment. While the department will try to develop opportunities for graduates, it is important that they look for employment or internship placements on their own.

"The important part of opportunities like internships is that you are gaining experience. There are skills learned when you apply for positions. Employers always ask for qualifications plus experience. Internships provide that experience (and possibly a recommendation) even if no salary is paid. This is a big boost in your job search."

The director advised university applicants to research industries where there is current or growth potential. For example, the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are currently receiving private and public sector investment.

The Alumni Association expert also stated that students and graduates should consider starting their own businesses. The events sponsored by the Department

of Alumni and Foundation will help establish a culture of entrepreneurship. "It is something we need to do with our graduates here. When bringing people together, we will try to give them exposure to different ideas and possibilities so they can start learning outside the classroom as well."

While the Alumni Unit works towards creating a network of NUST graduates, the NUST Foundation unit will work towards contributing to the financial development of the university. It will work towards fundraising for the institution and receiving grants and donations. These resources will assist the university in its developmental needs. "Our hostels only accommodate 400 students, both female and male. This is a challenge with 400 out of 12,000 students having accommodation possibilities. If you look at the numbers, most of our students come from rural areas. These students need accommodation and yet we do not have enough facilities. The foundation will play a role in raising funds to address these kinds of challenges."

The NUST Foundation plans to bring in prominent people to help assist in raising funds and uplift the profile of the institution. "We will also engage with partners, like embassies and a range of institutions outside the country."

There are many students who face financial difficulties that stand in the way of their studies.

For example, some students are unable to sit for exams because they don't have taxi money to get to the test site. Kandjii explained that the NUST Foundation unit will seek to help shoulder a portion of the burden many students face. "There are a lot of needy students who are attending school here and they also need help."

The activities of the NUST Foundation should begin by October 2020. There are still documents and legal procedures outstanding.

One of the department's goals is to mobilize the NUST Alumni association. "We are going to have an annual general meeting for our members on 28 October. During that meeting, alumni assembly will be asked to approve a constitution and launch the Association formally." During that meeting, they are also going to elect an executive committee that will supervise the affairs of the association.

The applications to join the association will be available online or onsite at NUST. The department plans to expand its services nationwide. However, its initial functions will only be available in Windhoek.

BOOK REVIEW

DO I WRITE OR DO I EAT

...time is a scarce commodity for creative minds

Rémy Ngamije

Of the many challenges which can beset and derail the writing process, time is probably the most crucial one. In its abundance it is a boon, but in its scarcity it is a bane. Whether a piece of writing is completed or not, or whether writing is appealing (whether a story works), is determined by how well a writer masters their own personal time and the sense of time in the story. All good things—writing among them—take time.

For aspiring Namibian writers, time is more than the ticking of the clock or an impending deadline. It is a constant economic battle to ensure the essentials of their lives are provided for in sufficient quantities to warrant spending the remaining free hours working on their craft. For many writers (and artists) in the country, this is not always possible.

The reality for writers of all levels is that too much time is spent in the formal economy—pursuing alternative careers—trying to eke out a living. This is not a bad thing. Throughout history writers everywhere have always had to have other hustles to provide for themselves, and I think this has made for some interesting and rich storytelling. But I warrant few writers have it quite as hard as Namibians who find themselves competing for scarce resources in an economy defined by wanton scarcity and the re-prioritisation of writing to the lowest rungs of need (but not want).

If the premise that all good things takes time is true, then Namibian writers are not being given time to start their projects from start to finish. They are not provided with the time needed to revise or edit their work. Worse, many of them do not even have the time to read, the most essential skill any writer can possess.

For the most part, writing is the thing that is attended to at the end of the day. And only if one is lucky. Many are not. This is evidenced by the country's low literary output. There is a Namibian-shaped hole in Africa and world storytelling that is not being filled in. This should be a cause for concern. But it is not.

My advice for aspiring writers of any kind is this: if you are going to make a serious go of

writing, be prepared to go it alone. In the absence of regional or national bodies willing to fund the literary arts through the provision of writing grants or residencies, and with a small literary community, learning to make time for one's craft is as essential as the practice of writing. Securing some form of employment which provides the barest necessities while providing time to read and write is important. Thereafter, dedication and discipline come into play.

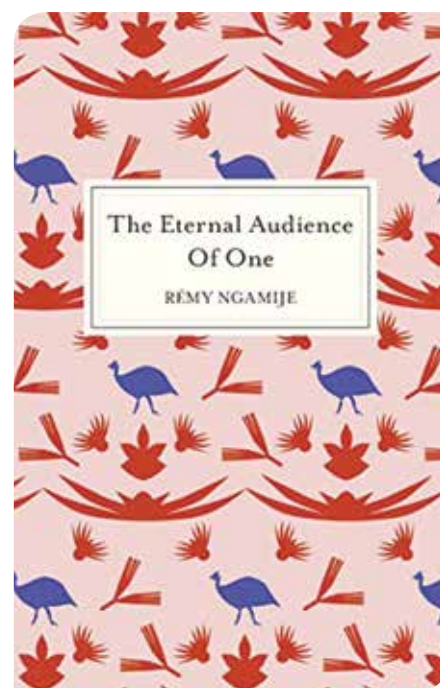
Constantly reading, continuously writing, and always having something to work on—either a short story, or a longer manuscript is required. All of these factors are needed to take any writer to the most important part of their work: the end of a project and, hopefully, submission to local, continental, and international publications who are always willing to consider polished and completed work.

While it remains each individual writer's task to make their way in the world, at least in Windhoek, the journey is not so lonely. The Windhoek Writers Club (WWC), a bi-monthly meeting of poets, photographers, and writers provides a sense of community and a diverse space for collegial critique for creative submissions. Furthermore, *Doek!* Namibia's only online literary magazine provides a local publishing platform for members of the WWC and showcases their work to a national and international audience of readers.

Less than a year on from the release of my debut novel, *The Eternal Audience of One*, navigating in new authorial waters, the writing struggles remain the same: titles need to be thought of, characters and plot are in constant need of development, and revisions to all of my writing still need to be made. However, the only constant throughout is the fight for time to continue honing my craft through reading and writing. This desperate search for time is an equaliser for any writer in the world, but in Namibia, with all the hardships writers face, it is an especially challenging factor to overcome. It is my hope that the country's desperate need for writers is realised, and that the burdens associated with writing are eased in some way. In the meantime, the most I can do is wish any writer strength and determination on their journey.

Rémy Ngamije is a Namibian short story writer, columnist, poet, and the author of *The Eternal Audience of One*, his debut novel. He is also the editor-in-chief of *Doek!*, Namibia's online literary magazine. Stay in tune with the Windhoek Writers Club (WWC) at doek-litmag.com/windhoek-writers-club.

