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For Human Rights

Publications of the Department
for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
of the United Evangelical Mission

Volume 13

Think BIG

Inputs and Reflections on Social Justice and the Basic Income Grant

Edited by Jochen Motte, Theodor Rathgeber and Angelika Veddeler



foedus-verlag

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Publisher: United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

Edited by: Jochen Motte, Theodor Rathgeber, Angelika Veddeler

Translation and editorial editing: Scott Kushner, Catherine Lauer-Walker, Brunhild von Local

Production: Breklumer Print-Service, Breklum / Germany

Printed in Germany

ISBN 3-938180-20-X

www.vemission.org

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Preface

Think BIG Inputs and Reflections on Social Justice and the Basic Income Grant

From 14 to 19 February 2010, 15 representatives from the UEM member churches and further resource persons from the Philippines, Indonesia, Germany, Tanzania, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Kenya visited the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia. The purpose of the gathering was to share experiences and insights into the Basic Income Grant Programme which had been launched by a coalition of non-government organisations, churches and church-organisations in Namibia under the name of Basic Income Grant Coalition.

The visitation was an opportunity to learn about an exciting initiative to promote social justice and to work for the social and economic rights of people who have been affected by poverty and marginalisation. The project in Namibia known under the name of BIG (Basic Income Grant) has gained public attention all over the world in recent years.

Based on the experiences from the encounters with the members of the Otjivero community, where the project has been implemented, inputs and reflections of the participants presented during and after the programme were shared from different social and cultural perspectives. We hope that these reflections will contribute to a broadening of the debate on *unconditional cash transfers* like the Basic Income Grant specifically and on the question of social and economic rights in general. The texts in this sampler follow the guidance of the gathering's discussion in February: theological reflections, theoretical and historical embedding, and the countries' experiences.

Furthermore, we express the hope that with the example of the BIG and the ELCRN's commitment to this project, the churches' responsibility for advocacy in church and diaconic work will be encouraged.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta who invited us to this visit, to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia and to the ELCRN's Desk for Social Development for organising and hosting this programme.

Dr Jochen Motte
Dr Theodor Rathgeber
Angelika Veddelar

November 2010

Welcome to Namibia

ZEPHANIA KAMEETA

In February 2010, an international delegation from the United Evangelical Mission Member Churches from Asia, Africa and Germany visited our church, the Evangelical Church in the Republic of Namibia. The aim was to learn about the developments in Otjivero, to share the experiences we made in the pilot project on the Basic Income Grant (BIG), to get feedback on what has been done from different cultural and regional perspectives and to look for the next steps in order to maintain this idea.

I am glad that with this publication, reflections and insights from this programme and even ideas and analyses on which participants wrote articles after the event will be shared with a broader audience. We hope that with this publication BIG will also inspire and motivate others to reflect on the question of social justice and economic rights and to initiate similar programmes in their respective contexts.

Let me therefore, at the beginning, introduce some of the experiences we made with the Basic Income Grant.

When we came to Otjivero-Omitara in July 2007, a woman told us *“Some days we don't have anything [to eat] and we just go and sleep and get up again without eating.”* Such a situation is typical for many people in Namibia today. We face the situation of sheer hunger next to incredible wealth. But in Otjivero-Omitara something has changed. Allow me to put this in the context of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Lk: 9,10-17). When Jesus fed all these people with five loaves of bread and two fish, we as rationally minded people think about how one could divide up five loaves of bread for so many people and everybody could still get enough? With the BIG pilot project, we have come to a different understanding of this miracle, due to our own experience. The miracle lies in the sharing! The breaking of bread together.

Jesus shared unconditionally without saying: you are deserving and you are not, you need to stand in this queue and you must not. No, when you share bread you give to everybody, unconditionally, without so-called targeting - exactly like the BIG. And when you share, people open up, you create a community, and people start to give. The miracle is not about the arithmetic of dividing five loaves of bread among 5000 people, but the miracle is that if you break bread together, people start to open up and to share what they have. That is all: people started to contribute, and this is why they had more than they had before. The sense of community makes people take ownership and responsibility.

Before the pilot project started we frequently heard the concern that BIG might lead to dependency and a culture of laziness, that if you give people money, especially

poor people, they will sit down and become lazy. If they receive Manna from heaven (Ex 16), why should people work? The results in Otjivero-Omitara up to now refute this claim. If you look in depth at Exodus 16, the people of Israel in the long journey out of slavery received manna from heaven. But, it did not make them lazy; instead, it enabled them to be on the move and to travel through the desert. Nobody would say the manna made the Israelites dependent. On the contrary, it enabled them to move.

One might further ask, why did the LORD not give them apple trees for example? Because he wanted them to move - you can pick up the manna and go! You can move out of the harsh realities of slavery and dependency - just like the BIG, you can pick it up and move, not being forced to stay at a certain location or in a particular condition. The BIG, like the manna, is freeing people to move and take ownership of their economic affairs. This is not a trap, but a precondition for the long and hard journey to the Promised Land.

We see that in Otjivero-Omitara. Look at Frida Nembwaya, who, after receiving the BIG, started to bake traditional rolls for just N\$1. Currently she is baking 200 rolls a day, seven days a week, and people in Otjivero-Omitara now have the money to buy from her. She is currently considering extending her shack and wants to employ somebody. She also added a small braiding business and sells local sausages and recharge vouchers for cell-phones. The Manna works, she is moving, so much so that she wrote on all the sides of her newly-built zink house "*Good life after struggle*".

I am convinced that the BIG is not only able to eradicate destitution, hunger and malnutrition, but is able to lay a strong foundation for economic empowerment, responsibility and ownership taking. The BIG, by restoring the human dignity of people, frees people to become active and proud members of this society. It is my sincere hope that this dream will not only remain true for the people of Otjivero-Omitara, but become true for the whole of Namibia.

Churches in the United Evangelical Mission striving for economic justice

Implementing social and economic human rights by providing a Basic Income Grant

JOCHEN MOTTE

In February 2010 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia and the United Evangelical Mission, Communion of Churches in three Continents, invited 28 participants from different regions and countries to Namibia to get insights into one of the most exciting programmes that churches and church partners have ever initiated to fight extreme poverty.

When the UEM was transformed into an international communion of churches in three continents in 1996, members from Africa, Asia and Europe committed themselves to strive together for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Within the UEM's programme on justice, peace and Integrity of creation, the question of economic and social justice has always been one of the priorities. During recent years the UEM has promoted various opportunities for learning and sharing, supporting networking and joint programmes in the field of social and economic justice. This was possible because churches in Africa, Asia and Germany responded in various ways to the challenges of globalisation.

- In the mid-nineties churches from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia approached the Chinese Rhenish Church in Hong Kong with regard to the desperate situation of thousands of housemaids who work as migrants in Hong Kong. After an international workshop in 2003 the Chinese Rhenish Church started a programme to help and support domestic workers through pastoral counselling and legal assistance, by providing shelter for women who have been abused and by establishing a centre where migrants from Indonesia could meet and enjoy training in different fields. Through the UEM South-South exchange programme a co-worker from Java, Indonesia, served in this programme in Hong Kong for more than six years.
- The UEM was part of the Jubilee 2000 Campaign that lobbied for the cancellation of debts of the least developed countries by multinational institutions and rich countries such as Germany. In those years special attention was given to Tanzania, where member churches considered that the debt payment enforced on

the Tanzanian Government by the IMF was a scandal in view of the lack of funds provided for health and education.

- In view of centennial commemorations between 2001 and 2004 of the genocide committed by German colonial troops against the Hereros and other ethnic groups, the UEM, together with ELCRN, paid special attention to the question of the unequal distribution of land and a possible contribution from the German Government to fund a land reform in Namibia.
- In 2004 an international workshop on globalisation was hosted by the EKvW. Participants from all regions shared their experience on the impact of globalisation in their regions. During the exposure programme they got special insights into the social consequences of the privatisation of public services in Germany. German partners shared their experience on the growing pressure on the German job market and salaries in the industrial sector due to the liberalisation policies regarding social standards.
- In 2007, the UEM was invited to conduct a workshop in Argentina hosted by the protestant church, the Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata (IERP), which had developed a new missionary concept to address the challenges of globalisation in the Latin American context. Especially for the UEM participants from Asia and Africa, where people live under conditions of violence, exclusion and poverty similar to those in big cities like Buenos Aires or in rural areas like Northern Argentina, the encounter with members of IERP and marginalised people was experienced as an enrichment for their own theological and diaconic work.
- In 2008 churches from Sumatra hosted an international UEM consultation on the impact of globalisation on the Island of Batam. Batam, which is located seven miles south of Singapore, has been developing into a free trade zone over the last 30 years. Today hundreds of thousands of young women, who came as migrants from other regions in Indonesia, work on the production sites of national and international companies. Some pastors have started to develop interdenominational programmes to address the needs of the women, especially on health, abuse of labour rights, housing and human trafficking. It was Bishop Kameeta who, in a moving worship service in Batam Stadium, preached and talked to more than 3000 workers who attended the service.

Further examples of initiatives taken by churches within the UEM to address economic and social injustice could be added. They all have one common aim, which may be seen as a blessing. There are definitely church people in different places who feel challenged and moved when they see others who are marginalised and even dehumanised in local communities and global societies. People who open their doors to strangers, feed the hungry, give the thirsty something to drink and clothe the naked, who visit those who are sick and those in prison (MT 25). Sometimes those

who are part of diaconic work and action have even themselves been marginalised and have lived or still live under conditions of injustice and violence.

Those who start working for justice are often a minority even within their churches and communities and not always welcomed by the majority of their congregations. Therefore the sharing and togetherness during the visitation programme in Namibia was also experienced as an opportunity to strengthen and encourage each other to continue working for those living under conditions of poverty and marginalisation.

The UEM campaign on human rights in 2009/2010 focused on the issue of impunity. It is headed by words from Psalm 94, verse 15, "Judgment will again be founded on justice". Based on realities within churches in the UEM the campaign aimed at addressing the situation of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo who have been abused, pastors and human rights defenders from the Philippines who were killed, men and women from Sri Lanka who disappeared and were killed during the war, Papuans from Indonesia who have been discriminated against and experienced violence from the military and the police. Most of those mentioned are still waiting for justice.

Violations of human rights are nevertheless not limited to the violation of civil and political rights but also comprise violations of social, economic and cultural rights. Extreme poverty is injustice. More than 1 billion people are suffering from poverty. Due to the financial crisis it is very unlikely that the international community will reach its goal of reducing poverty by up to 50% by 2015. On the contrary, the number of people living below the poverty line has increased in recent years

Poverty excludes people from participating in society. It kills people who live without sufficient food, housing and health services. It destroys the dignity of people. Therefore diaconic work is an essential part of church work and life. But at the same time churches will continue to remind the government to fulfil its obligations to guarantee social and economic rights to all people.

In a decision of the German Supreme Court on 7th February 2010, the court obliged the German Government that a law which regulates the benefit for long-term unemployed German citizens had to be revised by the end of 2010. According to the German Constitution the state is obliged to guarantee every citizen a life of dignity under decent living conditions. This implies food, housing, clothes, sanitation, health, heating, but also basic possibilities of entertaining human relationships and participating in social, cultural and political life. The court criticised that the Government has not been transparent in calculating the amount adults and children need to live under decent conditions. Since the dignity of people is at stake, highest standards have to be applied - according to the verdict of the Supreme Court - to fix the respective amount to be laid down in the legislation. Churches and diaconic institutions in Germany have been engaged in the public debate on social security legislation in recent years and feel they are responsible to voice and echo the needs of those in need.

As in many other countries there is no easy answer how this can be done in a responsible and effective way. Often churches are blamed for being illusory and far from reality. The BIG Coalition in Namibia started to prove that this is not in any way true. The UEM is grateful to the ELCRN and the BIG Coalition for providing the opportunity to people from churches in different parts of the world who are confronted with similar challenges to learn about the implementation of the Basic Income Grant and its impact on the people.

The project of the BIG Coalition was developed to demonstrate to the government how its responsibility could be fulfilled to protect the social and economic rights of the people of Namibia. Its results may also serve as a basis for other countries and their governments where parts of the population are confronted with poverty.

During the visitation programme the participants experienced how this programme, initiated by the churches, has made an impact on the lives of the people who benefited from the BIG, as well as on the public and political debate in Namibia and even beyond its borders.

It was also of utmost interest to learn about the responses by the government and other actors in society to what the BIG Coalition has done in recent years with the support of churches, development agencies and mission societies like the UEM and other partners from inside and outside Namibia.

Besides sharing all information, analytical reports and inputs on BIG, most exciting for all participants was the visit to Otjivero where participants had the opportunity to meet the community which has benefited from the Basic Income Grant throughout the past two years. In direct encounter with the people from Otjivero the visitors from Africa, Asia and Germany could experience and hear how BIG has changed their lives.

The stories being shared by the people since BIG was available tell that children could be sent to school and school fees be paid, small income generating projects have been started, roofs and houses are being repaired, renovated or even rebuilt, food is being purchased, access has been given to medicine and medical treatment. People in Otjivero are still looking forward to getting regular jobs and a better income. Nevertheless BIG has definitely released people from the daily struggle for survival. The rate of malnutrition in children has gone down significantly and people are more concerned about how to increase their income and get additional food by starting small farming projects, business and trade. Otjivero has become a better place to live in than it was two years ago and that became obvious not only by the stories shared but also by seeing the facilities, housing compounds and places in the village itself.

The reflections presented in this publication show that the BIG experience has encouraged all participants to address poverty in different social and cultural contexts.

This encouragement is based on the common conviction that poverty eradication is a central obligation of governments and states to guarantee human rights for all people and to enable them to live in dignity.

Small budget and BIG expectations

Introduction to the Basic Income Grant

THEODOR RATHGEBER

This publication is based on and refers to a visitation programme conducted by faith-based people from several churches of different countries in February 2010 in order to experience the outcome of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) initiative in Namibia directly. The outstanding results of this pilot project by now – and it should be understood as such: ‘pilot’ – are presented here in text (Theodor Rathgeber) and photography, although this barely allows an approximation of the lively engagement of the villagers in Otjivero-Omitara in Namibia. We may not go as far as some people do and speak in terms of ‘liberation from poverty’, but the experience with the BIG pilot project in Namibia suggests that an unconditional, universal cash grant obviously enables poor people and their community to overcome the devastating impact of extreme poverty.

During the visitation programme, discussion emerged around the concepts and paradigms of development based e.g. on a universal, unconditional cash grant vs. conditional cash transfer (CCT) and other models of implementing social security. Though this discussion traces back to the beginning of the current millennium, it is worth recognising that already at the beginning of the former millennium, there were also approaches to social security in terms of cash benefits. Between 1911 and 1919 e.g. Norway and part of the USA introduced cash benefits to single and widowed mothers.¹ Malcolm Langford further quotes an article by Anne Gauthier in 2002/3 which sustains that direct and indirect cash benefits for families had stabilised at 11% of average earnings in 22 OECD countries in the 1970s and gradually grew to 13% by the mid-1990s. In this context, Martin Büscher provides a brief overview which explains why such approaches do not only work in reality but also in theory challenging the economic doctrines on globalisation. Many low income countries have recently established pilot social assistance and cash transfer programmes, as basic social security is not only good for poverty reduction but also good for economic growth.

1 Malcolm Langford (2009); *The Right to Social Security in Development: Rights and Realities – Background Note*. Paper presented to the international symposium on the right to social security in development, organised by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights in association with the UN Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on October 19-20, 2009, Socio-Economic Rights Programme / Norwegian Centre for Human Rights / University of Oslo and Berlin; to be found on the symposium’s webpage: <http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/serp/conferences/fes.html>.

Why have these considerations on cash transfer been popping up in recent years? Adrienne Goehler introduces certain answers based on her commitment particularly within the scenery of artists and scientists and promotes radical, including cultural change of societies vis-a-vis globalisation, world economic crises, increasing unemployment and climate change. She emphasises that each of the core concerns of social policy—need, fear and citizenship—are social constructs that derive from cultural and ideological definitions and, thus, are subject to change. Thus, she relates the upsurge of interest in social security or social protection in the recent years to the social security lacuna and its consequences. Key words are the massive rise in food prices, the global financial crisis and the meltdown in financial markets which caused poverty and the cost of basic goods to increase, the returns on investments in social security funds to decrease, unemployment to rise while placing greater demand on social security programmes at a time when government revenues are declining.

The next bundle of causes of social security popping up as a ‘fashionable’ item on the world’s agenda stems from the shocking persistence of poverty in developing countries despite high levels of economic growth. Martin Büscher would argue that redistribution, and not just growth of average income, plays a critical role in reducing poverty. At the same time, a number of countries from the global south have managed to develop social security and cash transfer schemes or programmes despite assumptions that they lack the financial capacity and administrative competence. Irrespective of many hindrances in terms of bureaucracy and corruption, Theodor Rathgeber’s summary on the experience in South Africa shows how such even unconditional schemes and grants are working; e.g. the child, disability and old age grants. There are more cash transfer programmes, though conditional, in India, Brazil, or Mexico. Evaluations have demonstrated that these programmes had a direct impact on reducing poverty with multiplier effects in other areas.²

It is no coincidence that initiatives around cash transfer and social security systems are emerging from the churches. Christian Oelschlägel presents some arguments in his text why this is so. He particularly emphasises the gradual shift in understanding christian commitment with the poor nowadays as rather a matter of rights than charity and mercy. This process of merging a church oriented concept – *diakonia* and social work – with a historically rather state based concept – human rights – is still to be continued while the text makes the new dimension for the christian commitment understandable. Jochen Motte’s text illustrates the fields of eventual and potential activities of churches in the Global South as well as in the Global North. However, the text by Ute Hedrich and Christian Sandner underscores that the acknowledgment

2 For examples visit e.g. the articles to the symposium of FES at <http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/serp/conferences/fes.html>.

of such a shift is one aspect but the implementation another. Even more, as the paradigm of unconditional cash transfer is to a certain extent harshly contested, and the still necessary support has to be organised against all odds.

The theological reflections by Bishop Zephania Kameeta, Barbara Rudolph and Victor R. Aguilan stress the often spilled wisdom of the gospel in its commitment to the poor. Beyond the challenges of translating and transferring this knowledge into terms of political, legal, social and cultural commitment of today, these theological reflections reveal the deeper, value-based perception of the world and particularly stress the spiritual, community-based and emotional assets of the Church; indispensable of any long-standing commitment. It is this added and founded value which keeps the conviction alive that BIG in Namibia – and elsewhere – can be realised. Petrus ≠ Khariseb and Uhuru Dempers point out that the pilot project has ended and, although it is less than the original grant, a transitional allowance of R80 per person and month is being paid. Despite this obstacle, Petrus ≠ Khariseb and Uhuru Dempers present a detailed analysis of the actors who are still sustaining BIG Namibia and challenging the ongoing hesitation by the Namibian government to extend the project nationwide.

Obviously, it is not only the Church who is highlighting the fact that social security deserves priority in policy making and budgetary allocation. Within the human rights system and movement, there are critical elements which are genuine in relation to social protection. Along with the right to equal treatment, the right to social security is mentioned twice in the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1948; Articles 22 and 25) as well as in Article 9 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR; in force since 1976).³ According to Article 9, the state party to the covenant must use its “maximum available resources” to duly implement ICESCR; i.e. the right to social security.

There is a growing empirical research which demonstrates that almost all countries can afford such basic social security. Consequently, the UN Committee for the monitoring of the implementation of ICESCR adopted its *General Comment No. 19* in January 2008 providing guidelines for the employment of the right to social security e.g. in the fields of pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance, cash or in-kind transfers, subsidies, employment-related emergency programmes, labour standards and labour rights. Also in 2008, the UN Human Rights Council appointed the new independent expert for the mandate of the UN Special Procedures on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona.

She particularly places a focus on cash transfers as a tool for choice-making

3 Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security. Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family. Article 9 ICESCR: The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.

while human rights provide the normative standard. In cases of extreme poverty, basic income grants should be unconditional and universal.⁴ Also, from the viewpoint of human rights, conditional cash transfers are seen as problematic since they make a basic right dependent on a behaviour which defeats the purpose of a right. Possible cases to consider a conditional cash transfer as a complementary tool might work in order to address school attendance for girls where it is unlikely that this can be increased with an unconditional grant in countries such as Pakistan, or conditions relating to harmful forms of child labour. But the subject remains a contested field.

In addition, there are a number of treaties of the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO) which deal with social protection; e.g. the Convention No. 102 (Social Security Minimum Standards) and Convention No. 118 (Equality of Treatment)⁵ as well as the Preamble of the ILO Constitution (1919)⁶, the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944)⁷, and the commitment expressed during the General Discussion at the International Labour Conference in 2001 and in 2008 by the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. In 2003, the ILO launched a *Global Campaign to Extend Social Security* to all. The *ILO Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Strategies for the Extension of Social Security Coverage* (Geneva, September 2009) confirmed the need of essential social transfers as part of the UN social protection system. The ILO also conducted a large study “*Compendium of Cash Transfer Programs in Developing Countries*” whose preliminary results have been available since 2009.

The texts of Jean Gottfried Mutombo on the Democratic Republic of Congo, by David Wafo on Cameroon and by Victor R. Aguilan on the Philippines explicitly consider human rights as well as the national constitutional framework as being constituent for the church’s commitment to social protection in these countries. Both also emphasise the successive realisation of social protection systems stressing nationally owned and tailored approaches in order to respond to the political economy, demographic and poverty make-up of their countries. Their message is also very clear in indicating that it is rather a question of each of the political economies than

4 See her reports to the UN General Assembly Document Nos. A/63/274 and A/64/279 as well as the annual reports to the UN Human Rights Council Document Nos. A/HRC/11/9 and A/HRC/14/31.

5 Further pertinent ILO Conventions are No. 67 (Income Security Recommendation), No. 69 (Medical Care Recommendation), No. 121 (Employment Injury Benefits), No. 128 (Invalidity, Old-age and Survivor’s Benefits), No. 130 (Medical Care and Sickness Benefits), No. 168 (Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment), or No. 183 (Maternity Protection).

6 The Preamble mandates ILO (...) to improve conditions of labour, inter alia, through the “prevention of unemployment, (...) the protection of the worker against sickness, disease, and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old-age and injury.”

7 The Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) charges the ILO with “to further among the nations of the world programmes which will achieve the objectives... the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care.”

the financial capacity of their countries which hinders the full realisation of the right to social security. Again the international church alliance is requested to accompany the national endeavours with promotional work and assistance.

The Basic Income approach does not have all the answers to the questions raised in relation to social security and social protection of the poor. However, the existing evidence and the nature of structural exclusion from minimum social standards as in situations such as Otjivero-Omitara in Namibia, unconditional cash transfer programmes should be introduced immediately. The level might be low, as considered in South Africa, but everybody has to be reached. The finances necessary to cover the cost should be obligatory for the states thereby in compliance with the corresponding human rights in accordance with ICESCR. Not providing sufficient funds must be qualified as a violation of human rights.

At a later stage, such universal basic income programmes should be made enforceable, in order to cover the core content of the right to social security, and as one element of a wider package of social security mechanisms. The experience of Otjivero-Omitara suggests the conclusion that the Basic Income Grant is not an added burden but an appropriate intervention. The authors hope this publication provides an additional basis for further discussions on that matter as well as for encouraging further support.

The miracle of sharing

ZEPHANIA KAMEETA

Matthew 14:13-21

- 13: As soon as Jesus heard the news, he went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed by land from many villages.
- 14: A vast crowd was there as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
- 15: That evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and it is getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves."
- 16: But Jesus replied, "That isn't necessary – you feed them"
- 17: "Impossible!" They exclaimed. "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish!"
- 18: "Bring them here," he said.
- 19: Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. And he took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and asked God's blessing on the food. Breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave some of the bread and fish to each disciple, and the disciples gave them to the people.
- 20: They all ate as much as they wanted, and they picked up twelve baskets of leftovers.
- 21: About five thousand men had eaten from those five loaves, in addition to all the women and children!

Dear sisters and brothers, God does not react but act. We have just read that after Jesus received the terrible news of the killing of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas, 'He went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone'. We would have liked perhaps to hear that Jesus reacted by taking revenge and teaching Herod a lesson he would never have forgotten.

God acts in his love, not to destroy lives but to give life in its fullness. He went to a remote place to be alone so that he could deal with his grief, but when He stepped from the boat; a vast crowd was awaiting Him there! In the church we are always busy with "more important things" and do not really have time to do anything about poverty, climate change, violation of human rights etc. If it had been me, verse 14 would have been written as follow: as he stepped from the boat, he was horrified to see the vast crowd and in desperation he shouted at them and said: When will you people learn to make an appointment? I am busy with more important things and want to be left alone. Go away and next time contact my office!

When Jesus saw them, the purpose of why He went there, was not important any more. We read: "and He had compassion on them and healed their sick". We in the church are too pre-occupied with ourselves and our offices and forget the church - the people. The people of God whom we are supposed to serve. We need compassion. Yes, it is true that we do not always lack compassion, but the problem is that our compassion is insufficient and is empty of deeds of healing.

"But Jesus replied, "that is not necessary – you feed them." When we in 2007 decided to start the pilot project at Otjivero we did not have any budget for that. Humanly speaking it was impossible, as the disciples exclaimed in our text. What we have learned in the past two years is that little or nothing, and in Jesus hands, becomes more than enough. When we give in faith, our resources are multiplied.

I see the sharing of the last supper not only in Matthew 26 but also in chapter 14-19. When we celebrate Holy Communion in the Church, we put emphasis only on the forgiveness of sins and not on sharing. To be forgiven is to be justified, and to be justified is to have a share in God's justice. Forgiveness and sharing are twin sisters and kiss each other. Forgiven people share this with others in God's justice; and they in turn share this justice with a world starving for justice.

The miracle is not in numbers or mathematical calculation of how the bread and the fish was divided and how twelve baskets could be filled with leftovers; the miracle is in the SHARING. According to the Life Application Study Bible p.1,437, the number of people Jesus fed could have been 10 to 15 thousand. The number of men is listed separately because in Jewish culture men and women usually ate separately when in public. The children are with the women.

The miracle of sharing is the opposite of the destruction through greed and economic injustice in our world. Otjivero in Omitara is a miracle for which we fervently pray to happen in the whole of Namibia and in our one World.

SO THAT ALL AND NOT SOME CAN EAT, BE SATISFIED AND HAVE LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS.

The bread from heaven - Lechem min haschamajim (Hebrew)

Bible Study

Exodus 16, 1-23+35

BARBARA RUDOLPH

Prayer

God, open our eyes; God, open our ears; God, open our hearts!

Let your word come alive in our midst through your Holy Spirit! Amen!

Introduction

Can you tell us your story? Yesterday we heard this question in Otjivero very often. And the people of the settlement started to tell what had happened since they got the Basic Income Grant. When it comes to real life, you don't talk about principles, you come to the point where you tell stories. We will listen to a story of the origin of the faith, a story of life, struggle and faith in the wilderness. Not a theorem, not a sentence you can learn, not an easy solution but the story of life and the story of God accompanying the way and life. Stories are alive, give different perspectives, and in different contexts you hear a story differently.

Stories give you the chance to grow with them and to listen to them in different stages of your life.

The story of this morning is one I first heard as a child. And now I hear it one day after I saw the village of Otjivero and the result of the pilot project of the BIG.

Scripture Reading: Exodus 16

(Everybody repeats the sentence which is most important for him/her)

Where?

The story of the manna happens "in between", between Egypt and the Mountain of Sinai, between liberation from slavery and the Ten Commandments. In this situation of "in between" they are no longer under oppression but not yet in the Promised Land. They are in the wilderness, in hostile surroundings. It is 31 days after they left Egypt, after 61 meals, as the Jewish teachers count. The way is too long to carry the food from Egypt, everything they had prepared for the journey is gone. And the way is too long to wait till Canaan. They need something for the location between Egypt and

Canaan, between slavery and freedom, between Exodus and Ten Commandments. It is not freedom yet; it is “in between”, in the wilderness. And they need provisions for this journey.

Complaining

In this situation the People of Israel start to complain. The Jewish scholars love to discuss whether it is right or wrong to complain. On the one hand the Israelites should trust God who brought them out of Egypt. On the other hand there is a terrible wilderness in front of them. And the Jewish scholars ask: why do they argue with Moses and Aaron? On the one hand it is not right to say: you brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. On the other hand Moses and Aaron are the persons nearest them who are in charge and are their leaders. Whether it is right or wrong, they complain.

The German word for complain is “murren” that is a very deep and dark word. And it sounds almost like the word for the noise the stomach makes when you are hungry. That German word is “knurren”. “Knurren” from the stomach comes right out of the mouth as “murren”, there is no time and energy to go first to the head, to the brain. When you are hungry you are angry. When there is “knurren” then there is “murren”.

The Bible doesn't give an answer whether the complaining is right or wrong. Instead of that it says in V 9: Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining. So, even when they were far away from God, God is close to them.

Structure

And God answers. The time “in between” is not a “non-time”. The time in the wilderness becomes a structure. It is amazing how often in the text there is information about the time:

- V4 each day
- V5 sixth day
- V6 evening
- V7 Morning
- V8 in the evening - in the morning
- V12 twilight - morning
- V13 evening - morning
- V19 until morning
- V21 morning by morning
- V22 sixth day
- V23 Sabbath
- V35 forty years

The difficult time of “in between” gets a structure. The time is organised, every twelve hours something important happens and there is something important to do. A German research says that one of the biggest problems of long term unemployed persons is, that they lose the structure of time: there is no reason to get up in the morning, to do something today, to hurry up or to slow down. Sometimes it is wonderful: when I am on vacation and lose track of time and have to ask: Which day is today? Do we have Wednesday or Thursday? That is a wonderful feeling of freedom. But only for 2 or 3 weeks. After that life needs structure again. What God gives the people of Israel in the wilderness is a clear structure, which creates discipline for 40 years.

And next to the structure of the day there is a structure of collecting and resting. Six days of collecting and one day of resting. Even in the wilderness, even in the time of “in between” there is a structure of work and pause, there is time of rest.

The Jewish scholars ask: What is the Sabbath? And they answer: Sabbath is one day in the week when you live as if all concerns are solved and all work is done. A gift from God in the midst of the wilderness.

Measure

Some gather more, some gather less. Everyone has enough. Everybody gets enough, no reason to steal, no reason to be jealous, no reason to hide the possessions. The measure of the manna is not the work of the people but the need of the people. That is not capitalism, that is not socialism, that is God’s measure: everybody gets what he or she needs. Collect for every person in the tent (V 16). We are far away from this kind of measure. It is a different approach than we have learned. It is not a market orientated but a people orientated economy.

Manna

Manna, the bread for the time “in between”. Jewish scholars say “Manna” is the word relating to the Hebrew phrase “Man Hu?” “What is this?” Listening to these words, I hear the voice of a woman, because in almost every culture women are the first to get up in the morning, to prepare breakfast, to look after the children, to go outside to get everything organised. I am quite sure, that a woman got out of the tent early in the morning and was the very first one who shouted “Man Hu - What is that?” Yes, what is that? What is Manna? The Bible says “Lechem min Haschamajim - Bread of the Heaven”. They find the bread of the heaven - on the ground. Heaven and Earth come together in the manna, if you want to come close to heaven bow your back. If you are looking at the ground you are close to heaven.

Martin Luther was asked: “How can I find God?” Luther answers: “Don’t lift your eyes up to the sky, look down, you will find God down on the ground, in the dirt.” Heaven and earth come together. For a short moment we already see Jesus

Christ, God comes to earth, heaven and earth are together. God gives, people are no longer separated but together. In the bread and wine we receive the power to believe in God's sustainable grace. Manna is the bread for the time "in between", God has given freedom from slavery; the Manna makes the freedom sustainable till the people enter the Promised Land. Between the "fleshpots" of Egypt (the food of slavery) and milk and honey, the food of freedom in Canaan, Manna is the food for the time "in between", God's structure on the way from slavery to freedom.

Man Hu, what is this? That is the question people are asking when they hear the word BIG. The Basic Income Grant in Otjivero is the bread "in between", not the bread of freedom, not the bread of Canaan, but the bread which gives structure, power and endurance – to become finally free.

A biblical reflection on the “BIG” consultation: “manna from heaven”

TEXT: Exodus 16:1-15

VICTOR R. AGUILAN

Human rights advocacy is a constant and key element in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) ministry. Even before martial law the UCCP had spoken on selected national issues affecting the wider Philippine society. The church in the Philippines has recognised the connection between civil-political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. The General Assembly of 1960 took a definite stand on each of the following social concerns: economic development, agricultural development, population trends, modern technology, industrialization, urbanization, unemployment, trade union movement and management relation, and responsible laity.¹ The UCCP involvement in human rights advocacy has a biblical-theological warrant. One important biblical text which justifies the UCCP Human Rights Ministry is Exodus 16: 1-15. This passage is also relevant to the consultation on Basic Income Grant (BIG) as a human rights issue. What does this story tell us about the issue of (human) rights and security?

The story begins when after having left Egypt the Israelites face a material crisis (economic and social crisis), the lack of adequate food, water, and life-support in the wilderness. The crisis is so serious that the people start to grumble, murmur and complain against Moses and Aaron. The economic-social-cultural (ecosoc) crisis has become a political crisis (and also a religious crisis). The Israelites, a newly born people, were complaining like a newly born baby. The people had to express their grievance to the leadership. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

I would like to reflect on this specific incident. Often this scene has been interpreted as proof of people’s lack of faith. But after reading the text several times, something different dawned on me. Why not interpret the text from the perspective of people who are struggling to survive? Mothers know that when babies cry there is something wrong. These are people who are in a desperate situation. Like the people we visited in Otjivero. I think anyone in that kind of situation would normally complain. People would cry out! You would speak out! People would express their grievance!

1 Lydia Niguidula, ed. Uccp Statements and Resolutions (1948-1990,) Quezon City: United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1990.

If the poor, the oppressed did not cry out how could we hear them? Would the government officials pay attention to the needs of the poor and marginalized if they remain meek and subservient? Of course not! Complaining is asserting one’s rights. The Israelites were exercising their fundamental human rights. These are the rights to express one’s grievance and find redress from government (Moses/Yahweh). It also shows that rights are to be asserted and defended. When the poor start complaining it is the beginning of recovering their lost humanity and dignity because of life-time oppression. To complain is the beginning of freedom. This should be welcomed by people who are involved in human rights and justice work. And people in leadership should be ready to address the “complaints” of people. The role of authorities (religious, political, business, or state and non-state) as duty bearer of human rights is to listen to the “grumbling” and complaints of their people. If the economic and social security of people is neglected and ignored, the result could be tragic.

Let us return to the narrative in verse 3. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” The complaints of the Israelites become more threatening when the people make a sharp and unfavourable contrast between the wilderness and Egypt. The wilderness is a place of hunger and will inevitably lead to death. By contrast, Egypt is remembered as a place of “pots of flesh” (i.e., source of meat) and bread. It is ironic that Egypt was a “better” place compared to their situation in the wilderness. They did not mention the oppression or abuse in Egypt, but only meat and bread. The anxiety about survival, the immediacy of food overrides any long-term hope for freedom and well-being. People were willing to trade “their hopes, visions and rights” in exchange for survival and food.

Again this reaction is but to be expected. When people become vulnerable or desperate they are “willing” to do anything. They become submissive to anyone who can provide them with what they need. Desperate people – marginalized, deprived women and children, minorities and disabled, outcast and rejected – would do anything to survive. Here we see two kinds of bread in the story: 1) Manna, the bread from heaven, and 2) the bread from Pharaoh. Let us compare the two breads.

Manna (Bread from Heaven)
Enhances human security

Meets human needs

Rights-fulfilling

Oriented to Total Development
Manna is not the goal but a means to reach the Promised Land
(Josh 5: 12 The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.)

Pharaoh (Bread from Egypt)
National Security-oriented

8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 He said to his people, “Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.”

Promotes the interest of the State
(11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh)

Rights-curtailling / life destroying
(22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.)

Development aggression
(Pyramid building)

The “manna from Heaven” was to sustain the Israelites so that they would reach the Promised Land. The manna was a means of sustaining the freedom of the Israelites. The “manna from Heaven” was for total human development. But the “bread from Egypt” was to keep the slaves alive so that they could continue building the Pyramids. The “bread from Egypt” was to preserve the inhuman development, a development aggression project of the Pharaoh. Development aggression is a term that human rights defenders coined against the unjust and dehumanizing development projects of the Philippine government.