The Eternal Audience of One is a must read. Find it in Windhoek at the Book Den. The ebook is available on Amazon.com. Google the book for other reviews and plot summaries. This enticing story follows the intersecting lives of Séraphin and a host of eclectic characters from pre- and post-1994 Rwanda, colonial and post-independence Windhoek, Paris and Brussels in the '70s, the crowded public schools of Nairobi, as well as the hormone-saturated clubs and streets of Cape Town. From one of Africa's emerging literary voices comes a piquant modern epic of family, friendship and migration. (Amazon.com summary)



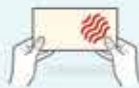
**BANK OF NAMIBIA IN CELEBRATION OF 3 DECADES OF INDEPENDENCE,
SMOOTH TRANSITION OF POWER BETWEEN 3 PRESIDENTS
- PEACE, STABILITY AND PROGRESS -
PRESENTS THE NEW N\$ 30 COMMEMORATIVE POLYMER BANKNOTE**

KNOW THE SECURITY FEATURES



LOOK

Take a careful look at the overall colours. Lift the banknote up to the light and discover see-through feature and shadow image.



FEEL

Feel the tactility of raised print in the text and portrait.



TILT

Tilt the banknote to check the colour changing and dynamic features in the clear windows and glossy prints.



1

Feel the raised print on the portraits of the three presidents: H.E. Dr Sam Nujoma, H.E. Dr Hifikepunye Pohamba and H.E. Dr Hage G. Geingob.



2

Feel the braille dots for the visually impaired.



3

Look at the acronym BoN on the obverse of the note.



4

Look at the dynamic effect between the diamond-shaped window and the value 30 with gold ink, (obverse and reverse).



5

Look at the image of the Black Rhino printed on the window, (obverse and reverse).



Obverse



6

Tilt and observe the green to gold colour change effect in the BoN logo.



7

Tilt the banknote and see the colour change from gold to blue in the patterns inside the large window, (obverse and reverse).



8

Tilt the gold band containing the BoN logo and the value 30.



Reverse

**THE NEW BANKNOTE IS PRINTED ON A SMOOTH,
SECURE AND DURABLE MATERIAL KNOWN AS POLYMER**

Bank of Namibia



FLASHBACK

For the **Flashback** feature in the *Observer Connect*, we scour the considerable and valuable archives of the *Windhoek Observer* (aka *Windhoek Advertiser*) for stories from yesteryear that may have relevance to something Namibia continues to grapple with today.

On Saturday January 27 1990, the newspaper did an article that describes the terrible sewerage conditions facing the people of Khorixas. This problem continues to grip the nation and seems to only be getting worse.

Khorixas still struggles with a sewerage problem. Even parts of Windhoek and the informal suburbs that have exploded in growth have major problems with sanitation.

There have also been reports about sewerage problems around the country including Ongulugwambashe, Kuisebmond, Aus and Eenhana to name a few.

There is an urgent need for budgetary, civil planning and waste management solutions to the country's sewerage systems challenges. Consistently poor sanitation exposes the most vulnerable citizens of this country, the poor and marginalized, open to disease outbreaks as evidenced by the spread of Hep E in the poorest and most destitute communities living in squalor around the capital city and in other locations around the country.

The 1990 report about sewerage conditions

in Khorixas that is re-printed below provides an in-depth report on how the poor state of the town's sewerage system affected the livelihood of the town's people.

Take note that we hold true to replicating exactly what was printed at the time noted. We have not updated the piece, corrected grammar or changed any aspects of the original text whatsoever. It is what it is.

“Not a town to linger in” Sharon Montgomery

The first thing one notices on arriving in Khorixas after dark, is the number of mosquitos. Each room in the house where I stayed was protected by a window netting



and hummed like a small generator, giving very little chance of sleep that night.

Early next morning Herman Eiseb, a resident of the town, explained that everyone in Khorixas suffered similar or even worse problems, and that the reason for the mosquitos was the river of sewage running down the centre of the high density residential area of the town.

At his own house, a small stream of sewage bubbled from under a manhole cover to create a smelly ditch which ran through the rest of his neat, clean garden.

Holding our breath, we crossed the river, where the stream of sludge reached the hubcaps of the vehicle. As we walked along the backs of the houses, we saw foul-smelling liquid oozing from under every single manhole cover along the row, indicating a blockage in the main sewer.

Children were hopping from rock to rock trying to avoid the trying to avoid the sewage during their games.

Speaking to some of the women, sitting in their back gardens, we learned that this state of affairs had continued for the past two months and that despite regular visits and bitter complaints to the administration

offices, the situation had not improved at all. The women said that no-one in town could sleep because of mosquitos breeding in the permanent river of sludge.

The neatness of the gardens Khorixas, even in the poorest section of the town, contrasted dramatically with the filth in the streets. Many of the inhabitants have been recycling cooldrink tins and using them to build multi-coloured lean-to's and shade areas in their gardens.

A recent survey of households and shops in the town, conducted by two schoolboys of Khorixas, showed that a very small percentage of residents in the lower part of the town have bins in which to place their rubbish. Not a single person was satisfied with the rubbish removal service. The piles placed outside gardens were not taken away, and unless they had their own vehicles the residents had no way of removing the rubbish themselves.

Surely in a 'major' town where the inhabitants themselves have identified a serious health and environmental problem, there should be some action from the Administration officials and community leaders.

I approached Mr Maritz, the Director of Agriculture and Works for the Damara

Administration for comment on the sewage situation, and he said that the river of sludge was caused by regular blockage of the system due to incorrect use.

He stated that there was regular maintenance of the drains when blockages occurred but that the main sewer in the river was particularly prone to blockages. As far as he was concerned, he said, the most serious problem had been solved last year when all the defective pipes had been dug up and replaced. According to him, the situation at present was normal.

As regards the lack of rubbish bins, Mr Maritz claimed that although he was not the person in charge of this service, the question had been brought up at a meeting and drums for litter collection were currently being distributed around the town. He agreed that the situation in this respect was most unsatisfactory at present. Hopefully there will be a concerted action, both by officials and townsfolk to improve the situation in Khorixas. Obviously the lack of efficient rubbish removal services and the sewage problem go hand in hand. It is not only health and self-esteem which stand to suffer. Regular busloads of visitors are frequently taken through Khorixas and there can be no doubt of the impression with which they are left.



NAMIBIA IN NUMBERS



11 And ZERO!

Number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Namibia as of March 28, 2020 and number of people who have died in Namibia due to the pandemic

22,020

Number of deaths worldwide due to the Coronavirus as of March 28, 2020

500-700

Estimated number of workers who lost their jobs after Namsoy Fishing at Walvis Bay closed last year. This was as a result of the Fishrot scandal, a corruption case unveiled by the Al Jazeera Investigative Unit exposing the corruption in the fishing industry in Namibia which involves the ex-fisheries minister Bernhard Esau and former justice minister Sacky Shanghala

25

The number of fishermen who allegedly died since they lost their jobs due to the Fishrot scandal as they suffered because they had unfairly lost their jobs in the fishing industry. The deaths were due to increasingly high blood pressure caused by stress, as well as suicide

12,000

The number of first year university students that NSFAP cannot support in their studies due to a N\$641 million budgetary shortfall. Which means that of the 15,087 who qualified for NSFAP loans, only 2,925 (20%) would be included in the program

N\$40,128,512

The amount owed by the Town Council of Khorixas to NamWater. Several local authorities across the country owe huge amounts to the national water provider. The small village council of Tses owes N\$8,319,728 and has carried this debt for 4,217 days.