“Development is development aggression when the people become the victims, not the beneficiaries; when the people are set aside in development planning, not partners in development; and when people are considered mere resources for profit-

oriented development, not the center of development Development aggression violates the human rights of our people in all their dimensions – economic, social, cultural, civil and political.”²

In the contemporary situation, tyrants and dictators know very well how to exploit and manipulate vulnerable people. They offer “bread from Pharaoh.” They deceive the poor into trading away their basic human rights in exchange for “social security.” The question is: is it genuine social security when civil-political rights are taken away? This is the argument that we hear from some government officials, “Development first before democracy.” or “Food first before freedom.” “Social security before human rights.”

This is the current debate in Asia. “Rights versus Security” but I am suspicious of this argument. This is a misplaced debate. In the Philippines security is always associated with other concepts such as national security, economic security and political security. Particularly during martial law in the Philippines, the concept of security was employed to curtail freedom, to uphold a military dictatorship. Concerns for vulnerability were not voiced in light of solidarity with the poor or disenfranchised. Security for the powerful meant insecurity for the poor and marginalized. A government that is truly of the people and for the people knows that rights are indivisible, universal, interrelated and interdependent. When Christians succumb to this dichotomization or derogation of human rights at the expense of other rights we are leading people back to “Egypt.” We are offering them the “bread from Pharaoh.”

This is what we learned during martial law and under the present GMA regime. On 21 September 1972, Marcos declared martial law. He suspended the Bill of Rights, the Senate, the House of Representatives and all political parties, and began to rule by decree. His government closed down newspapers, introduced press censorship and jailed many opposition members, including student activists of various political convictions. Marcos used the deplorable situation in the country as the main justification for martial law, pointing to the crime wave and the threat of a communist take-over. Most people were convinced that Philippine democracy could not, in any case, long survive the perpetuation of crime, inequality and poverty and incoherent economic policy. Martial law gave the promise of political stability, economic development and an improvement in social conditions. Eventually all sectors of society including the religious sector, including both Catholic and Protestant religious leaders accepted martial law.³ President Marcos skilfully used

2 The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, as quoted in Ramon C. Casiple, “Human Rights vs. Development Aggression: Can Development Violate Human Rights?” Human Rights Forum: Focus on Development Aggression. Quezon City: Philippine Human Rights Information Center, 1996.

3 Oscar. Suarez, Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics. The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines, Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1999, 50-56.

the people's craving for social justice, peace and order by posing as the archenemy of oligarchies and criminal syndicates to win the consent of the governed.⁴ Church leaders were willing to give martial law a chance precisely for this reason. Eight heads of churches belonging to the National Council of Churches in the Philippines even issued a “Resolution of Support”.⁵

But what price was to be paid for this support? At the outset of martial rule, President Marcos ordered the arrest and detention of many persons, including political opponents, journalists and media practitioners, businessmen and church activists. Between September 1972 and February 1977 the regime had detained nearly 70,000 persons, although most people were held for only a short time.⁶ Many of those arrested by the military were incarcerated in the absence of formal charges. It was a curtailment of a closely guarded right under the 1935 Constitution, which guaranteed the freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention. This police power could only be exercised upon the determination of the judge that a probable cause existed to justify the issuance of a warrant of arrest. An arrest undertaken without the proper warrant, except under a few specific instances, would be illegal and a violation of human rights.⁷ In addition, an independent group like *Amnesty International* (AI) recorded disturbing incidences of torture of detainees while in prison. In its fact-finding mission report, AI found out that torture was “part of the general approach to the treatment of suspects.” Some of the commonly used torture techniques were beating the prisoner, drowning (water-cure), rape, sexual molestation and electric shock treatment.⁸

President Marcos justified the arrest and detention on two grounds: crimes and subversion. He claimed that most of those arrested were “common criminals”, such as thieves, kidnapers, and murderers. Only a few detainees were charged with subversion. But observers of martial law pointed that many of those arrested were critics of President Marcos and his *New Society*. What was frightening and deplorable was the use of torture especially on perceived opponents of the regime. Eventually church activists and oppositionists saw a connection between human rights violations and martial rule.⁹

The public could no longer ignore the increasing incidence of human rights violations and abuses committed by the soldiers and government officials and the dictatorial nature of the Marcos regime. Eventually the churches had to respond

4 Ferdinand Marcos, *The Democratic Revolution in the Philippines*, Manila: 1972.

5 Estanislao Abainza and et al, “Resolution of Support,” NCCP Newsletter, January 1973.

6 Amnesty International, *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Republic of the Philippines*, 22 November – 5 December, 1975, 2d ed. London, 1971, p.6; and United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Reports*, vol. 4, Asia & Pacific, 7 September 1977, p. 1.

7 1935 Constitution of the Philippines, Article III.

8 Amnesty International, *Report of an Amnesty International Mission*, 1975 p. 6

9 Robert L. Youngblood, *Marcos against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines*, Quezon City: New Day Publisher, 1993, 101-171..

to this unjust situation. During the 15th General Assembly of the UCCP held on May 21 to 26, 1978 at Cagayan de Oro City, Mindanao, the Assembly approved unanimously the statement calling for the *Restoration of Civil and Political Liberties and the Dismantling of Martial Law*.¹⁰ This statement could be considered as the first and strongest statement against martial law that a protestant church ever made. The Statement of the General Assembly declared that the current political situation which, “...relates to the suppression and curtailment of the civil and political liberties of the citizens under the domination of martial law;” and “...the system of one-man rule or of total concentration of power in one man” are “...anathema to the full growth and enrichment of a Christian community and oppressive to the challenges of a creative and responsible christian discipleship.”

It is the same with the Gloria Macapagal Arroyo regime; the war against terrorism in the Philippines with the support of the United States is welcomed by ordinary Filipinos. Because of insecurity and fear people are willing to trade off some of their fundamental rights. But in the process it created a culture of impunity and a culture of corruption. The security against terrorism usually means assuring the privileges of a few at the cost of many. The extra-judicial killings or political killings have risen since the assumption of Mrs. Arroyo in 2001. Many of those killed were activists or militants from different left-leaning political groups. But the numbers vary. Amnesty International, in its official website, mentions 244 victims.¹¹ Task Force *USIG* of the Philippine National Police listed 114 killings.¹²

It should be mentioned that some of the victims of extra-judicial killing were members of the UCCP. The Church has recorded twenty (20) of its members as among the victims of extra-judicial killings.¹³ The UCCP leaders believe that these pastors and lay leaders were killed because of their prophetic ministry. Reacting to these killings the church joined prayer vigils and public protests; gave donations to the families of victims, issued statements of concern, organised fact finding missions, and supported legal actions filed by families of the victims.¹⁴

Rights versus security and development versus liberation are used by the state

10 Journal of the Proceedings of the First Quadrennial General Assembly (15th General Assembly Session) of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 21-26 May, Cagayan de Oro City., 1978, 35. Action 78-117.

11 Amnesty International, Philippines: Political Killings, Human Rights and the Peace Process, 15 August 2006, Amnesty International, 2006, accessed 16 November 2006; available from <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA350062006>.

12 Ibid.(accessed). See Amnesty International, Philippines: Growing Number of Political Killings Risks Retaliatory Spiral, 8 August 2006, Amnesty International, 2006, accessed 16 November 2006; available from <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA350062006>.

13 CONTAK Philippines, 21 Church People Killed as of 20 June 2006, CONTAK Philippines, 2006, accessed 16 November 2006; available from <http://contakphilippines.tripod.com/speaknow/id7.html>.

14 Edna J. Orteza, “The Quest for Lasting Peace: The UCCP Experience,” photocopy, 12 December 2005.

to undermine and deprive its citizens of their fundamental human rights. This has been the experience of the Filipino people. But the church has seen through the deception and lies of the governments. The truth is that human rights and security and development and liberation are intertwined and inseparable. What we can learn from the story in Exodus is the truth that liberation can only be sustained by the manna from heaven. In other words economic security is a prerequisite to preserve the civil and political rights. I believe that this is the reason why Israel is not reprimanded in this narrative. Instead Israel receives an immediate, positive response. Israel is not required to repent its yearning for food; rather, they can expect to receive food from another source, one that requires dependence but does not lead to a new slavery. Yahweh gave Israel bread “from heaven”— i.e., bread given out of God’s rich storehouse, so that it need not come from the Pharaoh’s storehouses (v. 4; cf. 1:11; Gen 47:13-19). Quail is also given in answer to a yearning for meat. Yahweh assures Israel of social security. Yahweh knew the importance of providing social security to Israel to safeguard their new found freedom. To protect the newly gained freedom of Israel Yahweh gave them their basic needs, their social security.

Today we need to have clear theological understanding of government or state. The Bible is clear that it is an instrument of justice. It has the mandate to execute justice in this sinful world. According to today’s human rights discourse, the state is a duty-bearer of human rights. It has a three-fold obligation: to respect human rights, to protect and to fulfill human rights. A state that is truly just would not divide or separate rights from security and security from rights. It would fulfill its obligation to put all human rights into effect.

This is what I believe the story of the manna from heaven in Exodus is telling us about rights and security. There is a close connection between civil and political rights and with economic social and cultural rights (ECOSOC rights). Social rights which mean the rights to an adequate standard of living, health, education, rest & leisure and social security are inseparable to civil and political rights. ECOSOC rights and CIVILPOL rights are mutually dependent and that a reciprocal relationship among human rights exists. The enjoyment of one right is often dependent on the enjoyment of other rights.

Conclusion

There is a temptation today to divide or compartmentalise human rights in the name of development, poverty alleviation, and security. Exodus 16 reminds us of this danger. This was expressed by the late Senator Jose Diokno of the Philippines, a human rights defender: *We cannot enjoy civil and political rights unless we enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, anymore than we insure our economic, social and cultural rights unless we can exercise our civil and political rights.*

This is also a challenge to the Namibian people and churches. The BIG campaign is a novel and inspiring effort to address the challenge of poverty in Namibia. The concept that everyone has a right to a basic income from the state is an approach to poverty alleviation on the basis of rights. The BIG campaign could be compared to “manna from heaven.” The basic income of N\$100.00 (Namibian) is an initial effort to move people to action. It is similar “pump priming”. The BIG is not the goal but a way to begin the process of total human development and the realisation of human rights. BIG is like “manna from heaven” which Yahweh gave to the Israelites so that they would reach the Promised Land.

The BIG coalition must never lose sight of their Promised Land. The “manna from heaven” should be integral with the struggle for the realisation of freedom and liberation (civil and political rights). The “manna from heaven” is given to the Israelites to sustain their liberation from slavery. The “manna from heaven” is more than a humanitarian response to the impoverishment of the community. Welfare-developmental response emphasises intervention to alleviate the precarious conditions of the poor. The “manna from heaven” is a development-liberation response. It will soon become clear that the economic uplift of the poor will not automatically occur with the mere provision of the means for improving their livelihood. The BIG coalition is challenged to make further inquiry why the majority of Namibians remains impoverished and underdeveloped. And this question will lead to the question of social injustice. There are laws and policies which exclude the poor from their fair share in the fruits of society’s development. For instance, taxation is regressive; land-owning is a monopoly of the rich, etc. Here the churches initiate conscientisation activities, human rights campaigns, etc. Often the churches take the lead in proposing the enactment of new public policies. Churches put up non-government organisations (NGO) or service institutions to mobilise people into action.

It becomes a liberation model when churches fully support the formation of community and sectoral organisations in the pursuit of justice and transforming social structures. Local churches work with secular movements and groups involved in genuine land reform, peace advocacy, environmental protection, community-based health programmes, and social movements. This implies solidarity with landless, rural, poor movements, worker organisations and labor unions, urban poor organisations and other sectoral groups struggling for social justice and liberation. In addition they encourage their members to join these groups and other civic groups, sectoral groups and cause-oriented organisations. This is now the challenge to the BIG coalition. “Manna from heaven” requires justice.

The “manna from heaven” is also a call to government as duty-bearer of human rights to fulfill its obligation to realise all human rights. In this light, governments must join hands and develop, through permanent structures, new forms of collaboration

in which representatives from business, professional life, unions and other non-governmental groups cooperate. To achieve this bearers of rights and duty-bearers should work together for total human development and liberation.

BIG – Paradigm shift for demand side economics

Challenging the economic doctrines of globalisation

MARTIN BÜSCHER

1. Real World Economics

A young lady starts baking bread in the village. She has made some savings for the oven, she knows how to bake, people in the village can afford to buy bread. In the beginning, it is just her and two days a week. After a while, she expands. She has got employees, a little shop, clients from neighbouring villages. A young man starts to repair shoes. He makes his income as the village people come to him for his service. A lady, after a while her friends, starts sewing textiles, clothes for school, clothes for work, another lady starts to grow vegetables and plants in her garden.

How can this happen? There is affordable demand. There is an income that is used for the basics of life. There is an income that is used for production and investment. The fact that a basic income grant (BIG) is working like this in Otjivero-Omitara is a blessing for the village and the experiment that the BIG Coalition has launched as a pilot project. At the same time the results are a contrast to what the general notion of economic development is. The general notion of economic development in the context of globalisation is that first the conditions of supply, i.e. low costs of production, competitiveness, no state interference are the most important goals to follow. Market conditions while undisturbed lead, in the end, to higher production, employment, initiative and welfare. The success of the BIG-Project is thus not only an innovative example of social policy, but a challenge to the norms and economic mechanisms of neo-liberal economic globalisation. It is a real world example how things can be done differently and expands a new horizon over the mechanistic foundations of an anachronistic way of shaping economic development.

I will proceed in three steps according to what my headline suggests: I will first explain what the notion of “supply side” in global Europe and its understanding of economics consists of. I will relate this to the philosophy and practice of the BIG project, draw some conclusion from a German social perspective and highlight what a resulting immodest agenda might be.

2. Supply Side Economics - Global Europe

What is “Global Europe” these days? It is a concept of the European Commission, based on programmatic decisions of the Lisbon strategy in 2000. It indicates that in

a globalised world, Europe's trade policy must become an integral part of its wider approach to economic reform and competitiveness. A stronger EU economy at home means Europe has to be more competitive abroad. Markets have to be opened to create new opportunities for trade and ensure European companies are able to compete fairly in these markets.

From the Commissions' point of view, changes in the global economic order today are as significant for the world economy and international relations as at the end of the Cold War. Global economic integration is quickening, driven by growing trade, falling transportation costs, and a revolution in information and communications technology. This is creating opportunities for growth and for development on an unprecedented scale. But it is also putting new pressures on global resources and creating new competition for EU workers and industries. It has eroded some old certainties and aroused new fears.

The EU-Commission continues to express: the answer to these fears is not to close off or to seek to stop change. Strong economies are needed to preserve the fiscal base of the social models that we regard as an integral part of European life. In a global economy, strong economies are competitive economies. And competitive economies are built on trade. WTO members agreed, in the Doha Declaration, to the objective of establishing a multilateral framework on competition policies.

This will contribute towards the more effective application of domestic competition regimes and will be of benefit to consumers and business and industry more generally, including those in developing countries. The aim of this policy is to enable Europe to become more competitive as a zone. In comparable nations like Great Britain, France or Germany the approach is the same. Competition and competitiveness here is an end in itself. All this corresponds to the theoretical concept of supply side economics.

Demand side economics would argue from the other point of view. John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) in the last century was the revolutionary economic thinker who emphasised on a macro-economic level the importance of the demand side. Keynes sought to develop a theory that would explain determinants of saving, consumption, investment and production. In that theory, the interaction of aggregate demand and aggregate supply determines the level of output and employment in the economy. Because of what he considered the failure of the "Classical Theory" in the 1930s, Keynes firmly objects to its main theory—adjustments in prices would automatically make demand tend to full employment level.¹ On a macro-economic level, neo-classical supply side theory supports that the two main costs that shift demand and supply are labour and money. Through the distribution of the monetary policy, demand and supply can be adjusted. If there were more labour than demand for

1 Cp. Keynes (1936 (1974)) S.22f, S.302f., Donges/Freytag (2004) S.300ff., Rettig/ Böckmann/ Vogenreiter (1998) S.1f., S.117ff.

it, wages would fall until hiring began again. If there were too much saving, and not enough consumption, then interest rates would fall until people either cut their savings rate or started borrowing. Still, both concepts relate to industrial contexts of European societies of the early 20th century.²

Theoretically interesting now are the two shifts. The first shift is to turn from a supply side economics to demand side economics as Keynes developed in the last century. The second shift is to consider the Keynesian approach as a means of reconsidering the microeconomic approach at the same time.

The Westphalian Church, however, by positions papers of its synod and the church board is convinced that this approach is too narrow. In the political, economic, social and ecological challenges a *broadened view* on economic mechanisms is necessary. The church board has now endorsed a study on “Ethically Reconsidering the Social Market Economy”.

3. Demand Side Economics - Social Market Economy

The concept of a Social Market Economy, well understood, in its German tradition is a contrast to competition and free markets as an end in itself.

The specific aspect of the concept of a social market economy is that a well working market economy needs a strong frame, a frame of the social order, the order of law, a constitutional order. All these elements have to find a good balance – on the one hand to establish the prerequisites for well working markets. Those are a good infrastructure, state administration, education, public health system, social security, etc. On the other hand the negative consequences (external effects) of a market system were to be disciplined. Correspondingly, the social market economy in Germany established a security system for unemployment, old age and health as well as elements of distributive justice (access to education without considering class, income or family, support of low income families, support of families with many children, etc.) Economic liberalism in the social market economy intended to combine the advantages of productivity and efficiency of a market economy with social justice and thus was considered a third way between capitalism and socialism.

However, considering these values of distributive justice to evaluate the ethics of the market would only describe *half* the picture. The social market economy is the attempt to shape the order of society as a whole. There is an interdependency of the orders (“Interdependenz der Ordnungen”, Walter Eucken). The economic order is related to the social order, the order of law and the order of the state. Social market economy is even shaped as a relation of the order of life (“Lebensordnung”, “Lebenswelt”, “Vitalordnung”) and the economic order (Alfred Müller-Armack, Wilhelm Röpke).³

2 Cp. Keynes (1936) S. 274f., S.322f.

3 Ev. Church of Westfalia (2009) 15ff.

These elements of the liberal order of society find their complementary component in the convictions and social norms: the principle of subsidiarity and solidarity (“the market needs solidarity, but does not create it”, Alexander Rüstow). The anthropology of the social market economy is dialectic. On the one hand the freedom, self-interest and wish for material supply of the individual is observed, on the other hand social cohesion with society, social responsibility and spiritual, altruistic or communicative motivation for human action is emphasised.

The economy is considered to be a part of society; it is not an independent system. Market and competition are not autonomous, they are embedded in society. In contrast to the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham or James Buchanan, the social system is not fully grasped as the sum of individual and economic action, but according to Amitai Etzioni or Martin Buber, the social structure has realistically to be integrated into a balanced relation of economy and society. A “Responsive Community” is based on the I&WE- (Buber) paradigm.⁴

In Germany, this was called programmatic interventionism. The political father of the German Model, the conservative Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, expressed that, “There are a thousand instruments of trade, tax or fiscal policy to direct the economy towards its ends.”

4. Demand Side Policy – Demands of the People

Both in conceptual thinking as in application a movement has gained influence that intends to broaden the basic ethical orientation of neo-classical concepts and economic liberalism. Socio-Economics as a school of thinking and communitarianism as a US-American political movement aims at critically challenging and modernising ideas of individualisation, freedom, community and the common good. Communitarianism intends to find a new balance between self-interests of the individual and moral “interests” and conceptions. The anthropology holds that human beings are both interested in maximising their own utility, but at the same time have moral notions as well. Those are values and criteria of personal fulfilment, of the interests of others, of the common good, etc. Decisions may be rational, but rationality is dependant on values, not only on interests. Economic decisions rely on anthropology and ideas of the common good. That’s where churches show up on the scene.

Communitarianism builds the bridge to analyse and integrate socio-economic change into market framework and consider ethics beyond competition and self-interest. For a European context of communitarianism the emphasis is slightly different. What new horizons have to be considered?

There are different forces that influence markets. The one holds that new impulses for markets have generated because of the breakdown of socialist economies and

4 Etzioni (1988)

new global markets. The other holds that economic growth and liberalisation leads to substantial external effects, not only on the environmental and social level, but also on the political level (imbalance of powers) and the personal level (economic colonisation of the “Lebenswelt” (order of life), J.Habermas). One argues that markets work by the guarantee of property rights, workable competition and price signals, the other argues that economic, ecological, social and political change implies new frameworks. The one stands for a weak state and less welfare policy, the other stands for the claim of new forms of regulation and active social policy as a *prerequisite* for market and competition. The one intends to have more state functions privatised, the other stands for more basic rights and an increase of state action for the common good. The one considers competition as an instrument of harmonising forces in society, the other wants to control competition and relate the economy to the “Lebenswelt” (order of life) again. Economics as a science are separated from politics and ethics from the one perspective, the other intends to redefine economics as a political science and develop new ethical fundamentals. As indicators for the one serve economic data like the GNP, for the other the phenomena of crisis in external effects encourage the need for political reactions. Thus we need a new, ethically widened political economy and resulting political instruments to put it into practice.

It is the time of redefining economic policy categories. In some cases concrete and influential measures have won political prominence. The high attractiveness of the Attac-Movement in the USA and Central Europe, which enforces the claim for a tax on currency exchange as a control of international capital markets (Tobin-tax), may partly be explained by the fact that a concrete political crystallisation point of different economic and ethical concepts is reached. The recent earthquake of financial markets is just a symbol of a new need to end *laissez-faire* economics. There is a whole bunch of political instruments without necessarily making public costs grow: control of capital transfer, regulation of high risk funds, progressive taxation on capital revenues, improvement of international control mechanisms, progressive income taxes or even again an ecological tax reform to integrate ecological and social prices into market prices. In other fields of policy there are comparable examples of how to overcome the belief in market forces: looking at the quality of public goods like health care, social security, public security, energy supply or the distribution of work on how to make a living and define necessary work markets need not be destroyed, but reembedded into their serving role.

5. Basic Income Grants – New Economic Demand Side Philosophy

Social protection is on the one hand a means of distribution policy. On the other hand, it has become more and more evident that social protection is a prerequisite for

economic growth.⁵ It strengthens the ability and readiness to invest and secure long-term eradication of poverty. Universal transfers are more cost-efficient than social assistance. Concepts like negative income tax or citizens' dividends become more attractive.

The BIG project in Otjivero-Omitara is a concrete example for a paradigm shift. It is idealistically speaking the practical example for the aspiration that "another world is possible". It indicates that economics on different ethical grounds are realistic. It indicates that there is high potential to challenge the supply doctrine of globalisation as a whole. The BIG project indicates a paradigm shift contrasting supply side economics. Social protection has become a friend of the market economy. It is not, as orthodox economists prefer to argue, an obstacle that is destructive for economic motivation. The opposite is true. By creating the financial prerequisites of demand, motives for investment, employment, education and social integration are enhanced. A new paradigm of economics that church institutions do not get tired of claiming is that the BIG project becomes a real world example that supply economics and the homo oeconomicus can overcome.

The BIG project is an encouragement for real world economics. It has the capability of underlining the potentials to redefine the way the economy is organised in a society. Human dignity, a fulfilled life and values of the common good are the basis for churches and for democratic societies. With the inspiration of BIG it is now the time to transform this orientation into a political agenda.

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5 Loewe (2008) 49 and the differentiated results of the study on basic social protection and positions of key development actors.

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Diakonia and human rights – Building a house of justice

CHRISTIAN OELSCHLÄGEL

At first sight, *diakonia* and human rights seem to be two disparate concepts belonging to two different spheres. Whereas *diakonia* has often been understood as charity based on Christian mercy and is linked to the realm of the church, human rights seem to belong to the sphere of the state and not to social work.¹

A closer look at the origin and history of *diakonia*, however, points to interesting links between the two concepts.² The biblical foundation of *diakonia* has been reduced in many respects as the understanding or interpretation of it has strongly been influenced by historical developments in Europe during the 19th century, when capitalist industrialism was growing in the north hand-in-hand with imperialism and colonial domination in most of the world.³ Martin Robra has pointed out that during the Middle Ages, charity and almsgiving were mainly motivated by the fact that they were seen as a means of salvation, influenced by the Final Judgement as described in Matthew 25:31-46. The Reformation viewed *diakonia* both as the believer's spontaneous response of gratitude, directed to the suffering neighbour (like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37), and as a task of the community, demanding a system of relief for the poor with the support of the local government (Lutheran churches) or organised by congregations through the ministry of deacons and deaconesses (Reformed churches). During the nineteenth century social changes took place rapidly in Europe. The misery of the poor masses was seen as a missionary task (Inner Mission; cf. Luke 15:1-7), but church institutions were not engaged in structural change, due to individualism and a neo-Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of the 'two kingdoms'. The broader sense of *diakonia* as rooted in the Old Testament traditions that refer to justice, the dignity of every human being and structures of social security or New Testament traditions referring to the sacramental life of the church and the vision of the kingdom of God was lost. "With the emergence of functional subsystems (in particular politics and economics), *diakonia* was

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- 1 It has been difficult to implement the Greek word *diakonia* as a guiding principle in the World Council of Churches interchurch aid section and its constituencies.
 - 2 Martin Robra, Theological and Biblical Reflection on Diakonia. A Survey of Discussion within the World Council of Churches, in: The Ecumenical Review 46 (1994), 276-286.
 - 3 Hans-Jürgen Benedict, Beruht der Anspruch der evangelischen Diakonie auf einer Missinterpretation der antiken Quellen?, in: Volker Herrmann/Martin Horstmann (Ed.), Studienbuch Diakonie I, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2006, 117-133.

understood only as the function of a special ministry (the deacon or deaconess) or as an ensemble of institutions like hospitals, orphanages, schools, special services for marginalised groups (“ignorant, sick and handicapped”) and individual aid for the poor (service).⁴ This reduced understanding of *diakonia* was often adopted by missionary societies, who transferred this interpretation and the corresponding theology to many countries. In this sense *diakonia* could be understood as a means of saving individual souls by winning them over to the church, in contrast to biblical and theological traditions that emphasise the character of help springing unintentionally from faith. Biblical traditions relate help to social structures instead of reducing it to the individual. Consequently, during the struggles for independence and liberation, diaconal service and charity were often rejected as insufficient or as an element of the existing structures of domination and thus an obstacle to nation-building, structural change and social action. Martin Robra therefore concludes that from his view it was and still is necessary to rehabilitate *diakonia*, returning to the broad and prophetic understanding of both the word and the praxis. However, reservations about the usage of the words *diakonia* and service are likely to remain in several contexts.

Nevertheless, the understanding of *diakonia* changed during the 1970s when liberation theology rediscovered God's preferential option for the poor stressing the Old Testament tradition that God hears the cry of the oppressed people (Exodus 2:24-25; 3:7-10; Micah 6) or emphasising the messianic vision of the kingdom of God giving motivation, orientation and hope (Micah 4:3,4; Isaiah 61:1,2). Churches moved from a church-centred perspective, concentrating on the individual faith, to a politics-centred perspective, involving social and political analysis of the root causes of injustice and dependence.⁵ This led to a people-centred approach of prophetic *diakonia* in solidarity with the poor and marginalised and sharing life with the whole oikoumene. In ecumenical discussions the action-reflection method was established which implies a socio-experiential approach to studying the Bible committed to suffering people and involved in radical social transformation. Liberation movements and action groups are seen as partners in the people-centred struggle for social justice. Referring to Mark 10:17-31 and Matthew 9:9-13 the rich (churches) may have a chance of changing their place in society and supporting the struggle of the people.

It is obvious that a mutual link between the two concepts exists. Jewish and Christian traditions have shaped (social) laws whilst on the other hand (human) rights have shaped the Christian understanding of *diakonia*. Many 20th century

4 Martin Robra, Theological and Biblical Reflection on Diakonia. A Survey of Discussion within the World Council of Churches, in: The Ecumenical Review 46 (1994), 276-286: 277.

5 The German discussion on the theological interpretation of *diakonia* has been summed up by Volker Herrmann, Theologie der Diakonie in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Konzeptionen – Kontroversen – Konstitutiva, in: Volker Herrmann/Martin Horstmann, Studienbuch Diakonie I, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2006, 257-271.

developments in the area of human rights, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, have been strongly influenced if not inspired by Christian Rights' and *diakonia* concepts and share a common focus on justice. However, as these traditions developed far earlier in history and under very different circumstances than Enlightenment-inspired human rights understandings, caution is needed in moving too directly from biblical and early Christian perspectives to current human rights understandings. This is all the more important in today's multi-religious and secular world. Human rights have developed through complex, interacting historical processes, informed by experiences of oppression and totalitarianism, injustice and violations of human rights. Nevertheless, human rights can be seen as both rooted in ancient religious beliefs and practices and as modern political fruit of those beliefs. In light of this orientation, *diakonia* and human rights work are both understood to be two important components of the justice work of the churches.

Diakonia and justice

In the New Testament, a clear distinction between 'mercy' and 'justice' is made. While charity describes a voluntary and gratuitous work for others and is usually linked to the context of an unequal relationship (since actions imply that the so-called 'strong' advocate for the needy) – the term justice expresses in legal propositions something that we owe to each other and which is legally codified in terms of 'right to ...' e.g. in human rights conventions. Justice in the sense of legally secure entitlements can often overcome or at least limit dependencies.

It is nevertheless of central importance to consider the manner in which mercy and justice are interrelated. From a biblical perspective mercy - as gratuitous, free and spontaneous action – aims at establishing justice. Ideally, impulses of mercy are being transformed into principles of justice, as can be already seen in the biblical literature, especially in the development of a 'social law' in the Old Testament. Besides this, it can be found also in the context of the development of social law in Germany - which can be studied at major key points of the legal development, the Inner Mission or later, the Diakonische Werk. The gradual transformation of charity into law does not mean that there is no need for mercy in the further development of law or that mercy will be replaced completely by law. In contrary, impulses of mercy are of fundamental and lasting importance. They serve as a critical corrective that - in light of new challenges - draws attention to the distress of those whose claims are not yet or no longer legally secured. In addition, mercy refers to the motivational basis of those who are professionally or as volunteers involved in diaconal work. Mercy can therefore be considered as the starting point, the motivating force and the permanent corrective of a rights-based social service. The law upholds these ideas which function as a normative meta-norm of the development of rights.

Mercy and justice are so closely interrelated concepts, which can be systematically distinguished, but are not to be separated. Mercy without the objective perspective of justice could help only occasionally and eventually perpetuate social inequalities. Justice without mercy threatens to be formal and to solidify. From a Christian perspective, a ‘culture of mercy’ raises the question of justice again and again.

When churches realised that this strive for social justice could not be reached by financial support or a project-oriented system and that the relationship of giving and receiving had a serious ecclesiological implication, the aim of international *diakonia* slowly shifted towards a liberating empowerment of the powerless and poor. The question was no longer ‘what can the churches do for the poor?’ but whether they were prepared to live with the poor and to take part in their struggle for liberation. The poor were then seen as the agents of change. However, this shift from helping the victims to supporting those struggling for justice meant conflict with the powers and was in the beginning thus not accepted, especially by rich and powerful churches.

The discussion initiated by liberation theology led to a consultation on *Contemporary Understandings of Diakonia*⁶ in Geneva in 1982 which was helpful for its evaluation of historical forms of *diakonia* and its remarks on the biblical and theological basis of *diakonia*. The consultation considered the role of the local community and *diakonia* as a ‘relationship of exchange in a healing and sharing community’.

Eight key-words characterise *diakonia* as:

- essential for the life and well-being of the church;
- concentrating on the local level, for it ‘starts where the people are’ with their immediate needs;
- worldwide in international solidarity;
- preventive, to tackle the root causes together with people, and not to sustain unjust structures;
- concerned with structural and political dimensions (preventive, comprehensive and holistic);
- humanitarian beyond the household of faith;
- mutual;
- liberating, with the stress on empowerment of people promoting participation and respecting their culture and values.

This summary of new theological approaches towards *diakonia* has influenced the further discussion within the World Council of Churches. It engaged in broadening traditional understandings of *diakonia* and led the ecumenical sharing of resources to go beyond a focus on material transfers from rich to poor and to enable practical

⁶ World Council of Churches (ed.), *Contemporary Understandings of Diakonia*. Report of a Consultation, Geneva, 1982.

partnerships which involved people as well as funds. A global consultation on *diakonia* in Larnaca in 1986 discussed issues such as worldwide regression to parochialism, hunger, debt, armaments expenditure, and uprooted people. It noted that *diakonia* can exist on various levels – emergency, prevention, rehabilitation, development and change – and that the form it takes should be shaped by local needs.⁷ For the future, Larnaca suggested (1) renewal of philanthropic *diakonia*, (2) *diakonia* and development for justice and human rights and dignity, (3) *diakonia* for peace between people, (4) *diakonia* and church unity in the service of society, and (5) *diakonia* and inter-religious understanding for common involvement in justice and peace. The Larnaca Declaration stresses the importance of justice for diaconal action: “We recognise that justice will not be given by the powerful until and unless the powerless stand together. We know that God is with those struggling for justice and peace, and we know in our hearts - if not yet in our actions - that our place must be with them.”⁸

In connection with the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches stated in 1998: “As Christians, we are called to share in God’s mission of justice, peace and respect for all Creation and to seek for all humanity the abundant life which God intends. Within scripture, through tradition, and from the many ways in which the spirit illumines our hearts today, we discern God’s gift of dignity for each person and their inherent right to acceptance and participation with the community. From this flows the responsibility of the churches, as the Body of Christ, to work for universal respect and implementation of human rights, (Consultation on ‘Human Rights and the Churches: New Challenges,’ Morges, Switzerland, June 1998). Our concern for human rights is based on our conviction that God wills a society in which all can exercise full human rights. All human beings are created in the image of God, equal, and infinitely precious in God’s sight and ours. Jesus Christ has bound us to one another by his life, death and resurrection, so that what concerns one concerns us all, (fifth assembly, Nairobi, 1975)”⁹ It is important to notice that the assembly not only links justice and dignity to human rights but also stresses the indivisibility of human rights and the connection between individual and social rights. “The process of globalisation has once again re-emphasised civil and political rights, dividing

7 Cf. the article on *diakonia* written by Teresa Joan White in the Ecumenical Dictionary, online: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/themes/christian-service-diakonia/ecumenical-dictionary-diakonia.html>.

8 The Larnaca Declaration. World Consultation on Interchurch Aid, Refugee and World Service, *Diakonia 2000*, Larnaca, Cyprus, 19-26 November 1986; online: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/ecumenical-solidarity/larnaca-declaration.html>.

9 World Council of Churches (ed.), *Together on the Way. Official Report of the Eighth Assembly*, 5.8. A Statement on Human Rights, online: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/or-01.html>.

them from economic, social and cultural rights. We reaffirm the position taken by the WCC fifth assembly that human rights are indivisible. No rights are possible without the basic guarantees for life, including the right to work, to participate in decision-making, to adequate food, to health care, to decent housing, to education for the full development of the human potential, and to a safe environment and the conservation of the earth's resources. At the same time, we reiterate our conviction that the effectiveness of work for collective human rights is to be measured in terms of the relief it gives both to communities and to individual victims of violations, and of the measure of freedom and improvement of the quality of life it offers every person.”¹⁰

This concern for human rights that has been expressed in several declarations has been taken up in the joint position paper “Rights-based development from a faith-based perspective” which has been elaborated by the Rights and Development Group, staff members of seven APRODEV member-organisations and the Lutheran World Federation/Department of World Service.¹¹ The position paper states that from a faith-based perspective, the longstanding commitment to *diakonia* and development with justice seems to strongly support a rights-based approach. This means that internationally accepted human rights standards will constitute an important reference and guideline for their work as faith-based organisations in development and humanitarian work.

Practical consequences for rights-based social work

If a rights-based approach towards *diakonia* is taken, what are the consequences? In accordance to the APRODEV position paper the following key elements could be considered for diaconal social work:

- The starting point of all rights-based work is a new way for us to see those living in poverty and suffering the consequences of conflicts and disasters. They have to be seen as **rights-holders** and not as objects of charity. By accepting that individuals have legitimate claims to rights and a dignified life, we also acknowledge that there are actors in society who as duty-bearers have obligations and responsibilities to realise human rights. The national state has the principal legal obligation, is the principal duty-bearer, and should therefore always be addressed in rights-based strategies at the relevant strategic levels. However, other actors at different levels also have moral responsibilities to promote and respect rights and should also be addressed.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Aprovev et. al. (ed.), Rights-based development from a faith-based perspective. Joint Position Paper, Rights and Development Group, online: http://www.aprodev.net/main/Files/Plans_and_reports/Rights-Position-Paper_E.pdf.