200,000

The number of 'new' people who registered to vote in the presidential and National Assembly elections in 2019. The target of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) was 300,000 new registrants

820,227

The number of votes that were casted in last year's National Assembly election, according to results announced by the Electoral Commission of Namibia

65 percent

The increase in new infections of Hepatitis E last year. Infections rose from 2,747 to 6,974 cases between January and December last year. The total number of people killed by the disease hit 59 since it first broke out more than two years ago. The primary obstacles hampering efforts to stop the outbreak included limited sanitation facilities and poor access to water

N\$572.7 million

The amount endorsed for drought relief interventions to assist affected food insecure households and drought affected farmers in all 14 regions

41,000

The number of cattle that died over a period of ten months while serious losses of livestock have been experienced across the country due to the severe drought

61 percent

The percentage of full-time high school pupils who passed the grade 12 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) examinations in 2019. This percentage is a drop from 66.7 percent in 2018

77 percent

The percentage of illiterate adults who live in the rural areas as compared to the 23 percent that live in urban areas

N\$720,000

The amount of money stolen by a hacker who is a former police officer at Rosh Pinah. He allegedly hacked the emails of a Walvis Bay businessman and replaced the victim's bank account information with his own

101

Age of an elderly woman who took her own life in a hut in Omeege Village near Oshakati.

18,925 million

The number of cubic meters contained in the Hardap Dam. As of the end of January 2020, it was 6.4 percent full. Recent good rains in February 2020, have increased the amount of water, though not considerably

N\$6,674.03

The average price of a standard 2- or 3-bedroom houses recorded on average in Windhoek. Prices of these houses fell by 10,9% from January to June 2019, and a 3,7% decrease when compared to 12 months ago.

N\$3,000

The lowest rental prices of standard 2-3 bedroom houses on average recorded in Rehoboth. Low rental prices in this town attributed to a smaller population and weaker economic activity compared to Windhoek.

N\$ 1.2 million

The average purchase price of a town house in Windhoek at the end of last year. Across major municipalities the average price of a town house at the end of September was N\$637,000 in Gobabis, N\$745,000 in Okahandja, and N\$ 1.2 million in Windhoek.

126

Namibia's military is ranked as one of the weakest in the world, at 126th out of 137 countries considered for the annual GFP review. The GFP index assesses nations' potential war-making capability based on more various factors, including resources, manpower, and finances

734

The first batch of 734 student teachers who took part in a special diploma program meant for teachers, are expected to graduate this year.

63 percent

The percentage of registered health professionals including nurses, doctors, pharmacists and other specialists that are employed in the private sector rather than in lower paying, poorly supplied state medical facilities

75

The average number of pupils per teacher at Ndama Combined School in Rundu. The stipulated ratio required by the Ministry of Basic Education is 1 teacher: 30 pupils

545

The number of school-aged younger women and their partners who became unprepared parents Kavango East last year

68

The age of a former teacher who stands accused of allegedly raping his eight-year-old daughter.

42.6 percent of households

The poverty rate in the Oshikoto region

36 million

The amount lost by SWAPO in Parliamentary funding due to the decrease in their seats won in the national election

N\$9.58 million

The increase in state funding for the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) after an impressive performance which tripled the number of its seats in parliament. They received N\$5.74 million from five seats before the 2019 national elections.

6,287

The total number of households in the //Karas region who benefit from the drought relief program

154,000 metric tons

The total allowable catch (TAC), set by the government for the coming hake fishing season that began on 1 November 2019 and runs until 30 September 2020. According to the Information Ministry. The TAC for hake does not change from that issued last season.

953,937

The number of Namibians out of a population of 2.5 million who live in shacks, as the country battles a housing shortage and supply bottlenecks

35

The decreased number of rhinoceros killed by poachers from January to October 2019 compared to a total of 72 rhinos that were poached across the country in same period in 2018

86

Number of dusky dolphins that were stranded and later died near the fishing town of Luderitz. The dolphin group included two newborns and several youngsters were discovered on the beach of Hottentots* Bay (Namibia must change this name as this term is offensive), 60 km north of Luderitz. Sadly, the dolphins may have been stranded for a week before they were discovered on the isolated beach of the little used bay.

AFRICA IN THE NEWS

UN warns of 'major hunger threat' as locusts reach DR Congo

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Agency on Tuesday warned of a "major hunger threat" in East Africa, as a small group of desert locusts entered the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is the first time the voracious insects have been seen in the Central African country since 1944.

www.africanews.com

South Africa reports second case of Coronavirus

South Africa confirmed the second case of the novel coronavirus. South African officials said the 39-year-old woman was part of a group that had travelled with the first confirmed case travelling from Italy.

www.newvision.co.ug

African Union (AU) prepare to Support Ethiopia's election

Ethiopia, the continent's second most populous country, is in the midst of a promising but turbulent transition. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government pledges that elections tentatively scheduled for 16 August 2020 will be the most peaceful and competitive in the country's history. The AU will also signal its readiness to send an election monitoring mission. The vote's sheer size and complexity - there will be around 50,000 polling stations and 250,000 staff.

www.crisisgroup.org

World Bank looking for tourism sites in Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the World Bank held a consultative meeting at the Miatta Conference Hall to assess about twelve identified tourism sites to be developed in Sierra Leone.



www.eturbonews.com

Ethiopian Airlines celebrates women with 6th consecutive all-women operated flight

Ethiopian Airlines has made yet another history by operating an all-women functioned flight to Washington DC. Africa's Largest Aviation Group and SKYTRAX Certified Four Star Global Airline has scored the all-female flight crew feat highlighting the airline's progress in empowering African women, and the contribution of women to the socio-economic development of the continent.

www.voyagesafriq.com

Uganda reiterates commitment to tourism trade to remain free of COVID-19

In its latest Advisory to Uganda Travel Trade on Coronavirus, the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) has reemphasized the government's commitment to ensuring that the country is free of the novel coronavirus outbreak. At the moment there is no case of the disease in the East African country.

www.voyagesafriq.com

Mauritius blocks Italian passengers because of the deadly Coronavirus

Authorities in Mauritius are not taking chances, telling passengers from Northern Italian regions affected by the coronavirus that they would have to go into quarantine. The Alitalia plane landed in Mauritius with 224 passengers but up to 40 passengers from the northern regions of Lombardy and Veneto returned home rather than go into quarantine.

www.africanews.com

Namibia is the first African country to export red meat to the US

The state-owned meat firm Meatco sent a shipment of 25 tons of beef to Philadelphia,



the Southern African nation is set to export 860 tons of various beef cuts in 2020 to the United States, rising to 5,000 tons by 2025.

www.africanews.com

Gnassingbé re-elected with 72 percent of votes

Togolese president Faure Gnassingbé has won a fourth term in office, according to provisional results declared by the national election commission. He won 72 percent of the vote in the first round of presidential election.