- Focus on **structural and root causes**: At the root of poverty and rights violations lie complex social, cultural, political, and economic structures that exclude certain groups of women, men and children. Efforts must not only meet their immediate needs but must also analyse and address the rules, institutions, power relations and mechanisms that exclude and discriminate against certain groups in society.
- Focus on **equality and non-discrimination**: The principles of equality and non-discrimination mandate particular attention to the groups most affected by rights violations and breaches, including minority groups. Social work must address the interests and needs of the most marginalised and vulnerable men and women in societies. Support needs to strengthen their access to their rights, in particular their claims for an equal voice in the distribution of resources, to real access and control of these resources, and to non-discrimination within institutions, legislation, policy, and administrative practice.
- Focus on **empowerment**: Impoverished and discriminated women and men and excluded communities should be at the centre of social work. Rights-based support continues to support and facilitate their empowerment endeavours, strengthening these processes by increasing their capacity and opportunities for asserting rights, using law, and for addressing those with rights obligations and responsibilities.
- Focus on **participation**: Not only the outcome of social work is important but also the way to achieve these aims. Following the focus on empowerment impoverished and marginalised men and women have to be enabled to participate in political as well as economic decisions. No change in unequal, unjust power structures is possible without their active engagement and participation. They have to be included in decisions concerning the design, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that impact their lives. Local communities need to set the agenda, including influencing the choice of which rights should be prioritised when different rights come into conflict and priorities need to be set.
- Focus on **accountability**: The use of political power is only legitimate if exercised in accordance with international human rights standards for protecting human dignity. Strengthening the accountability of duty-bearers to targeted rights-holders, through for example advocacy or capacity-building, becomes therefore a major endeavour. This principle of accountability also challenges social organisations and partners to operate in ways that are transparent and accountable to the societies and communities in which we work.
- Focus on **community** and the inter-relatedness of human beings: Rights based approaches do not only have the individual in focus but also recognise the human being as being part of a community. Public justice reflects all conditions of social life – economic, political, and cultural – which make it possible for persons to achieve dignity and humanity within the community in which they live. Community and

public justice belong together. Dignity and rights are thus realised in community i.e. in relationship to others.

Example of the pilot project of a BIG in the village of Otjivero

In my opinion, BIG can be seen as a good example of how a rights-based approach can be put into practice. I will just give a brief overview over key elements that have been identified by the APRODEV paper and the corresponding aspects of the BIG project¹².

Key elements

Human beings as rights-holders

Structural causes

Equality

Empowerment

BIG pilot

BIG Coalition plans to establish BIG as a right for every Namibian citizen regardless of age or income. People in pilot project do not receive charity but a basic income.

Charity would only match some needs for a short period of time. BIG reduces exclusion due to a lack of income. VAT financed system.

Absolute poverty leads to marginalisation, people living in poverty are most vulnerable. BIG would take a step towards equality.

The introduction of the BIG ignited hope and the community responded by establishing its own 18-member committee to mobilise the community and to advise residents on how to spend the BIG money wisely. This suggests that the introduction of a BIG can effectively assist with community mobilisation and empowerment.

Start businesses

Decide how to spend the money

12 Aspects concerning BIG are taken from Claudia Haarmann/Dirk Haarmann/Herbert Jauch, Hilma Shindondola-Mote et. al., Making the difference! The BIG in Namibia. Basic Income Grant Pilot Project Assessment Report, Windhoek 2009; online: http://www.bignam.org/Publications/BIG_Assessment_report_08b.pdf and Claudia Haarmann/Dirk Haarmann (ed.), The Basic Income Grant in Namibia. Resource Book, Windhoek 2005, online: http://www.bignam.org/Publications/BIG_Resource_Book.pdf.

Participation	BIG Coalition is committed to working together with all stakeholders to make the Basic Income Grant a reality in Namibia.
Accountability	Namibian State is held responsible for reducing poverty by establishing BIG.
Community	People achieve dignity and humanity within the community in which they live. Community building aspect of BIG pilot.

The example of establishing a BIG in Namibia shows that many key elements of rights-based approach have been met. Further steps will be necessary to achieve more aims guaranteed through human rights. Nevertheless, BIG provides an important basis for further steps towards a just society, which means more than distributive justice. The German theologian Traugott Jähnichen uses the image of a “House of justice”¹³ to describe the relatedness and interference of different aspects of justice. Distributive justice may be seen as a basic principle that needs to be complemented by other principles of justice, but it provides the foundation for a house of justice that needs further elements which are intertwined and inseparable – similar to individual human rights.

13 Traugott Jähnichen/Klaus-Dieter Kottnik, *Gerechtigkeit in Theologie und Diakonie*, in: Michael Schibilsky/Renate Zitt (ed.), *Theologie und Diakonie*, Gütersloh 2004, 112-128:115.

The Basic Income Grant in Namibia and the partnership work in Germany

An Initiative from far away – but a topic next door

UTE HEDRICH / CHRISTIAN SANDNER

The topic next door - experiences and historical roots

Before the summer started, the media in Dortmund revealed that the whole football stadium of Borussia Dortmund, which is one of the biggest in Germany (seats 80,000 people), could easily be filled with the amount of people who receive a social grant in Germany called Harz IV. The number of free lunch offers for homeless people and very poor people in North Rhine-Westphalia has increased considerably in the last years. Child poverty is discussed publicly and even the church is asking if a basic income grant for children would be a suitable instrument to fight child poverty.

These kind of messages are at the top of the agenda when we discuss the basic income grant in Namibia with partnership groups: topics are mentioned such as the relationship to the question of poverty in Germany, the level of inequality the lack of resources e.g. making a good application or getting further training, or training in the job which is often costly (more than 1,000 Euro) and which is hardly ever paid. These are all connotations which make it very easy for partnership groups to understand and to rethink but also to support the basic income grant in Namibia.

The whole partnership work within the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) as well as within single churches has a history which started about thirty years ago. The connection from the UEM to Namibia goes as far back as the middle of the 19th century, which was the beginning of the mission work. Social issues have always been connected to the mission work as well as a strong feeling of wanting to understand life situations, political and economic conditions and to re-shape them. In times of Apartheid, many circuits were strongly involved in boycotting fruit from South Africa or in standing in front of the banks and demonstrating or fighting for the freedom of Namibia in front of the International Court in The Hague. This was always associated with a very clear perspective on the life situation of the members of the black sister church who before independence and due to the political situation experienced many obstacles in their development. After independence, many of the partnership groups had difficulties finding a new understanding on how to live in solidarity and how this could now be transferred into a life together in free and independent Namibia.

Many of the partnerships focused on the new political developments as well as

on the questions of the new and independent Namibia could become a topic in the German churches. One of the major emphases was always poverty reduction. The huge inequality between poor and rich is a consequence of the time of Apartheid and is still visible today. Therefore, the suggestions leading to an introduction of an unconditional basic income grant, which was based on a research of the tax commission in Namibia and was later endorsed by the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), were taken up with interest.

When it was the time to indicate to the Namibian government that a basic income grant in Namibia could make sense in order to fight the huge gap between poor and rich or just inequality between poor and rich church circuits, partnership groups and the whole church were very open. It was very easy to send donations for this pilot project in Omitara-Otjivero. At the same time it was clear that the funds could only be an initial funding because it was a form of economic re-distribution within the country. Apart from donations, the public statements of the BIG coalition in Namibia were supported and a public discussion started.

A Project starts: UEM, Evangelical Church in the Rhineland and Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Many people were listening quite carefully when the project was introduced by Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta on the occasion of the Protestant Church Day Convention in Cologne in 2007. The idea was so brilliant that support did not take too long to build. Later on, it was formalised that a partnership circuit X should carry basic income grants for Y. Many of the church circuits as well as single persons quickly came up with such decisions. It was quite easy to get donations and collections for this programme. Even a whole church collection went towards the support of the project. Bread for the World as well as UEM also asked for donations for the same project. It seems to be consequent that poverty reduction is something which cannot be developed on many pages of draft papers or in parliaments and NGO's, but it has to be implemented quite specifically. Partnership seminars Namibia often revolved around the topic of poverty reduction.

Basic income – a challenge for Europe too

From this involvement, members of the Rhenish and the Westphalian Church as well as the UEM and other interested organisations in Namibia voiced the wish to have a workshop or a seminar on basic income grant in order to explain the concept and to continue the discussions on a political level. Therefore people were invited to a conference in Wuppertal which took place in March 6, 2009, at the Church College (Kirchliche Hochschule at the UEM's Centre for Mission and Leadership Studies) under the topic "Basic Income Grant in Namibia – a Challenge for Europe".

Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta und Dr Claudia Haarmann explained the concept of

the basic income grant and reported the success story from Otjivero. Initiatives with the focus on poverty reduction and social security which existed in the frame work of development cooperation as well as in the context of the German government were contributing further. One very important voice was Prof. Dr Peter Katjavivi who was then head of the National Planning Commission of the Government of Namibia. He was invited to explain the position of the Namibian government on the basic income grant. His remarks were positive but not very open. He said that many other projects should be established to introduce the basic income grant in Namibia. It was obvious that Prof. Katjavivi had not received a mandate from the government to make a clear political statement. Nevertheless, the conference was afterwards discussed in Namibia.

For the German setup it was important to establish a link between the discussion on the German and European political scene and to enter into talks with members of parliament in Germany and the European Union (EU) on concepts of poverty reduction. A very important supporter of the basic income grant in the EU is the Green Party Member of the European Parliament from South Tirol (Südtirol), Mr. Sepp Kusstatscher. He explained that the parliamentarians of the Green Party represent the EU concepts on basic security and basic income, but they cannot see any majority for these concepts yet. Therefore, they can neither get the concept of basic income grants on the agenda of the parliament nor on any other commission of the EU.

The Wuppertal conference was highly recognised and well attended. About 150 people were present and Präses (Church President) Schneider of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, who in many regards supports the basic income grant in Namibia, said, “We are not only discussing whether there is any responsibility of the government to prevent people from moving into poverty and bad life conditions, but we are discussing the best instruments to keep this from happening”. He was referring to the social law explained in the third book of Moses, Leviticus, where practical examples indicate that society is responsible for the poor community and has to offer them means in order to survive. The contributions of the conference were published in an epd documentation and could, therefore, be put on record. This was important for many partnership circuits, which after the conference started to look at the topic of poverty reduction and tried to link this to their own partnership context.

The next highlight in the German involvement was the Ecumenical Church Convention in 2010 in Munich, where it was no problem to get the topic of basic income grant on the agenda of the Kirchentag (Protestant Church Convention) with a panel discussion as well as a service. The project in Namibia was the example and was transferred into a wider context related to social, economical and cultural human rights and was connected to projects like Bolsa Familia in Brazil. There, a basic income grant is paid to families and until now about 16 million people have benefited. This

was discussed by German politicians and members of diakonia: Ms. Kerstin Griese, board of directors of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, the Social Democratic Party, SPD, Dr Norbert Blüm, former minister and the Christian Democratic Party, CDU.

Ending the pilot project is not ending the endeavour

After the pilot project was concluded, it was quite obvious that the project's outcome have been very positive. The question always asked and which still has not been really answered is how far this project in Namibia can be carried on while a political will exists that completely goes into the other direction. Secondly, the question also refers to how far this project can be transferred to other projects on poverty reduction even into the German context since there are similar problems as mentioned at the beginning.

The ecumenical service in Munich 2010 was led by Bishop Kameeta, Bishop Nubuasha, a Catholic Bishop from Botswana, and Präses (Church President) Schneider. The service focused on "Bread from Heaven" in connection with 2. Corinthians 8, 13 -15. In this text, Paulus talks about equalisation between different communities and congregations. It was clear that the basic income grant is a matter of redistribution in Namibia. This is not new or different to the current concept of development cooperation, but like in Brazil there needs to be an initiative in the country to tackle the problems, establish redistribution and to get an equalisation on the agenda of the Namibian government, in particular on the agenda of the finance ministry.

Such an approach will not exhaust all projects on development cooperation but it will create the basis on which development projects can be sustainable and empower people to get access to urgently needed resources. Therefore, with the end of the pilot project not everything is over: the advocacy work in Germany and the EU is becoming more and more relevant in order to get social security and social grants on the development agenda. The access to re-distribution justice creates the question whether many other accesses to project funding etc. have only created structures of dependency.

This new perspective on poverty reduction would also change the perspective in Germany as the discussion about social security for children is indicating. Here again, it is a matter of the gap between rich and poor. A fair distribution of resources is necessary. In partnership circuits and groups, the question is always asked whether the financial requirement of the partners in the south is in need of assistance or if it is not much more a task of rethinking which kind of development aid could really make a difference. Important is their own way of life and their own political interests and these could create changes.

Partnership circuit groups and churches are important and are contributing a lot through a network in order to keep the commitment and the will to political changes of processes in Germany and worldwide on the agenda. This always happens in close cooperation and communication with the brothers and sisters e.g. in Namibia.

Basic Income Grant – the cultural impulse needed now!

ADRIENNE GOEHLER

My approach to the idea of a basic income grant is the consequence of my analysis of the radical change of societies due to globalisation, world economic crises, increasing unemployment and climate change - radical changes that affect indeed the possible role of artists and scientists.

We live at a time of extensive social transition, a time of the no longer and the not yet. There is no longer hope for a “more, better, faster”. There will no longer be a return to full employment in our countries, as in most high-price countries, but what is to take its place is not yet a subject of public debate. We live in an in-between situation: on the one hand, the economic and social “one size fits all” solutions of our political parties no longer work in a globalised, labour-division world that generates more and more productivity through fewer and fewer jobs (experts like Jeremy Rifkin call it “jobless recovery”). The political party concepts are no longer and not yet capable of reacting to the global challenges of economic and climate change and the social upheavals that come with it all. On the other hand, there is a significant increase in jobs – most of them badly paid – in the creative sector, in the non-profit sector, in NGOs, so that we may speak, at the same time, of an economic and social basis of a society that is looking for more than, and different things from, just an administration of its shortages.

We live in an interim: we are no longer sufficiently provided for by the father, the state, but not yet able to break new – our own – ground, because the preconditions for social constructions that could create hybrids between welfare, individual responsibility and self-organisation are still missing. The no longer – not yet situation is scary. The lack of a guaranteed place in society frightens. I claim that artists and academics, cultural and social creatives, are more experienced in dealing with the incertitude of the open contexts of “liquid modernity”, as Zygmunt Bauman characterises our present. It is the nature of artistic and academic practice to deal with errors, doubts, rejections, to combine and recombine, to sample and mix, and to deal with imagination. And this is needed for all cultural and democratic development of our societies.

We find ourselves stuck in hardened, solidified structures which are empty, the facade covered with new neo-liberal garments. What we need is to use the productivity of error, the ability to begin again and again, to navigate between shortage and

abundance, to think in transitions, laboratories, models, movements, excess, energy, desires, potentials, visions, yearning, breathing. This is what liquid cities need. And this is what a society may learn from artistic and scientific practice. We need new forms of social coexistence, new resonance spaces. Based on the residents richness of possibilities and various ways of life. What we need is their talents and creative power, their awareness of being able to participate in the extensive development of their city at work and in life. And what we need are flexible, creative counterparts in politics and administration.

Because creativity is flexible, liquid, “not a reserve, not a commodity, but a current!” An energy that runs dry if it is abused by reducing it to its immediate economic usability. To recognise the potentials of the creative industry is an immensely important step that European politics is taking only very hesitantly. But in order to keep creativity in the city, creativity that cannot be perceived as a model for a business plan, we need more. It is not culture that needs “business exercises”, it is the market that needs a cultural revolution! As philosopher Hannah Arendt said: “The privilege of the human being is to call something new into the world.”

This is why; culture-based society means a concept that does not just refer back to the rather small group of those for whom culture is their means of living, but those who perceive culture as a matrix for creativity as a general human capacity. Culture, as an expression of the individual, a will to change that connects with others in order to try out, link and dismiss solutions, ways, views. Albert Einstein puts the interrelationship between individual creativity and social development precisely: “Without creative personalities who think and judge for themselves, a higher developed society is as unthinkable as the development of an individual personality without the breeding ground of the community.”

Creativity is not an exclusive property of the “happy few.” There is no you-belong-or-you-will-never-belong. An environment in which creativity is perceived as a capability that lies within every individual is, in fact, crucial. Because every human being relies on resonances, wants to be useful, to create, to be valued.

A cultural society is about multi-dimensional and experimental ways of thinking that also interlink the various fields of artistic, social, technical and economic creativity and whose chances are being decided as early as kindergarten and school. In this sense, creativity is the processor in the development towards something that is socially bigger as well as economically more powerful. Economy is not the driving force, but it ultimately profits when humans think, live and work creatively. What we need is a milieu that supports the idea of laboratories and strengthens the notion of empowerment for self-empowerment. We need the required change to perceive arts and sciences not just as a subsidy burden, but as a long-term investment in a society capable of development. They must become experts for transitions and in-between certainties, a protagonist of change.

We need to face the question of what types of recognition and participation a society can offer its members, taking into account the fact that for an increasing number of people from all classes, age groups and nationalities, there is no opportunity for a traditional sense of belonging. (“Not in our name” manifesto in Hamburg) We need creative solutions for education, for universities, for institutions, for social issues, for employment, for the recapture of public space. Art and science are vital for a liquid city, especially where they generate socially relevant strategic concepts. Their actions, which might once have been attributed to bohemians, have by now become a model that can be generalised for future ways of working and living. Characterised by the abolition of work and leisure, sometimes a lot, sometimes not a lot of paid work, alone or in a team, often from home. However, these activities are completely connected with what we call “the precariat”. New studies suggest that about half of those employed in the creative industries do not earn enough money to survive.

In this respect, Berlin, the city I come from, is the capital of precarious circumstances. It is visible to the naked eye that there isn’t and won’t be enough paid work in this city to counter the jobless rate of 14 percent. For some years now, this shortage has forced jobless artists and academics into new forms of working and living that arise from a lack of money and a simultaneous surplus of ideas. If I am right in my analysis that our societies cannot renounce the artistic and academic practice, the question is: How to make this happen? It is the inability to tackle unemployment and escalating social and cultural exclusion with conventional means that has led in the last decade to the idea of the BIG (basic income grant). Social, economic and cultural policy can no longer be conceived separately, and the basic income is increasingly viewed as the only viable way of reconciling three of their respective central objectives: poverty relief, full employment and participation in the cultural production and richness.

The guaranteed basic income grant is the most simple and powerful idea for the 21st century. It constitutes the foundation of a self-transforming society, and it provides the idea for a society based on culture. I am not standing up for the BIG primarily for artists and academics but for everybody. Also, from a strategic point of view, I would not advise fighting for the BIG as an exclusive right for artists and academics or for cultural producers. Even if it is only for a short perspective.

Liberty and equality, efficiency and community, common ownership of the earth and equal sharing in the benefits of technical progress, the flexibility of the labour market and the dignity of the poor. A fight against inhumane working conditions, against the desertification of the countryside and against interregional inequalities; the viability of cooperatives and the promotion of adult education, autonomy from bosses, husbands and bureaucrats, have all been invoked in its favour. You will find different approaches, terms and definitions concerning what a guaranteed income could be. I assume, like most concepts do, four principles: the Basic Income Grant (BIG)

- is an individual right
- hedges one's existence
- is not means-tested
- is not under constraint to work.

It should be high enough to guarantee the participation in the cultural and social life, and it is independent of maintenance obligations of spouses, parents and adult children. The BIG gives an individual the freedom to choose between different spheres of her / his life the one that makes the surplus value for the society. The BIG is a synonym for dignity. The BIG is the right to say “No!” (The right to choose and to say “No” is then real in the “labour market.”). The BIG is empowerment for self-empowerment. The activists of this idea expect that once the constraint of work is abolished, when “income” and “labour” are separated, multiple, co-existing forms of paid labour, caring, further education, social and cultural relevant occupations will be possible. And I will add: and also the right of idleness which is important to the health of a society.

There is a German Basic Income Network, which can be roughly summarised in the following key aspects:

- The paid amount secures existence and enables economic, social, cultural, and political participation and is not means-tested.
- The basic income is paid without making demands in return, such as forced labour or coerced return services.
- There are additional needs, special supports, and special needs for certain groups of persons in addition to the basic income. This concerns, for example, single parents, pregnant women, the handicapped, or people with chronic illnesses.
- The basic income is an aspect of the maintenance, extension, and the democratisation of public infrastructures.
- The basic income stands in the context of the perspective of gender equality that realises a radical redistribution of socially necessary labour (paid and unpaid) between men and women.
- The concept of basic income is embedded in a societal development towards sustainability and a concept of society that focuses on ecological sustainability.¹

The French economist and philosopher, André Gorz, gives his argument for the basic income: The connection between “more” and “better” has been broken; our needs for many products and services are already more than adequately met,

¹ More details in German at www.grundeinkommen.de, www.archiv-grundeinkommen.de, www.untersimm-die-zukunft.de, www.grundeinkommen.tv, www.initiative-grundeinkommen.ch, www.freiheitstattvollbeschaeftigung.de.

and many of our as-yet-unsatisfied needs will be met not by producing more, but by producing differently, producing other things, or even producing less. This is especially true as regards our needs for air, water, space, silence, beauty, time and human contact.

The Basic Income Earth Network was founded in 1986 as the Basic Income European Network, expanding in 2004 to an international network. The basic income is an income unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis, without any means-test or work requirement.

- It is to be paid to individuals rather than households; a basic income is paid on a strictly individual basis. Not only in the sense that each individual member of the community is a recipient, but also in the sense that how much she / he receives is independent of what type of household s/he belongs to. The operation of a basic income scheme, therefore, dispenses with any control over living arrangements, and it preserves the full advantages of reducing the cost of one's living by sharing one's accommodation with others. Precisely because of its strictly individualistic nature, the basic income tends to remove isolation traps and foster communal life.
- It is paid irrespective of any income from other sources. It is paid at the same level to the rich and the poor alike, irrespective of their income level. Neither a person's informal income, nor the help she / he could claim from relatives, nor the value of her/his belongings. Taxable "means" may need to be taxed at a higher average rate in order to fund the basic income.
- It is paid without requiring the performance of any work or the willingness to accept a job if offered. The right to a guaranteed minimum income is, by definition, not restricted to those who have worked enough in the past or paid in enough social security contributions to be entitled to some insurance benefits. The basic income is paid as a matter of right — and not under false pretences — to homemakers, students, break-takers and permanent tramps.

The participation income is a model proposed by Anthony Atkinson, professor of economics in Oxford that differs from the BIG at this point. A participation income would be a non-means-tested allowance, paid to every person who actively participates in economic activity, whether paid or unpaid. Persons, who care for young or elderly people, undertake approved voluntary work or a training or are disabled due to sickness or handicap would also be eligible for it.

After a while, one may well realise that paying controllers to try to catch the few really work-shy would cost more and create more resentment all over than just giving this modest floor income to all, no questions asked, while referring to BIG, many questions are frequently asked:

- No. The BIG is not a remedy for all sorts of sicknesses and injustice in our societies.
- Yes. The BIG is affordable. Dozens of studies in different countries and from different social backgrounds and perspectives show it. But as the BIG would be such a change of paradigm in our societies, I think we need much more interdisciplinary research on this subject.

What about migrants?

There are more or less inclusive conceptions how to deal with non-citizens. Some, especially among those who prefer the label “citizen’s income,” entitle people restricted to nationals, or citizens in a legal sense. The right to the basic income is then of a piece with the whole package of rights and duties associated with full citizenship. Others, especially among those who view the basic income as a general policy against exclusion, conceive of membership in a broader sense that tends to include all legal permanent residents. The operational criterion may be, for non-citizens, a minimum length of past residence, or it may simply be provided by the conditions which currently define residence for tax purposes.

Children?

Some restrict the basic income, by definition, to adult members of the population. Others conceive of the basic income as an entitlement from the first to the last breath and therefore view it as a full substitute for the child benefit system. The level of the benefit then needs to be independent of the child’s family situation, in particular of his or her rank. But the majority of those who propose an integration of child benefit into the basic income scheme differentiate the latter’s level according to age, with the maximum level not being granted until maturity, or later. Anthony Atkinson claims that Europe should introduce the basic income for kids. It would be the only appropriate way to fight back the tremendous poverty of children.

Does it not make the rich richer?

From the fact that the rich and the poor receive the same basic income, it does not follow that the introduction of the basic income would make both the rich and the poor richer than before. The basic income needs to be funded.

Does it make work pay?

The other aspect of the unemployment trap generated by means-tested guaranteed minimum schemes is the lack of a significant positive income differential between no work and low-paid work. Since you can keep the full amount of your basic income, whether working or not, whether rich or poor, you are bound to be better off when working than out of work.

Learning from Africa!

The Basic Income Grant pilot project in a village in Namibia is continuing to make national and international headlines. The proposal for a Basic Income Grant in Namibia was made in 2002 by the Namibian Tax Consortium (NAMTAX), a government appointed commission. In the village of Ortijero in January 2007, the two-year experiment was started, based on the following conditions: a monthly cash grant of not less than N\$100 (~13US\$/8⁻) is paid to every Namibian citizen as a citizen's right. Every person receives such a grant until pension age from where onwards she / he is eligible to the existing universal state old age pension of N\$370. The Basic Income Grant experience in Ortijero is to date the biggest civil society project, united in fighting poverty and working towards economic empowerment in Namibia.

BBC World News summarised the enterprise in 2008 as follows: “Namibians line up for free cash.” “Economic activity has picked up in the settlement since the beginning of the year and a grocery store, a hairdresser, a barber and an ice-cream vendor have opened for business. ‘The opponents of the BIG always have the reasoning that people will become dependent,’ says Pastor Wilfred Diergaardt. ‘In fact, what we are seeing here is really lifting people up out of dependency into becoming human again.’ (. . .) If the pilot project succeeds within the next two years, the BIG could become a national provision for all people under the pension age of 60. It could help balance one of the most unequal societies in the world.”

The Basic Income Grant in Namibia

Summary of the assessment report 2009

THEODOR RATHGEBER

The following summary reflects the assessment made on the Basic Income Grant (BIG) Pilot Project in 2009.¹ The assessment report considers the implementation and running of BIG in the village of Otjivero-Omitara, about 100 kilometres east of Namibia's capital Windhoek. The summary aims to give an overview of the findings and lessons learnt for the national implementation.

The beginning of the Basic Income Grant

Namibia is among the countries in the world with a remarkably high level of income inequality. Therefore, in 2002, the Namibian Government's Tax Commission (NAMTAX) proposed an universal Basic Income Grant (BIG) to which every Namibian citizen should have access until she or he would become eligible for the government pension at 60 years of age. NAMTAX proposed that the level of BIG should not be less than N\$ 100 per person and month. The Basic Income Grant was to have been financed out of a progressive expenditure tax on the affluent. In 2004, concerned about the ongoing high rate of poverty and in spite of many efforts and the government's commitment, a cross-section of Namibian society set up a coalition to promote a BIG for all Namibians in order to establish a cash-transfer pilot project whereby the recipient can choose how to spend the money.

This BIG Coalition consists of four umbrella institutions in Namibia: the Council of Churches (CCN), the Namibian Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), the Namibian NGO Forum (NANGOF) and the Namibian Network of AIDS Service Organisations (NANASO). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) with its Desk for Social Development (DfSD) took over the legal administrative and financial home responsibility for the implementation of the BIG project on behalf of the BIG Coalition. In 2007, the BIG Coalition decided to implement the pilot project in order to move the policy debate forward and to produce evidence. The BIG Coalition aimed to pilot the Namibian Government's NAMTAX recommendation of BIG for the entire Namibia.

1 The entire assessment report is published by Claudia Haarmann / Dirk Haarmann / Herbert Jauch / Hilma Shindola-Mote / Nicoli Nattrass, Ingrid van Niekerk / Michael Samson (2009); Making the difference! The BIG in Namibia. Basic Income Grant Pilot Project. Assessment Report, April 2009, Windhoek. This and previous reports on BIG in Namibia are also available via www.bignam.org.

The project received national and international support, among them the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, or the General Secretary of the United Evangelical Mission. Namibia's first Prime Minister even donated money for the grant. Government ministers and senior officials in Namibia have also shown interest in developing a general system of social protection and economic empowerment. The fund-raising campaign for the pilot was launched in August 2007. The project was to run for a period of 24 months up to December 2009.

The BIG Coalition had hoped that by operationalising the BIG project, government leaders would feel encouraged to transform BIG into a national programme. After a careful examination among several villages, the BIG Coalition chose the Otjivero settlement as site for the pilot project, about 5 kilometers away from Omitara town in the Omitara District. The Assessment Report concludes that Otjivero-Omitara was selected for its manageable size, accessibility and poverty situation. The people have settled in Otjivero on government-owned land since 1992 and comprised mainly dismissed farm workers. Otjivero had then a bad reputation amongst the local farmers because of its criminal activities.

The technical preparation and implementation started with the registration of the whole community present in Otjivero on 31 July 2007. Each household was visited, all members of the households were identified by means of identification documents and everybody below the age of 60 was registered for the BIG. The registration was done in one day in order to avoid in-migration to the settlement. At that time, the community of Otjivero-Omitara raised questions about development aid and short-time assistance from outside, which they identified as being detriment to their ambitions. Speaking to the community on the day of registration, the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia and chairperson of the BIG Coalition, Dr Zephania Kameeta, was able to allay some of the fears.

The registration was followed by a baseline survey in November 2007. Additional information was gathered from key informants in the area, accompanied by a series of case studies of individuals living in Otjivero-Omitara. The pilot project was then implemented as follows: every resident under the age of 60 living in Otjivero-Omitara had to receive N\$ 100 each month from January 2008 until December 2009. Nine hundred and thirty residents (930) got the grant of N\$ 100 without any condition. The money for children and youths up to the age of 21 was paid to a person designated as their 'primary care-giver' which is usually the mother. In January 2008, the BIG pilot project finally started in the Otjivero-Omitara. The BIG pilot project was monitored by so called panel surveys in July and November 2008.

Parallel to the technical issues, an 18-member BIG Committee was set up in Otjivero in September 2007 in order to guide the pilot project within the community as well as to develop a strict code of conduct and to outline a number of tasks for the Committee and its individual members. The Committee comprised the local

teachers, the nurse, the police and business people, and paid attention to ensure the adequate representation of language and age groups. The Committee also elected a number of so-called *Control Officers*. Despite its potentially negative connotation, the Committee wished to underline the seriousness of the tasks in contrast to ‘weaker’ terms like *advisor*. According to the people, such a term was considered to be ineffective. The Control Officers were tasked with educating, raising conscience among and empowering people in the community in order to make best use of their BIG payments. The Control Officers should not force people to spend the money in certain ways but rather to raise awareness and provide advice. All in all, the establishment of such a BIG Committee was one of the first successful outcomes in mobilising the community although indicating that such a process needs to be organised and does not run automatically.

In addition, the Committee was aware of the widespread problem of alcohol abuse and paid special attention to it. It openly discussed the problem from the very beginning and addressed it involving the community. One element to deal with this situation was to make the owners of small bars (*shebeen*) representatives on the Committee and ask them to assist with their advice and cooperation. This led to the owners of the *shebeens* agreeing not to open on the days the BIG was paid out.

Main Outcomes

Many positive changes were observed in Otjivero-Omitara, some even immediately after the introduction of BIG. In the first 6 months, the payout of the BIG followed the methodology and the experience of the old age pension payment in Namibia. The recipients received a *smart card* which contained the names, ID numbers and the picture of the recipients as well as a microchip with the date of birth, fingerprints and information on the amount and history after receiving the grant. As from July 2008, the Namibian Post Office conducted the payment of the grant via its smart card savings account system. Every recipient of the BIG now got a savings account with the Namibian Post Office into which the grant was paid. This enabled the recipients to decide when, where, and how much of the grant should be withdrawn.

Economic related outcome

Before starting BIG, Otjivero-Omitara was characterised by unemployment, hunger and poverty. According to the criteria set by the Namibian government through its National Planning Commission and based on a Cost of Basic Needs, 86% of the people in Otjivero-Omitara were below the so called ‘lower bound poverty line’ (at N\$ 220 per capita per month) in November 2007 and identified as severely poor. Also, 76% of the residents fell below the so called ‘food poverty line’. Many people living in Otjivero-Omitara survived by asking and begging for food at friends and relatives.

The still preliminary assessment of 2009 indicates that the introduction of the

BIG has significantly contributed to drop poverty. After just one year of existence of BIG, the rate of severe poverty had been reduced to 68% of the households, and the food poverty line was reduced to 37%. Amongst those who were not affected by in-migration (see below), the rate even dropped to 16%. Begging for food had basically stopped. Furthermore, the rate of food poverty continuously declined over the study period while the rate of lower bound poverty oscillated around 70%. In addition, the people in Otjivero-Omitara reported that they now can visit and speak freely to each other without fear of being perceived as beggars.

BIG increased economic activity. The rate of those engaged in income generating activities (above the age of 15) increased from 44% to 55%. The grant enabled recipients particularly to start their own small business e.g. brick-making, baking of bread and manufacturing of clothing. Self-employment has grown to the same level as wages. Parallel to this, a local market was generated by increasing households' buying power. By providing BIG as a small source of secure income, people were able to increase their productive income earned, and personal incomes rose even more than the actual grant paid. Also, remittance fell as the need to be supported by relatives elsewhere decreased in Otjivero-Omitara.

The assessment report provides data and graphics which show a decrease of the number of unemployed people from 60% to 45%. The authors differentiate that since the introduction of BIG, employment rose from 44% to 55% of those aged 15 and above. Not only the labour force increased slightly but the labour force participation increased as well. The authors also conclude that BIG did not result in people deciding not to work; a presumption which has been frequently articulated among the sceptical observers. On the contrary, BIG obviously facilitated greater labour-market participation and employment.

The increase in income appears to have also facilitated an increase in savings and reduction of debts. Six months after the BIG was introduced, 21% of respondents reported saving some of their BIG money (amounting to an average of 7.2% of BIG). In November 2007, 9% of the interviewed residents of Otjivero-Omitara intended to purchase livestock using BIG. At that time, only 29% of households had any large livestock. A year later, this rate had risen to 39%. Similarly, the percentage of households reporting ownership of small livestock rose from 19% to 37% and ownership of poultry rose from 42% to 59%. People use livestock as a form of savings. In November 2007, a third of the respondents indicated that they would be using part of BIG in order to renovate their homes. Now, there are strong and visible indications in the community that this has happened. The average number of rooms in households rose from 2.6 (baseline) to 3.2 (six months) to 3.3 (one year). Over a fifth of households indicated that they had improved the roof of their homes. In relation to debt, according to the survey conducted a year after the BIG was introduced, the average household debt had fallen from N\$ 1,215 to N\$ 772.

As a kind of side effect, BIG emerged a significant migration towards Otjivero-Omitara. Attracted by changed income and market conditions, impoverished family members moved into Otjivero in order to somehow benefit from the BIG paid to family members, although these migrants did not receive the grant. The actual in-migration is likely to be higher than 27%. This is remarkable enough, as Otjivero-Omitara is situated in an isolated rural area which offers little attraction. Another side effect by the migration affected the per capita income from BIG which dropped from N\$ 89 per month in January 2008 to N\$ 67 in November 2008.

As a next side effect, BIG has contributed to the reduction of crime. Overall crime rates – as reported to the local police station – fell by 42% (poaching, assault, housebreaking), stock theft by 43% and other theft by nearly 20%. The most dramatic fall refers to illegal hunting and trespassing, which fell by 95% from 20 reported cases to 1. According to information provided by the Omitara police station, 54 crimes were reported between 15 January 2008 to the end of October 2008 while during the same period a year earlier 85 crimes were reported. It is worth noting that the in-migration increased the number of people living in this area.

Stock theft fell by 43% and other theft fell by nearly 20% over the same period. Obviously, BIG did not eliminate crime while economically induced crimes continue on a significant lower level. Not least, BIG contributed to reducing the economic pressure on women to engage in transactional sex.

Social related outcome

One of the most significant positive impacts by BIG refers to the huge reduction of child malnutrition. According to WHO standards, 42% of the children in Otjivero-Omitara measured in November 2007 were malnourished; compared to the average of 24-30% of children under five in Namibia. WHO regards 30% as a mark of very high prevalence of malnutrition and classifies this as the worst category. The assessment report shows that children's weight-for-age has improved significantly. In just six months the rate of underweight children dropped from 42% in November 2007 to 17% in June 2008 and 10% in November 2008. These findings are sustained by the collected data of the local clinic for all children below the age of 7 years from 2007 onwards. This is an extraordinary achievement, particularly against the background that damage caused to children by poor nutrition under the age of five is irreversible. A similar outcome is reported in relation to the general nutritional situation of people living in Otjivero-Omitara. In November 2007, 73% of households indicated that they did not always have sufficient food; either lacking of sufficient food on a daily basis or once a week.

A primary school has been located in the centre of the settlement of Otjivero-Omitara since 1996. Financial problems were keeping many children out of school, the lack of adequate nutrition had a negative impact on the children's performance,

the lack of payments of school fees (N\$ 50 per year) limited the quality of education. Before introducing BIG, almost half of the students did not regularly attend school. Pass rates stood at about 40% and drop-out rates were high. Only few children managed to complete grade 7 and to further their schooling in Gobabis, Windhoek or Gunichas.