www.africanews.com

Zimbabwean villages live on food aid

Residents of Mudzi, located 230 kilometers in the northeast of the Zimbabwean capital, Harare say access to basic food is their biggest challenge. Their plight has been compounded over severe drought in Southern Africa, coupled with poor farming season.

www.africanews.com

Togo banks on solar power

In 2018, the Togolese government launched an electrification plan for the country, in partnership with the private sector: the aim? to achieve 100% coverage by 2030, at a total cost of \$1.5 billion. The Electrician in charge of solar panels in Tababou village couldn't be prouder. For him the solar panel has been of great benefit to the village.

www.africanews.com

Rising food, drink prices causes spike in Sudan's inflation figures

Sudan's annual inflation rate reached 64.3 percent in January, from 57.1 percent in December 2019, due to rising food and drink prices. The country's transitional authorities face the toughest task of turning around



an economy wrecked by three decades of mismanagement under the former president. www.africanews.com

Liberians frustrated by crippling fuel shortage

Liberia's government is struggling to keep the fuel flowing at petrol pumps, as sloppy bookkeeping and poor port infrastructure have caused long queues at petrol pumps for nearly two weeks. www.africanews.com

Bill Gates' daughter to marry Egyptian horse rider

Egyptian equestrian Nayel Nassar is set to marry Jenifer Gates, the daughter of philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates, who announced their engagement on her Instagram account. www.africanews.com

Kenya's former President Daniel Arap Moi dies aged 95

President Uhuru Kenyatta announced his death, saying the nation had lost a "great man". Mr Moi was Kenya's longest-serving president. He was in office for 24 years, until intense pressure forced him to step down in 2002. www.bbc.com

Malawi court nullifies presidential vote, orders new election

The Constitutional Court in the southern African nation of Malawi on Monday nullified the results of last year's presidential election, citing "widespread, systematic and grave" irregularities including significant use of correction fluid to alter the outcome. www.iol.co.za

Lesotho's first lady and Prime Minister charged with murder

The first lady of Lesotho is set to be charged with murder in connection with the 2017 killing of the prime minister's former wife. She fled the country in January to escape arrest, returned to Lesotho on Tuesday afternoon and handed herself to police in the capital,

Maseru. Police said she had been hiding in neighboring South Africa. The Prime Minister has also been arrested and sits in the dock on the same murder charge. The Supreme Court of that country is deciding if a sitting PM can be tried for murder. www.iol.co.za

China announces plans to curtail spread of coronavirus to Zimbabwe

The Chinese government has urged its citizens visiting coronavirus hotspots like Wuhan in Hubei province to suspend travelling to Zimbabwe until the epidemic is contained, Harare's State media reported. www.iol.co.za

14 pupils killed in Kenya school stampede

Kenyan police said on Monday they have launched investigations into a stampede at a local primary school in western Kenya that resulted in the death of 14 pupils and 38 injuries. www.iol.co.za

Joseph Shabala of Ladysmith musical group dies

Founder of legendary South African music group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Joseph Shabalala passes away on 11 February at the age of 78 after battling with a long illness. www.enca.com

Angola's Isabel dos Santos, daughter of former president, charged with fraud

Isabel dos Santos Africa's richest woman and daughter of former Angolan president Jose Eduardo dos Santos was charged with fraud amongst a long list of allegations which includes mismanagement of funds, money laundering www.enca.com

Desperate pleas to tackle Africa's locusts

The UN warns that time is too short to stop locusts threatening food supplies in some countries. www.bbc.com

Coronavirus: Cameroonian student had no intention of taking it to Africa

Kem Senou Pavel Daryl, a 24-year-old Cameroonian student studying in China said he didn't want to bring the sickness to Africa even if leaving China was possible. For 13 days he remained in isolation in a local Chinese hospital and was given antibiotics and drugs used to treat HIV patients. He began to show recovery signs after two weeks. www.bbc.com

Uganda's Electoral Commission moves nomination dates to October

The chairman of the Electoral Commission in Uganda, Justice Byabakama says the nomination dates for presidential, parliamentary and local government elections have been moved from August to October. www.iol.co.za

Relief for Namibian farmers as Etosha National Park fence is upgraded

Communal farmers in Namibia's Ananke area expressed gratitude to the government for upgrading the damaged fence on the Etosha National Park, which left them vulnerable. www.iol.co.za

Lesotho PM expects praise for early resignation

Lesotho's Prime Minister Thomas Thabane has lauded himself for "voluntarily" agreeing to resign after he was accused of having a hand in the 2017 murder of his estranged wife. www.news24.com

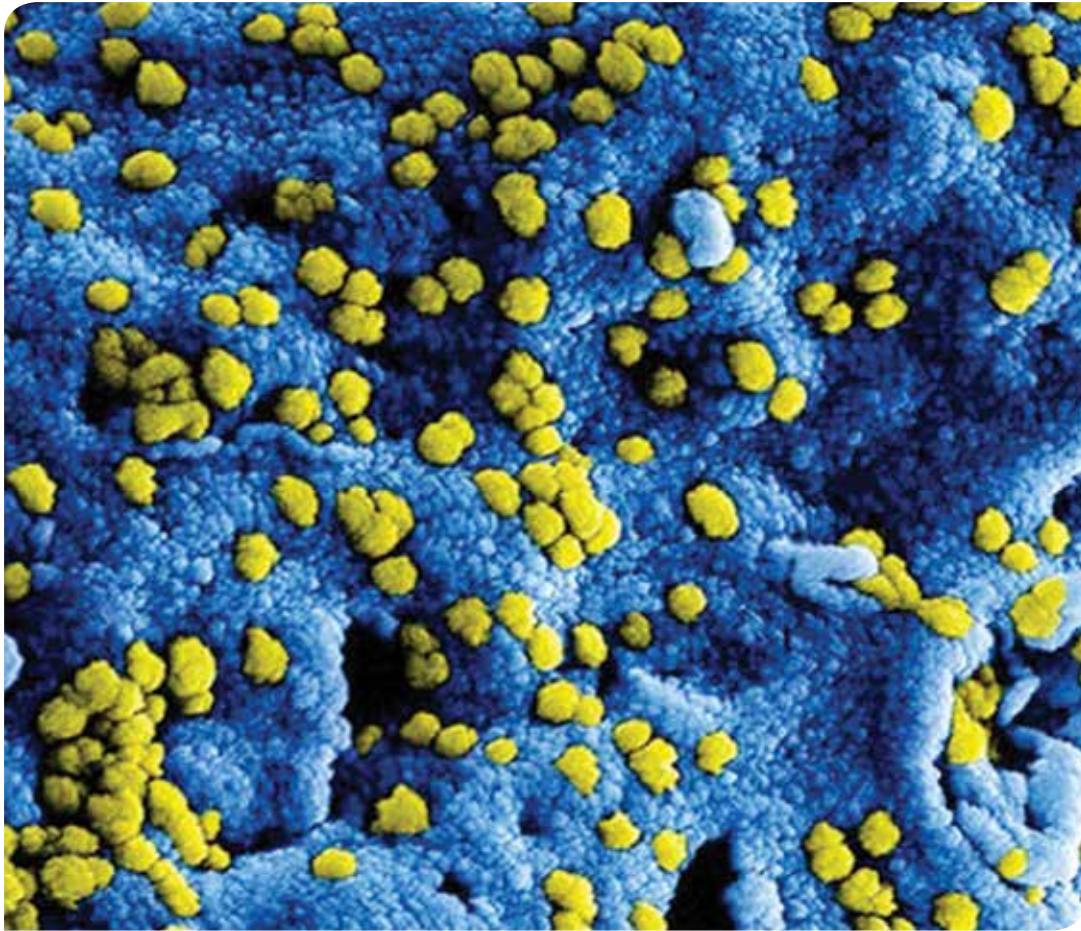
R3.9 billion bridge linking Durban to the Democratic republic of Congo comes to life