With BIG available, the number of parents who paid school fees doubled (90% in total) and most of the children wore school uniforms. According to the receipts provided by the school, in 2008, 250 children had fully paid their school fees and two had paid half the amount. In addition, a spirit of pride was evident when the school fees were paid at the beginning of the year. A father who was able, for the first time, to pay his daughter's school fees, came to school and the teacher did not even know him. The father had always avoided contact with the school. So, non-attendance due to financial reasons dropped by 42%. Drop-out rates fell from almost 40% in November 2007 to 5% in June 2008 and further to almost 0% in November 2008.

Since BIC was established, the residents have been using the health clinic more regularly. Before, people tended to go to the clinic only when they became very sick. Poverty hindered their access to health services and the fight against HIV/AIDS with anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs. BIG enabled people to afford nutritious food and gain access to the medication. Now, the residents pay the N\$4 payment for each visit. Thus, the income of the clinic has increased from N\$ 250 per month to about N\$ 1,300. This positive development was further enhanced by the Ministry of Health's proactive national ARV rollout and government's decision to make ARVs available in Otjivero. This prevented the residents from travelling to Gobabis and to spending additional money on transport. The number of people receiving ARV increased from three in late 2007 to 36 in July 2008.

A lot of criticism towards BIG refers to the presumption; such a project would lead to an increasing rate of alcoholism. The assessment report and the empirical evidence did not support such conclusion. As was mentioned above, the community Committee made a special effort to curb alcoholism. With the exception of the first payment, no problems related to BIG were reported. The number of *shebeens* did not increase, and nothing serious happened throughout the project phase. This was confirmed by the local police station. While there is a general concern about alcohol abuse in Otjivero-Omitara, as in any other community in Namibia, BIG is not able to solve this problem, but there is no evidence that it aggravates it. Even further, the mere existence of the BIG Committee and its intention to address this problem might be regarded according to the authors as a positive outcome too.

Conclusions of the report

The assessment report concludes that given such evidence as illustrated above, BIG can be identified as a form of social protection, which reduces poverty, supports pro-

poor economic growth and is able, in terms of a national policy, to assist Namibia in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, the costs of a national BIG in Namibia are substantial. The net costs would be between N\$ 1,2 – 1,6 billion per year, equivalent to 2.2 – 3% of Namibia's Gross Domestic Product. According to the authors, there are options to finance such a national grant: either a moderate adjustment of Value Added Tax (VAT) combined with an increase in income taxes, or royalties levied on natural resources, or a shift in budget priorities or a combination of these interventions. The authors argue that Namibia's tax capacity exceeds 30% of the national income, and the current collection rate would be below 25%. Thus, Namibia's capacity to raise tax revenue significantly exceeds the net costs of a Basic Income Grant, which makes BIG affordable and all the above illustrated benefits for a large amount of poor people possible.

Despite the evidence, the government of Namibia remains hesitant, and interest groups like the surrounding farmers reluctant to engage with the process. The latter experienced that the minimum income of BIG makes people no longer prepared to accept any low wage. But criticism also remains around two core approaches: a) a cash transfer is bad because it gives people rights without responsibility; and b) poor people are not capable of spending the money wisely. In relation to a), the assessment report argues that the individual and social benefits are immense while BIG is indeed innovative against the traditional way of thinking in economics. Rather the contrary can be assumed from the project: providing people with BIG promotes dignity and socially responsible behaviour.

In relation to b), the assessment report shows results that poor people have spent the money wisely in terms of a dramatic decrease in child malnutrition, school fees and clinic fees have been paid, house fixings have increased as well as income generating activities, and even secondary economic effects have been induced. The people benefiting from BIG diversified their incomes and activated local skills. Corresponding to the needs of the people, the dresses made are the kind that the people in Otjivero-Omitara will buy, the brick making business was inspired by the wish of residents to improve their dwellings, and the tuck-shops offer the basic necessities that the people need. BIG in Otjivero-Omitara allows the conclusion that there are good reasons to trust the poor to make the right decisions for themselves at least at local level.

An addition, the assessment report alludes to the international experience with social grants which documents the positive impact on nutrition, education and transportation. Children whose parents receive social grants are more likely to attend school, particularly primary school-age girls. The household spending effects also improve labour productivity, providing means to accumulate human capital. According to some quoted studies, job-seekers from households receiving social grants are likely to succeed in finding employment. In absence of the security by

social grants, looking for a job is risky as the few resources may be wasted in a futile search. The authors presume that BIG may rather be a stepping stone lifting the poor to more sustaining livelihoods than a safety net.

Cash transfers promote economic growth: this is the elementary message of BIG. The authors prompt policy makers to consider the opportunity to engineer a virtuous circle of increased equity promoting growth and supporting further improvements in equity. While BIG alone will not solve Namibia's social and economic problems, it will certainly make a substantial contribution. So, reasonably, the pilot project attracts an enormous attention worldwide.

The prospects and challenges with regards to the implementation of a Basic Income Grant in Namibia

PETRUS KHARISEB / UHURU DEMPERS

Namibia remains the most unequal country in the world and despite twenty years of independence from apartheid colonialism and various interventions by the democratically elected government, the situation has not improved. In some areas such as unemployment and income inequality the situation is worsening. It is therefore not a surprise that Namibia's Basic Income Grant (BIG) pilot project is the world's first universal unconditional cash transfer.

In analysing the timeline of the advocacy and lobbying campaign for the Basic Income Grant in Namibia, there has been setbacks but also major battles that we have won and can celebrate. It will be useful to discuss and analyse these achievements and positive aspects against the setbacks and challenges.

Major achievements and positive aspects of the campaign: It is a matter of historical record not only in Namibia but throughout the world that change in society only comes with pressure from various interest groups. Although it was a laudable initiative for the Government of the Republic of Namibia to commission the Namibia Tax Consortium (NAMTAX Commission) with the progressive terms of reference, it was immediately clear after the release of the report that some recommendations (including policy proposal for a Basic Income Grant) would only be implemented through pressure.

Coalition building and networking: Thanks to the visionary leadership within the church (especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia) the inaction by government leaders on this recommendation due to pressure from other interest groups was detected earlier and mobilisation work started immediately.

These consultations and mobilisations that had already started in 2004 resulted in the establishment of the largest civil society network in the country, consisting of all major churches, the largest trade union federation, the non-governmental organisations network and the Aids NGOs network. In addition, two more powerful networks joined later, namely the National Youth Council (consisting of more than 100 youth and students structures ranging from political party youth wings, faith-based organisations and students unions) and the Church Alliance for Orphans

and Vulnerable (consisting of 500 community based groups). Currently there are discussions and debates within the communal farmers associations and the disability movement's federation on the Basic Income Grant and there are positive indications that these constituencies groups will join the BIG Coalition before the end of 2010. This is not only a powerful platform to campaign for a Basic Income Grant but also other socio-economic justice issues. Increasingly other national issues within the socio-economic justice agenda are being considered and taken up by the BIG Coalition. Members of coalition are individually, in addition to their mandates, increasingly dealing with poverty and inequality issues through their constituencies.

Pilot Project: The decision by the Basic Income Grant Coalition to launch a pilot project in support of the advocacy campaign was probably the most important and strategic decision. Two years (2005-2007) of theoretical debates and submissions proved ineffective and it was a bold and unprecedented step to mobilise resources, select a site and start a pilot project. The decision to select a site proved to be a difficult exercise as various demographic, political and socio-economic issues had to be considered and many places in Namibia qualified for the criteria. Once the site was selected it was deliberately decided not to make an announcement and the villagers of Omitara were the first to know and the registration of participants in the pilot project was done on the same day of the announcement to avoid the anticipated rush by residents from the nearby villages and the rest of Namibia.

There were only two conditions given to the community for their participation. Firstly that they must be willing to share their experiences with the BIG Coalition and other stakeholders, including government, international and local visitors and those interested in the outcomes of the project. Secondly, they should realise that this was a two-year pilot project and that in the meantime, the BIG Coalition and all other stakeholders supporting the campaign will exert pressure on government to implement the project. However, should this not be realised in two years, the project might not continue in its present form.

The impressive results of the pilot project has become the most effective and powerful tool in the advocacy and lobbying campaign. Beyond our wildest expectations, the pilot project has also greatly contributed to the regional (African) and global debates and discussions on the urgent need for social protection with special reference to the effectiveness of cash transfers in fighting extreme poverty and income inequality. The pilot project site, Otjivero/Omitara, is inundated with request for visits and study tours from all corners of the world and we have had visitors from almost all the continents and have had to turn down some requests. The pilot project is a point of reference in many publications, conferences and other platforms and there has been less criticism and more admiration and encouragement of the model from various corners in both so-called developed and developing countries.

Focus on poverty and inequality: Although the Basic Income Grant campaign has not yet achieved its desired ultimate outcome of national rollout in Namibia, it has succeeded in putting poverty and inequality on the national agenda of government to be addressed as the top priority. Moreover, the public discussions and debates about how to tackle poverty and inequality has exposed the fact that government does not have an immediate alternative plan to address the crisis which some people have described as a ticking time bomb. This makes the Basic Income Grant a serious option and the only researched and tested model ready for implementation both in terms of infrastructure and resources. The current focus on the Millennium Development Goals and recent increasing debates on socio-economic rights and the need for a developmental (rather than free market driven) state has elevated the Basic Income Grant to a higher level.

Public opinion in favour of BIG: The public debates and discussions have turned awareness and support in favour of the Basic Income Grant. The public media and publicity campaign has resulted in the majority of Namibians supporting the introduction of a Basic Income Grant. Outreach programmes have also been undertaken in all regions of the country, where the BIG model has received overwhelming support, especially from grassroots communities.

Challenges and setbacks in the campaign for a Basic Income Grant

Lack of political will: Convincing the political leadership in government to positively consider and implement the Basic Income Grant has been the major challenge. It is not only a recommendation by a government appointed commission but by design it has to be implemented by government using public resources collected through the tax system. After a long silence on the debate, President Hifikepunye Pohamba in April 2010, while responding to a question from a member of parliament from the opposition party, said that he did not believe in giving grants to people who were not working. He further said that including people that were employed and earning a salary like him would be wasteful (referring to the universal grant). The President further stated that the programme would be exploitative as it would take from the working people and give to those that were not working. The statements by the head of state sparked a national debate on the Basic Income Grant in particular and poverty, hunger and unemployment in general with a focus on what meaningful and effective programmes the Namibian Government has put in place to address these challenges. In late 2009, the Prime Minister, while receiving a delegation from the National Youth Council, echoed similar opinions, stating that it would promote laziness and dependency. He instead preferred to increase the coverage of vulnerable groups through conditional grants that were means tested.

Contrary to the views mentioned above, the pilot project at Otjivero provides

evidence that this intervention has greatly boosted the local economy and new jobs have been created in the village. There has been an increase in small businesses and there are testimonies that even with a small grant of N\$100, people have made efforts to generate additional income.

The social cash transfer is a widely accepted policy of the Namibian Government to fight poverty. The current grants to orphans, certain categories of people with disability, liberation struggle veterans and the universal pension fund have been identified as major policy interventions to reduce poverty and hunger. The main question that remains unanswered is, "what happens to the vast majority of Namibians excluded from the above mentioned current cash transfers?". These include the 80% unemployed youths, the 60% unemployed women and 52% unemployed adults and their dependents which even do not omit children that are malnourished and become victims of infant mortality.

Sustainability of the pilot project: Practical adjustments had to be made in the pilot project as it was a civil society initiative without active involvement of the government. The policy proposal by NAMTAX proposed that the Basic Income Grant be financed by public resources generated through the tax system. The pilot project however had to be conducted with financial and material resources mobilised by the Basic Income Grant Coalition of Namibia. A fundraising campaign was launched by the chairperson of the Basic Income Grant Coalition on 6th August 2007, in the capital Windhoek, and various individuals, politicians and institutions made pledges. Although the BIG Coalition also received funds from outside of Namibia for the pilot, emphasis was put on mobilising resources from inside the country within the context of the BIG model which is based on the principle of local sustainability through the tax system. As envisaged, after two years of implementation, the BIG pilot project came to its planned conclusion in December 2009. The BIG Coalition had two rounds of consultations with the Otjivero Committee to discuss the way forward. The BIG Coalition took a principle decision not to let the residents slide back into the dehumanising levels of poverty that they experienced before the BIG was introduced two years ago. Thus, while demanding the implementation of the BIG nationwide, it was resolved after these consultations to utilise a 'bridging allowance' to tie over the households for the time being. This is not a solution but merely a 'stop-gap measure' which cannot replace the BIG.

The 'bridging-allowance' is limited to the participants of the pilot and the limitations, both of the value of support to the individual as well as to the community, are acknowledged. This measure was taken with the conviction that the welfare of the country's citizens is the responsibility of the government. During the next one to two years the coalition expects the government to introduce the BIG nationwide.

For the time being, all the people, who have participated in the pilot project,

are being paid the “bridging allowance” of N\$ 80.00 into their NamPost accounts. It was recognised that the amount is considerably less than that of a Basic Income Grant, however, the hope was to support the positive development gains by those, who participated in the pilot project and made it such a resounding success.

The major concern of the BIG Coalition is not only the future of the more than 1500 Otjivero residents but the estimated 1.2 million Namibians that urgently need a Basic Income Grant to get out of the cycle of extreme poverty.

Cracks within the coalition: The Basic Income Grant model continues to be debated and discussed by the BIG Coalition members themselves, especially in terms of strategies and tactics to convince the political leadership to implement a national rollout. In July 2010, suddenly and unexpectedly the Central Executive Committee of the National Union of Namibian Workers - NUNW (a key founding member of the BIG Coalition) decided to withdraw its membership from the BIG Coalition. The leadership of NUNW, at a press briefing after their meeting, said that BIG was a good idea but not good enough to tackle the structural economic challenges that perpetuates poverty and inequality. The BIG Coalition issued a statement in the press, indicating their regret, and expressing the wish that further debate and discussion be held by the NUNW members with the aim of achieving a reconsideration of the decision.

The decision by the leadership was hotly debated during the National Congress of NUNW in September 2010, which is its highest decision making organ. After hours of debate and discussion, the National Congress agreed, through a formal resolution, that the withdrawal from the BIG Coalition by the NUNW leadership was a mistake and overturned the decision and instructed the leadership to rejoin.

The concern of the NUNW about the need to address the deeper structural economic factors that cause and perpetuate poverty is shared by other members of the BIG Coalition. The Basic Income Grant is seen as the immediate and urgent first step to address these structural factors. We have maintained from the beginning that the Basic Income Grant would not eradicate poverty completely but as proven by the Otjivero Pilot Project would alleviate extreme poverty and support citizens in addressing some of their basic needs.

Powerful international forces: Even though the BIG is a modest intervention with a small amount, it is considered to be a very radical move by those proponents of the neo-liberal agenda, whose policies have failed so far to reduce the high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment in Namibia. Over the past years the International Monetary Fund has aggressively advised the Namibian Government against even considering the Basic Income Grant and in fact has insisted that the state review social spending. It is against this background that the BIG Coalition also

decided to actively participate in regional platforms (Africa Civil Society Platform for Social Protection) and international forums (such as the Basic Income Earth Network) to influence global debates and also to mobilise international solidarity against influences of the IMF and other reactionary policies.

Universality misunderstood: The principle of universality as a criteria for the Basic Income Grant has been the most controversial and misunderstood matter in this debate. Even critics have argued that the BIG is not a pro-poor policy model as almost everyone irrespective of economic status would benefit. NAMTAX was very clear in recommending that those that are economically well off will pay back through the income tax mode. Brazil has passed a law in Congress for the implementation of a Basic Income Grant, however, a provision was made in the law, signed by President Lula, that it should be implemented gradually as resources permit, starting with the most vulnerable groups.

Way forward: towards a Basic Income Grant in Namibia

The Basic Income Grant policy proposal is first and foremost a government initiative through the NAMTAX Commission. The progressive civil society organised under the Basic Income Grant Coalition, complimented this initiative by mobilising support for its implementation and by putting the idea to test in the pilot project. The results after two years are very positive, encouraging and indeed convincing that the Basic Income Grant can work in Namibia. It is sustainable and affordable and the infrastructure and technology for the rollout is readily available. What remains is the Political will to implement the Basic Income Grant nationally.

The BIG Coalition resolved that the debates and discussions in the media and at various public discussion platforms alone would not realise a rollout of the Basic Income Grant and that community-based mass actions were required to force politicians and policy makers to reconsider their positions.

In this regard, BIG campaigners have already been trained and BIG local committees are being set up in various centres around the country to spearhead these local actions in support of the national campaign.

Formal dialogue and persuasion with government will continue while the protest action and other political actions continue at all levels.

Basics on a Basic Income Grant in South Africa

THEODOR RATHGEBER

The following text should have principally been written by the South African participants of the meeting in Namibia 2010. Due to different constraints, this was not possible. As the discussion in South Africa on the Basic Income Grant (BIG) is not only geographically close to the discussions in Namibia and important as well, the aim was to seek at least an overview related to South Africa. Among the many contributions available, the text of Kumiko Makino has been chosen because of its succinct analysis¹, which allows a quick reading by interested people though it will be summarised thereafter. Her article explains the theoretical as well as the political background of the initiative in the Republic of South Africa, which not by chance carries the same slogan – Basic Income Grant – as in Namibia as it strives for an unconditional minimum of social security. In addition, researchers mandated by COSATU (*Congress of South African Trade Unions*) in 1997 to specifically look at the option of a universal basic income grant, later turned to Namibia and continued their engagement on the same subject there.

Kumiko Makino is embedding her analysis in theoretical reflections on “Basic Income” which, according to her understanding, emerged as a response to the crisis of welfare states. She particularly refers to Philippe van Parijs² and his concept of a “Citizen’s Income” which is defined as an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis without means test or work requirement. By the way, Philippe van Parijs states that the idea of an unconditional basic income has long historical roots in Europe. Nowadays, and due to globalisation and post-industrialisation, full-employment is becoming more difficult, chronic unemployment and underemployment increase, and, thus, long-term dependence on social assistance increases too, resulting in problems in maintaining the traditionally known welfare state.