The route is a notorious bottle neck for transport, with delays that can take up to 8 days to cross the mighty Zambezi River. www.news24.com

22 Killed in Cameroon massacre

22 people, amongst them 14 children, were killed by armed gunmen in a massacre in northwestern Cameroon. www.aljazeera.com





CORONAVIRUS

— THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE OF 2020

As of the publication date of this magazine, there are 11 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Namibia. However, over 1,100 cases have been confirmed in South Africa (as of April 1, 2020). Namibia, which instituted a lockdown in several regions at the end of March, is taking the painful steps to try to get ahead of COVID-19. We must pray that we do.

From the World Health Organization (WHO - www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19)

“African countries move from COVID-19 readiness to response as many confirm cases

The global community is racing to slow down and eventually halt the spread of COVID-19, a pandemic that has claimed thousands of lives and sickened tens of thousands of others. In Africa, the virus has spread to dozens of countries within weeks. Governments and health authorities across the continent are striving to limit widespread infections.

Since the start of the outbreak the World Health Organization (WHO) has been supporting African governments with early detection by providing thousands of COVID-19 testing kits to countries, training dozens of health workers and strengthening surveillance in communities. Forty-seven countries in the WHO African region can

now test for COVID-19. At the start of the outbreak only two could do so.

WHO has issued guidance to countries, which is regularly updated to take into account the evolving situation. The guidelines include measures such as quarantine, repatriations of citizens and preparedness at workplaces. The Organization is also working with a network of experts to coordinate regional surveillance efforts, epidemiology, modelling, diagnostics, clinical care and treatment, and other ways to identify, manage the disease and limit widespread transmission.

WHO is providing remote support to affected countries on the use of electronic data tools, so national health authorities can better understand the outbreak in their countries. Preparedness and response to previous epidemics is providing a firm foundation for many African countries to tackle the spread of COVID-19.

Importantly, basic preventative measures by individuals and communities remain the most powerful tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19. WHO is helping local authorities craft radio messaging and TV spots to inform the public about the risks of COVID-19 and what measures should be taken. The Organization is also helping to counter disinformation and is guiding countries on setting up call centres to ensure the public is informed.”

What is Covid-19?

It is caused by a member of the coronavirus family that has never been encountered before. Like other coronaviruses, it has come from animals.

What are the symptoms this coronavirus causes?

The virus can cause pneumonia. Those who have fallen ill are reported to suffer dry coughs, fever and breathing difficulties. In severe cases there can be organ failure. As this is viral pneumonia, antibiotics are of no use. The antiviral drugs we have against flu will not work. Recovery depends on the strength of the immune system. Many of those who have died were already in poor health.

Should I go to the doctor if I have a cough?

Common medical advice is that if you have recently travelled from areas affected by coronavirus, you should:

Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu

Call the Ministry of Health or your healthcare provider and ask questions

Is the virus being transmitted from one person to another?

China's national health commission confirmed human-to-human transmission in January, and there have been such transmissions elsewhere. As the pandemic has spread, transmission is known to be due to the fact that the cells remain active on surfaces for up to three days with the germs remaining alive in the air for several minutes after a sneeze or cough. More information emerges daily as laboratories and scientists concentrate on research each day.

Why is this virus worse than normal influenza, and how worried are the experts?

We don't yet know how dangerous the new coronavirus is, and we won't know until more data comes in. Seasonal flu typically has a mortality rate below 1 percent and is thought to cause about 400,000 deaths each year globally. SARS had a death rate of more than 10 percent.

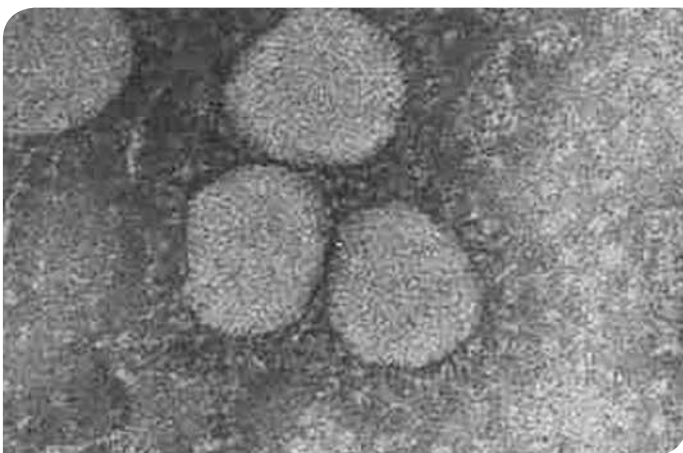
Another key unknown is how contagious the coronavirus is. A crucial difference is that unlike flu, there is no vaccine for the new coronavirus (yet), which means it is more difficult for vulnerable members of the population – elderly people or those with existing respiratory or immune problems – to protect themselves. Hand-washing and avoiding other people if you feel unwell are important. Contact your local health agencies for up-to-date information.

Have there been other coronaviruses?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome (MERS) are both caused by coronaviruses that came from animals. In 2002, SARS spread virtually unchecked to 37 countries, causing global panic, infecting more than 8,000 people and killing more than 750.

MERS appears to be less easily passed from human to human, but has greater lethality, killing 35 percent of about 2,500 people who have been infected.

www.theguardian.com



“Coronavirus from SARS isolated in FRhK-4 cells. Thin section electron micrograph and negative stained virus particles- courtesy of WHO”



“Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)”



MY HEAD WAS HELD UNDERWATER FOR FIVE YEARS

...ethics, governance and NamWater

Kuir F Tjipangandjara

The Namibia Water Corporation (NamWater) is mandated to supply water and provide other water-related services. In NamWater's unnecessary fight to rid itself of one single employee, I went through five years of draining legal battles, but emerged victorious. Imagine if the resources spent to drown me were instead applied to Namibia's water crisis. What advances could have been made in the same period of time?

In June 1998, I joined NamWater as the General Manager: Operations Department. As part of my responsibility, I supervised four (4) Regional / Senior Water Supply Managers and one (1) Senior Manager of Maintenance. In a changed structure in 2006, I made a horizontal move to the Department: Engineering and Scientific Services (E&SS).

With another restructuring in 2014, my job changed to that of Chief Water Supply: Central, this position was equivalent to that of the Regional / Senior Water Supply Managers that I used to supervise 16 years before when I was the GM: Operations Department back in 1998. I challenged this demotion.

A marathon dispute that changed my life, commenced. The dispute with NamWater was not only about the demotion, but the efficacy of the restructuring process. This dispute dragged on from June 2014 until 21st Nov 2019.

For five years, I worked with lawyers on legal submissions, attending hearings/ court sessions, and waiting for rulings. As the campaigns to isolate, disempower and victimize me intensified, I wished the time and resources wasted on this labour dispute were devoted to developing new strategies to prevent the water taps from ever running dry in Namibia.

I tried to avoid this conflict. But, NamWater had other plans. Each time I 'won' on a major point, they appealed and dragged the process out further. I believe they were trying to frustrate me into dropping the whole thing and running away.

The corporation took the fight from the boardroom to my, office, my gate, into my home and to the members of my family. When NamWater suspended my medical aid contribution, they risked the supply of chronic medication to my child.

I contend that the changes that took place at NamWater as part of corporate restructuring exercises both in 2006 and 2013 did not achieve operational efficiency and/or improve national water security. In my view, these restructuring exercises were aimed at getting rid of employees who did not 'fit' the other people's agendas.

The first restructuring exercise that took place in 2006, negatively impacted NamWater's operations in my opinion.

These impacts are still being felt now. The corporation lost many experienced and qualified individuals in the technical fields because of fear and uncertainty created by the implementation of the restructuring process. Some engineers/technicians opted to resign instead of being pushed out; regional management structures were disempowered; debt management campaigns almost ended; the condition of the infrastructure deteriorated due to poor operational and maintenance practices, and contacts with regional authorities and customers diminished.

In the 2006 restructuring, there were insufficient strategies in place to guide the implementation of the new structure in 2013. In late 2013, a submission to approve the new structure was made to the (then) outgoing NamWater board. The outgoing board had many questions and did not approve the restructuring. In 2014, a new board was appointed and the matter was approved.

During the 2013 restructuring exercise, some things went awry. For example, the line Ministry's structures and NamWater's did not talk to each other. Also, there was no paper trail on the restructuring made available to the appropriate cabinet SOE oversight committee (now morphed into the Ministry of Public Enterprises-MPE). Individuals were deployed to new positions with neither job descriptions nor grading. The inactions and silence of both MWA and MPE undermined corporate governance principles, in my view.

The new structure had 17 individuals reporting directly to the CEO. By 2013 already, there were already indications that the country could run out of water. Spending time and resources on restructuring while facing drought, was a misplaced priority. Forcing people out of the organization should not have been more important than averting water shortages.

I aired these concerns to the relevant authorities. Unfortunately, the ears of our principals were closed.

In June 2014, the CEO notified me about changes in my employment conditions. My new position was that of Chief: Water Supply Central. Unilateral changes in condition of employment are tantamount to constructive dismissal. I protested the demotion and was sidelined.

All decision-makers involved at that time, endorsed my demotion. I was forced to register my complaint with the Office of the Labour Commissioner in August 2014. Initially, there were few delays in getting the arbitration going. After only a few sessions, NamWater had to concede that indeed the corporation had changed my conditions of employment without consulting me - which was a breach of my employment contract.

On 24th February 2015, a settlement agreement was signed which compelled all the parties, to negotiate in good faith and suspended any decisions regarding my employment until the finalization of the consultations.

As NamWater and I were about to commence negotiations on my redundancy /re-deployment, I learned that the corporation had lodged a complaint against *me* with the Office of the Labour Commissioner. Although the date of their application was 30th January 2015, I was only presented with the documents only March 2015. NamWater demanded that I accept the demoted position. I believed that NamWater was not negotiating in good faith and the arbitration ended. My case with the Labour Commission, however,

continued.

I was then locked out of the company and my employment on 2nd April 2015. Under this 'lockout', the rule of "no work, no pay" applied. Thus, my last salary payment was made on 30th April 2015.

The combination of no salaried income and no access to my office (with all the documents needed for this case) hindered me from pursuing my case against NamWater.

In April 2015, I applied for an urgent interdictory relief with the High Court. The aim of this application was to argue for the termination of the lockout. My case was found to be non-urgent and I had to pursue it from other angles.

NamWater had access to unlimited state resources to put against my dwindling assets. I believe that the water SOE's strategies were aimed at wearing me out financially and emotionally to force me to abandon this case and to cause irreparable damage to my career.

Towards the end of 2015, the pressure was mounting on both NamWater and me. I was feeling the intense emotional and financial squeeze of the lockout. Negotiations resumed and the issue of separation/retrenchment was placed on the table. But NamWater negotiators had no board resolution authorizing them to offer me a package. I then went back to the Labour Court regarding the matter.

These processes took close to a year where I was without salary or benefits. But, in the end of that round, the Labour Court ruled against NamWater and I was granted the right to go back to work.

In complying with the ruling of the Labour Commissioner, I reported for work on 14th March 2017. For three consecutive days, with no access to an office, I was in the lobby waiting to have an audience with the CEO who refused to see me. I was in the employ of NamWater, but I was advised that future communications between the company and me would be channeled via our lawyers. Effectively, NamWater decided to ignore the Labour Court ruling and prevented me from returning to work.

NamWater lodged an appeal at the High Court. I instructed my lawyers to make a counter appeal and lift the lockout. As expected, the High Court made a ruling in my favour on 18th Nov 2018.

NamWater then lodged an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court, on 5th Dec 2018. Finally, on the 21st November 2019, NamWater's application for appeal was rejected.

All of this was done against one employee! So much time and expense and NamWater lost their case as was evident when it all first began so many years ago.

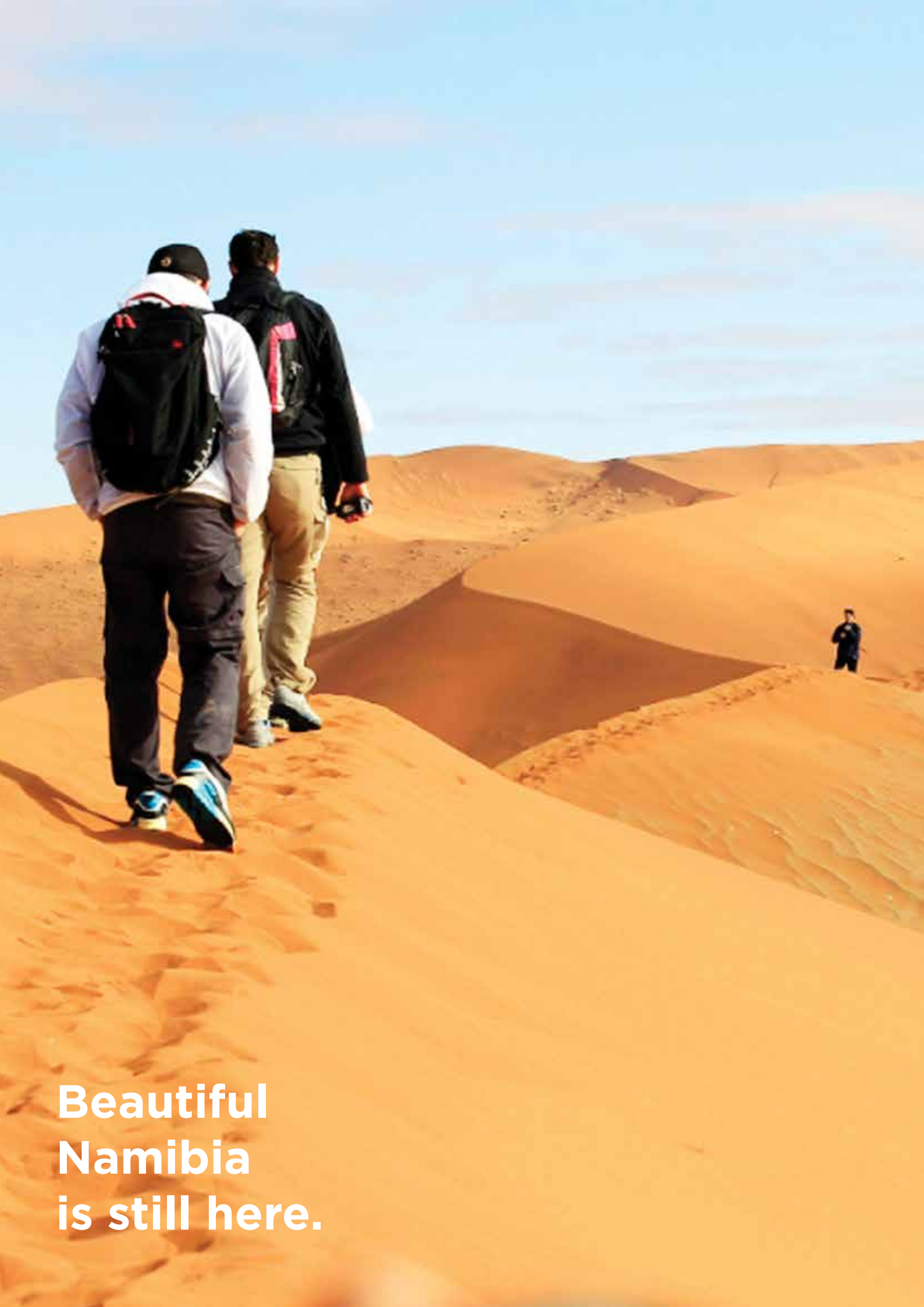
What I have gone through with NamWater has been a nightmare.

Because of the stigma associated with the lockout and the duration of the labour dispute, I am encountering problems in securing employment, despite my qualifications, vast knowledge and expertise.

It is important to stand up for yourself when others try to hold you down. But, be prepared for the long, painful fight. Tenacity is important in prevailing over injustice.

Dr Eng Kuiriri F Tjipangandjara (D Sci Eng) - was a former employee of NamWater, University of Namibia and Rössing Uranium Mine. He holds several degrees in basic sciences, applied sciences and engineering from Lincoln University and Columbia University in the USA. He has published highly acclaimed technical work in his field.

Article shortened for space. In giving Dr Tjipangandjara a platform to tell his side of this informative story, the opinions and statements made are his and not necessarily those of the Windhoek Observer and Observer Connect magazine - Ed.



**Beautiful
Namibia
is still here.**





OMHALANGA MILLS
INVESTS MILLIONS
IN NEW PLANT

Staff Writer

Nestled in the northern part of the country, Omhalanga Mills (Pty) Ltd is one of the country's largest milling companies.

Omhalanga Mills is a subsidiary of Profile Investments. It has grown from a simple milling company in the north, to a major contributor to the food security of the country.

Founded in 2010, the company is situated at its Elyambala premises in Ongwediva. It has a daily production capacity of between 80 – 90 metric tonnes of two shifts, producing super-sifted maize meal as the final product. The company's milling process also yields by-products; used for chicken and pig feeds.

"Currently we produce Super-Sifted Maize Meal packed in 5kg, 10kg, 12.5kg (Food Relief), 20kg, 25kg and 50kg bags. It is complemented by cooking oil in 750ml, 1L, 2L and 5L," Omhalanga Mills (Pty) Ltd General Manager, Hasho Nambambi says.

Nambambi notes that the company is unlike other millers. It directly sells its products to the general public in the North. This allows them access to its nutritious maize meal products at competitive prices. There are exciting plans afoot to increase its existing distributions points.

"Our biggest client is the general public, the end consumer. They were and are our main targets for opening the said outlets, to take the product as close to them as possible. As a producer, we are inviting businesses and individuals that would like to become distributors/agents within their areas to approach our offices for dealerships," he says.

"The products are only found in the northern regions of Oshana, Omusati, Ohangwena and Oshakati. We have a total of 22 outlets in Oshifo, Outapi, Tsandi, Okahao, Oshikuku, Okalongo, Oshakati, Ondangwa, Oniipa, Omuthiya, Eenhana, Okongo, Ondobe, Onhuno, Oshikango and Ongha.

In addition to our own outlets, our products are in chain retailers such as Spar, Woermann Brock and Choppies. We are also on the shelves in supermarkets like Eland, Eyambeko, BP Onhokolo, Tumandjeco and many others in and around the North."

There is an increased demand for Omhalanga products. There is also a need to diversify its product line. In response, the company has embarked on a multi-million-dollar expansion project. When completed, it is expected to boost production and introduce new products.

"We have invested N\$45 million in the on-going expansion project. This includes the construction of a new milling plants and silos. These facilities will have a total capacity of 800 MT for wheat flour and refined maize



meal products,” Nambambi says.

Quizzed on the rationale of investing N\$45 million in an expansion project during a recession, the Omhalanga exec says, “The main objective is to be as competitive as possible in the food market. This is very hard or impossible with only one or two products; we need to increase our product lines.

“We have also to take note of the possible good Mahangu harvest that if realized could significantly diminish the packaged maize meal demand for a considerable time. The new products are required to offset that business loss. So, there is a rationale of risk-minimizing in all that. We also needed to improve our efficiency and capacity to meet the current market/demand,” the Omhalanga head said.

“The expansion will positively impact the region if not the country’s food security both by quantity and quality. There will be one more option for consumers to choose from while they shop. The additional competition will likely stimulate affordable rates to the consumer and high-quality products from the producers.”

He said the company was planning by to have the expansion complete by mid-year. Thereafter, some of the new products lines will be in the market, but the set targets might be affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

“The new products are projected in May

this year, the first three will be refined maize meal, bread and cake flour as well as sugar. However, we are fearing the delay on installation and commissioning of the plants if the Corona virus does not subside,” Nambambi says.

He notes when completed, Omhalanga will increase its staff complement to over 200 employees from its current staff of 147. This will contribute to employment creation in the country.

“The total staff compliments stands at 147 heads in various positions. That number is anticipated to rise to between 200–220 when the new project is in full operation,” Nambambi notes.

Asked on the synergies between the company and fertilizer producer, Growmax, a company also owned by Profile Investments, he said, “The two-sister companies are and will be forever linked by the Namibian farmers. They supply Omhalanga with maize and wheat, which s/he produces with a boast of GrowMax fertilizers and soil analysis services.”

“GrowMax ensures that farmers will not miss out on prime season time due to delayed fertilizers. This can happen with imported inputs. Crop nutrients are more affordable when they are produced locally,” he said.

GrowMax is Namibia’s first fertilizer company located in Otjiwarongo. It has a

commissioned capacity of 200 tons per day. When fully operational, the plant will be able to meet Namibia’s fertilizer demand. Excess capacity will be exported within the region.

The factory will reduce the country’s heavy reliance on fertilizer imports from South Africa. It will manufacture custom fertilizer for Namibian crops and soils, which according to Profile Investments Chairman ,Vaino Nghipondoka will reduce Omhalanga’s over reliance on maize imports as local farmers will also start farming maize more.

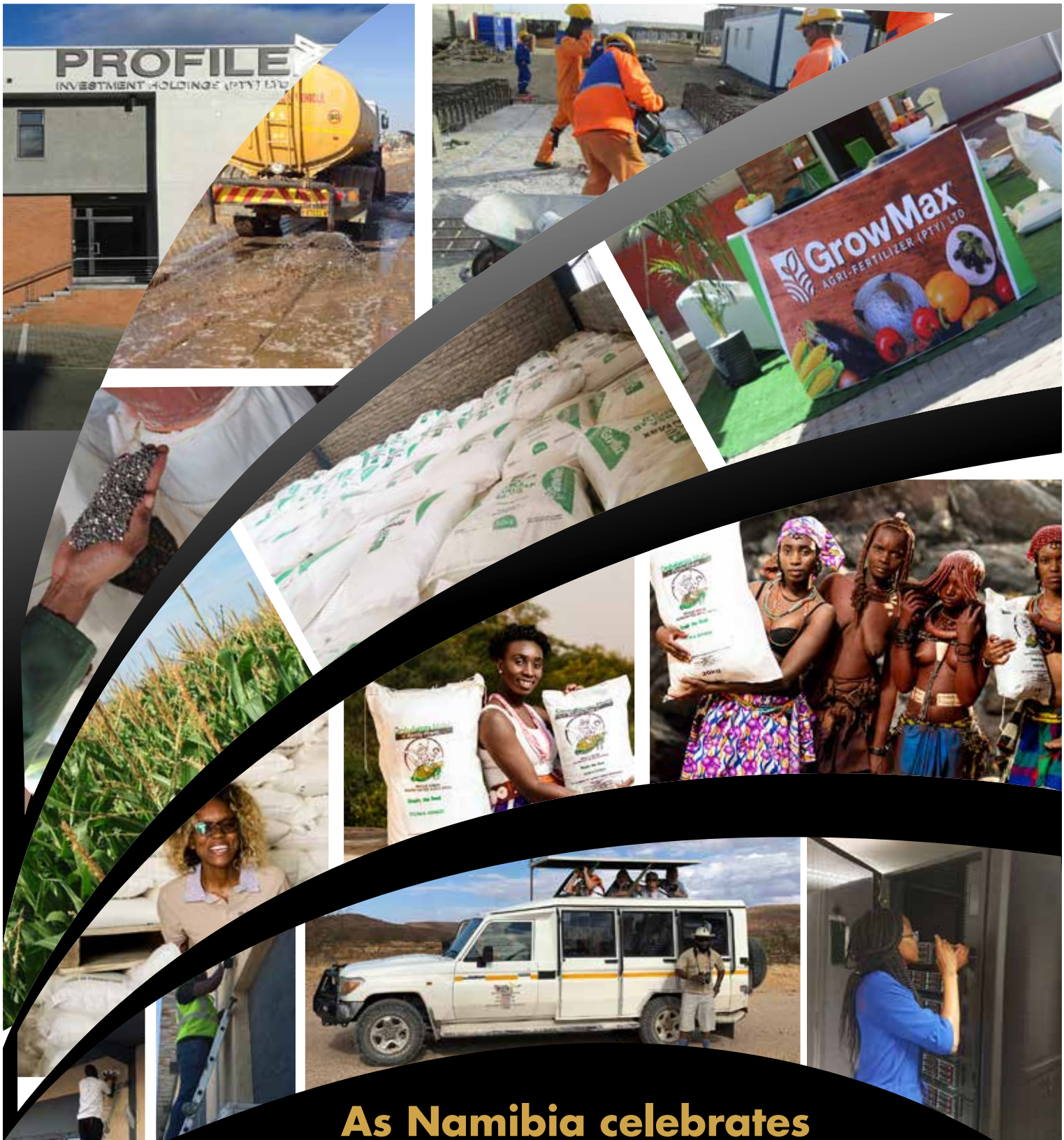
“Growmax will increase farmer’s maize yields even in areas such as the north which are well known for growing mahangu,” he said.

As a business we want to encourage farmers to start growing maize, which can become additional income for them when they sell the maize to Omhalanga for milling.

“We spend over N\$70 million buying maize from South Africa, which could be money that made by local farmer supplying us maize. With our fertilizer products, we hope to stimulate maize production in the north, while creating additional employment in the agricultural sector,” Nghipondoka said.

“The on-going land reform policy of government is a welcome development which will boost agricultural production in the county and I would want to commend government for that.”





As Namibia celebrates

its milestone, at Profile Investments, we are proud of the impact that our operations have had on the Namibia's development agenda and the economy in general. Through our 13 subsidiaries, we have created direct employment for 115 Namibians and indirect employment for thousands by implementing and delivering quality and timely projects on behalf our clients. We have brought home grown solutions to various sectors in the Namibian economy, be it, IT, Tourism, Construction and Agriculture, contribution to their growth now and beyond. We are a truly Namibian company with Namibian roots anchored on sound expertise.

Profile Investment Holdings
 44 Church Street | C/O Church & Hardy Str. | Windhoek West
 T. (+264) 61 401 594 | F. (+264) 61 202 834

PROFILE
 Investment Holdings (Pty) Ltd

GrowMax
 AGRI-FERTILIZER (PTY) LTD

Omhulanga Mills
 Family Power
 Simply the Best
 Chewa Ding!!!

Giving you the freedom to bank



WEATHERMEN & CO

Manage your finances with ease, whenever and wherever.

The FNB App allows for convenient banking, made easily accessible at your fingertips. Our safe and secure App ensures that you have 24/7 access to do all your banking. With no data cost on the MTC network whilst making use of our App, managing your financial life has never been this easy.

FNB

How can we help you?

For more information,
Call us on **061 299 22 22**
Visit our website www.fnbnamibia.com.na