Without going into many details of the different approaches and concepts of addressing these problems, the two principal approaches may be presented to exemplify the options: the so-called “workfare” approach which links the entitlement to benefits and the obligation to take low-wage work or job training, and the “Basic Income” approach which separates the entitlement to benefit from the status in the labour market. While the workfare concept aims to re-establish full employment by policy

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- 1 Kumiko Makino (2004); Social Security Policy Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa. A Focus on the Basic Income Grant. Centre for Civil Society Research Report No. 11, Durban.
 - 2 Philippe van Parijs (2000). Basic Income: A Simple and Powerful Idea for the 21st Century. Background paper for Basic Income European Network VIIIth International Congress, Berlin, 6-7 October 2000, [<http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/BIEN/Files/Papers/2000VanParijs.pdf>]

intervention, the Basic Income approach assumes that full employment is no longer possible, or even desirable, under the current social and technological environment. To make a long theoretical story short: in relation to South Africa, Kumiko Makino concludes that the country's investigation into BIG should be perceived as an attempt to address mass chronic unemployment and underemployment rather than an attempt to become a belated welfare state; which in the Global North is becoming dysfunctional. Particularly, as South Africa has never been a welfare state for the large majority of its people. At most, there was a set of social policies to guarantee the minimum standard of living during the apartheid state exclusive for white people.

Background to BIG in South Africa

Severe poverty and huge socio-economic inequality still remain in South Africa despite the end of apartheid, despite a constitution (1996) whose Bill of Rights includes a wide range of socio-economic rights including the right to have access to social security and which can even be enforced by the courts, and despite a government that claims poverty eradication to be the top priority, and social security to be one of the key policy areas. According to Kumiko Makino, approximately 24 million South Africans (corresponding to 40% of the population with lowest income) spend an average of R144 per person per month, while the average consumption in the top 20% was R2,409 in 2001. Poverty is still concentrated among black people, particularly Africans., Compared to 1% of white people, 61% of Africans and 38% of coloured people are poor. The unemployment rate has been above 30% even in official figures, and about 36% of the population live below the poverty line of US\$2 a day which is more complicated because of its racial aspects.

Poverty reduction and social security has been a concern by different governments in recent times in South Africa, while in the first years of post-apartheid, there was a certain hesitance by the then governments to cash transfers as a policy concept to address poverty. Preference was given to traditional systems within a development approach. Worth mentioning, in this context, are four committees which acted on social security policy reform in the late 1980s and 1990s: the *Mouton Committee of Investigation into a Retirement Provision System for South Africa* (1988-1992), the *Smith Committee on Strategy and Policy Review of Retirement Provision in South Africa* (1995), the *Lund Committee on Child and Family Support* (1996), and the *Committee for Restructuring of Social Security* (1996). In the late 1990s, an interdepartmental task team led by the Ministry of Welfare was also appointed, including the Finance, Labour, Transport and Health departments, in order to review the social security system. Most prominent and decisive on the BIG discussion was the *Taylor Committee* which will be presented below. Compared to the before mentioned committees, this one comprised members who were close to the labour movement and civil society.

The endeavours by the South African governments in the post-apartheid era resulted in the extension of traditional formats of social security to the majority of the population. South Africa has developed seven types of social grants in its social assistance system: older person's grant (R700 per month³), disability grant (R700), war veterans grant (R718), foster care grant (R500), care dependency grant (disabled children under 18 years, R700), child support grant (children under the age of 9 years, R160), grant in aid (an additional grant for recipients of old age, disability or war veterans grant who are unable to care for themselves, R150), and the temporary social relief and distress grant (up to three months; the amount many people receive depends on the applicant). Most of the grants are subject to means tests. Particularly the old age grant, which covers millions of people, has contributed to poverty alleviation. By 1993, typical old age grant recipients had become African women living in rural areas. In this context, Kumiko Makino quotes research studies which have shown that this kind of social grant for individuals effectively function as a household grant and contribute to poverty alleviation in the households with social grant recipients.

A next step followed in June 1996, when the policy guideline of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) was introduced, which envisaged economic growth with job creation and redistribution as well as measures including e.g. fiscal deficit reduction. Although GEAR recognised that cash transfers through social grants were playing a vital role in poverty alleviation, the pressure for restraining expenditure in order to reduce fiscal deficit was more central. In the same year 1996, civil society organisations joined their efforts successfully in order to put pressure on the government to increase the amount of the new child support grant. This success story built the basis of the advocacy for BIG. In 1998, the President called for a job summit in order to fight unemployment and create jobs. The labour constituency proposed the introduction of BIG as a part of a comprehensive social security system. Both, the government and labour, supported in principle the introduction of a means-tested social assistance for the unemployed. However, the shortcomings of such programmes were also known from the Global North as well as the insufficient administrative capacity and rampant corruption in South Africa, which would make means-tested social grants in South Africa probably fail when they should reach in particular those who need and are eligible for social assistance. Thus, the policy trend has been shifting away from cash transfers, and this trend has not been reversed yet despite many efforts made.

BIG in South Africa

In 1996, COSATU set up a research team which included Prof. Vivienne Taylor, who would later chair the *Taylor Committee*. The research was concluded by early 1998

3 Figures are related to the year 2003 and may differ meanwhile while the proportions remain the same.

and found that approximately 14 million people in the poorest 40% of South African households did not qualify for any social security transfers. They did not have members receiving unemployment insurance benefits or social grants. Based on the research outcome, the pressure from civil society towards BIG increased. Together with COSATU, Christian organisations and *Black Sash* endorsed BIG and informed the general public at the end of 2000. The *People's Budget Campaign* presented its first alternative budget plan in February 2001, requesting a BIG of between R100 and R200 for all individuals.

The campaign consisted of COSATU, the *South African Council of Churches* (SACC) and the *South African NGO Coalition* (SANGOCO). In June 2001, the *Basic Income Grant Coalition* (BIG Coalition) was formally formed in order to coordinate various efforts to campaign for BIG. In July 2001, the BIG Coalition handed the *Taylor Committee* (see below) a memorandum calling for the introduction of BIG to combat poverty. The BIG Coalition was also successful in drawing the media's attention to BIG, although not all articles were in favour of BIG. Some comments spoke in a derogative way of 'welfare in wonderland'. In parallel, the BIG Coalition also put pressure on the government through mass action, i.e. the *Treatment Action Campaign* (TAC). TAC organised a march to the parliament on Budget Day, 20 February 2002, in which around 3,000 supporters raised their voices in support of BIG.

As nearly 14 million of the poorest were living in households that received no social assistance, the government established a committee of inquiry in March 2000 to deliberate on a *Comprehensive System of Social Security in South Africa* in order to close the gap. The ministerial committee was chaired by Prof. Vivienne Taylor (i.e. *Taylor Committee*), who was then special advisor to the Minister for Social Development. The committee proposed several measures to address income poverty such as social grants, training on health, education, water/sanitation requirements, transport, housing, access to jobs and skills as well as and developing the infrastructure on land, credit, community etc. Though this bundle of elements was close to the development approach by the government – which entailed the shift away from cash transfers in the era of post-apartheid – the Committee emphasised the need to tackle income first, before rolling out mid-term and long-term programmes to address poverty.

Kumiko Makino quotes the *Taylor Committee* arguing that government programmes to address poverty were being compromised because of unsustainable levels of income. Poor people were having problems even in accessing health care and primary education, because they did and do not have even the most basic income for transport, food and basic clothing. The Committee also stated that income measures were easier to rollout in the short term than programmes on infrastructure. The Committee further recommended the basic income security be provided through

social assistance grants, rather than through public works programmes, because the latter do not offer viable long term employment opportunities for the structurally unskilled unemployed and such programmes are much more costly to run than simple cash transfers. Finally, the *Taylor Committee* put emphasis on the state's constitutional obligation in terms of socio-economic rights.

The *Taylor Committee* finally recommended in its report published in May 2002 the introduction of a basic income grant of R100 per person per month, irrespective of age or income level. According to Kumiko Makino, the proposal suggesting the amount of R100 would have been below the poverty line and, thus, to be considered mainly as a partial Basic Income. This option would have emphasised and encouraged job seeking activities by enabling people to take risks (such as paying for transport to go to job interviews). At that time, the concept of BIG had to argue against criticism that R100 per person per month would be too small to become “dependent” upon as there were doubts whether BIG “would create dependency”.

In addition, sources close to government were reported saying that there had been pressure from the Treasury not to go for the Basic Income Grant, and they should rather explore various alternatives including BIG. The government and the majority within the *African National Congress (ANC)* gave preference to the “workfare” approach compared to “basic income”. The then Finance Minister stated in addition that BIG would be “fiscally unsustainable” while at the same time he announced a R15 billion income tax cut for those who earned enough to pay income tax. The Committee did not agree, and the government has remained undecided on that matter till today, as social security at government level has been predominantly dealt with from the traditional economic point of view.⁴

The dynamics of the civil society initiative

The BIG Coalition is principally a loose network of various civil society organisations calling for BIG. The list of supporters is remarkably long and comprises organisations and institutions of key importance such as the *Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)*, organisations with expertise on human rights law such as *Black Sash*, *Community Law Centre of the University of Western Cape*, *National Association of Democratic Lawyers Human Rights Research and Advocacy Project*, faith based organisations such as the *South African Council of Churches (SACC)*, *South African Catholic Bishops' Conference*, *Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg*, *Church of the Province of South Africa*, *Diakonia Council of Churches*, *Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation*, and *Joining Hands against Hunger*, as well as organisations working for sectors of the society such as the *Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS)*, *Children's Institute of University of Cape Town*, *Resources Aimed at Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*, *AIDS Consortium*, *Treatment Action*

4 See the contribution of Martin Büscher here on different economic approaches.

Campaign (TAC), Gender Advocacy Programme, Women on Farms Project, Joint Enrichment Programme, Young Christian Workers, Age-in-Action, as well as research-based organisations such as the *Co-operative for Research and Education, Foundation for Contemporary Research, South Africa New Economics Foundation*, and civil society in general such as the *South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)*.

Black Sash is the secretariat of the coalition, organises meetings and circulates the information among members and frequently represents the BIG Coalition in conferences and meetings. *Black Sash* also developed the idea of utilising the smart card technology in the new *Home Affairs National Identification System*. The same churches, which had given moral and material support to the anti-apartheid struggle, were now focusing on poverty-related issues and its inherent “ethical crisis”. SACC has been involved in the BIG campaign from the early stage as mentioned above. SACC also argued that BIG could contribute to national reconciliation as a way of fulfilling the recommendations by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in relation to reparations. BIG became the main theme of the SACC Christmas Campaign in 2002.

Kumiko Makino spends some further considerations on the role of COSATU which is one of the key members of the BIG Coalition. COSATU is a close alliance partner with the ANC which is crucial in building campaigning strategies and in lobbying activities. On the other hand, this close relationship evokes concerns that COSATU might weaken the coalition exactly because of its alliance with ANC and the ANC based government. The argument stresses that COSATU would be far more interested in protecting its leverage towards the government and would prevent the BIG Coalition from putting more pressure on the government. Kumiko Makino concludes that the BIG Coalition member organisations would generally prefer a strategic engagement with the policy and law making forces and seek a more constructive engagement than confrontation. In addition, COSATU has an own interest as trade union in the socialisation of welfare, because up to now it is the working people who are bearing the major burden of providing private welfare to those who are not covered by the public social security system. This system and its inability to sufficiently address poverty seems to be a kind of tax on working people.

Though this BIG Coalition has not been able to reverse the government’s stand on BIG up to now, it was quite successful in making social grants increase above the inflation rate in the fiscal years of 2002/03 and 2003/04. The coalition further succeeded in the extension of the eligible age for the child support grant from April 2003. Together with an already existing and relatively well-developed social assistance system in South Africa and its corresponding mindset, the endeavours of the BIG Coalition have accelerated the demand for BIG. They have made South Africa one of the first countries in the world where policy makers have seriously started to consider BIG as an alternative for social policy. The BIG Coalition

contributed substantially to the general acknowledgement that expanding social assistance should be at the centre of policy intervention in order to address poverty. May be that in the globalised world it is not any longer up to the sphere of influence of only the national government to overcome the concept of fiscal constraints in reducing budget lines for 'ineffective' social matters. Some commitment in foreign countries is also needed. Whereas in terms of discourse, the committed people in South Africa are convinced that the policy trend favouring basic social security cannot easily be reversed again. Even by law and constitution, the State is obliged to take reasonable legislative and other measures to achieve the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights, including the right to have access to social security.

Social security and human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo

JEAN-GOTTFRIED MUTOMBO

On the cover of the growth and poverty reduction strategy report of July 2006, there is a map of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Inside the map is a seated woman who appears to be distraught, with her hands on her head. Her distress can be explained by the overpowering social problems that surround her on the page including water, electricity, housing, health, food, school fee and other academic expenses, and income. In broad strokes, this portrait of social insecurity and the related human rights violations afflict the vast majority of the Congolese population. This comes in spite of the fact that the DRC subscribes to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 22 of the Declaration accords the right to social security to every human being:

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.”

Despite the fact that the Constitution of the DRC¹ does not explicitly enumerate the concept of social security in its articles covering economic, social, and cultural rights, Article 36 grants every Congolese citizen the rights to work, unemployment insurance, equitable and fair compensation for workers and their families, and access to social security, especially a retirement pension. Article 42 of the Constitution requires that the State *“protect young people against all attacks on their health, their education, and their overall development.”* In Article 43, the right to education is extended to all persons, with particular emphasis on free primary education in public establishments. In Article 47, the Constitution guarantees the right to health and food security to all. In the same vein, Article 48 refers to decent housing, access to drinking water, and electricity. It also guarantees the right to specific protective measures for the elderly and the disabled with regard to their physical, intellectual, and moral needs.

Notwithstanding the existence of this legal arsenal in support of social security, there is a lack of coherent governmental policy making. The relevant constitutional

1 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Journal Officiel, 47th year, special issue, Kinshasa, February 18, 2006.

provisions allow for the enforcement of laws while the National Social Security Institute [*Institut National de Sécurité Sociale*] falls short of guaranteeing social protection, since it remains discriminatory and selective in its enforcement of the law. It only takes action on behalf of those workers from whom it collects a portion of their compensation including their pensions.

There is a long list comprising the extremely high rates on unemployment, illiteracy, and dropout, the level of violence against women and girls, the proliferation of so-called “street children”, the poverty rate, the very limited access to drinking water and electricity, the bad housing conditions in which most Congolese citizens live and so on and on. Increased poverty, aggravated by an unemployment rate estimated at 58% in 2009², traps the population in humiliating and degrading living conditions. These indicators clearly prove not only the very high degree of social insecurity in which the Congolese population lives; more importantly, they reveal the lack of an adequate policy for the promotion of social security within the DRC. Given that the protection of social security has implications for the promotion and protection of human rights, it is clear that human rights violations will continue as long as social security is not a top priority in the DRC.

In fact, according to economists, people have an unlimited number of needs (the need for clothing, food, security, etc.) that must be met to hold down a job. However, we know that employment creates the possibility for a people to secure a decent income, allowing them to increase their buying power and thereby improve their living conditions. This is why Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that:

1. *Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
2. *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*
3. *Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*

These rights are reaffirmed in Article 36 of the Constitution of the DRC. But there is no enforcement. Not only is access to work not realised for more than half of the working population, but compensation is neither equal nor adequate. There is a great disparity between the salaries of those who lead businesses and the masses of workers, who are underpaid, poorly paid, or unpaid. As work is a rare commodity, corruption, influence peddling, nepotism, tribalism, and related negative practices crop up around it. Those who cannot find work (which is to say those held down by unemployment) receive support neither from the State nor from international

2 http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/central-africa/congo-democratic-republic/#social_context_human_resource_dev

organisations. When they go to start a family, they are not only incapable of meeting their own needs. Still worse: they cannot provide for their families, either send their children to school, or maintain decent housing, or take care of themselves. In a predominantly patriarchal and heavily hierarchical society, it is the man who is naturally expected to work. But if he is not able to work, he faces a sort of reduction in parental power and authority as head of the household and provider. In this way, he loses a part of his human dignity.

This situation has reversed the societal role such that unemployed men are surprised by either their wives or their children in the search for subsistence. Many domestic conflicts are tied to these circumstances. Left alone with themselves, the unemployed and their families have to undergo a life without social security, deprived of the rights of subsistence. Their children are entirely excluded from education or quality training, which keeps them from contributing to the development of the country and from building a better future. The majority of street children (the so-called “*enfants sorciers*”), prostitutes, and criminals stem from families where the parents are either unemployed or poorly paid workers.

Not only does unemployment produce a mass of vulnerable people in need, it causes fear to the human existence already being eroded by poverty and the lack of an adequate safety net. As an illustration, in a country where medical insurance does not exist, getting sick becomes not only frightening and humiliating, but also a burden for the whole family. Such a family is obligated to pitch in to provide health care, buy medicines, take care of the sick person and of those, who watch over him or her. Principally, to a certain extent, an employer could provide health care for the sick person in accordance with social legislation.

In order to overcome these challenges, the government has undertaken some actions in its battle against unemployment, poverty, disease, illiteracy, etc. In this framework, partnerships were formed with churches and other organisations from civil society. With regard to unemployment, a permanent interdepartmental commission on “basic social needs” was formed. It established partnership with the Job and Income Creation Programme [*Programme cadre de creation d’emplois et de revenus (PROCER)*]. This partnership will be expanded to churches, including the *Church of Christ in Congo* as well as to unions in order to identify jobs to be created and unemployed people to be placed. This data will be passed to the National Employment Office.

On May 23-29, 2010, a colloquium was held in Kinshasa on the theme of “*The Church of Christ in Congo’s Engagement in Congolese Society from 1960 to the Present: Retrospective and Perspectives*” where the Church encouraged its members to devote themselves to pastoral care on work with people in rural areas and dealing with crafts. Options for sustainable development have been proposed, including:

- The improvement of members' abilities in all areas,
- Stimulating private investment and the spirit of entrepreneurship,
- Improving working conditions and workers' salaries.

Backed by the United Evangelical Mission (Wuppertal), the Joint Committee of the Commissions of Justice, Peace and Creation Care have extended micro-credits to church members who run small businesses. This initiative is aimed at lowering the unemployment rate, encouraging entrepreneurship, and reducing poverty. In the same spirit, the *Protestant University of Congo* has launched a degree programme in micro-finance, in collaboration with the *Frankfurt School of Finance and Management* together with the financial support from the *German Academic Exchange Service* (DAAD).

The DRC government has declared 2010 to be the year of the battle against poverty through job creation. If we want to meet the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty by half by 2015, we must invest in job creation, create incentives for workers to take pride in what they do, and fight against laziness, idleness, and above all corruption and impunity.

Still, it is essential to note that the government's good intentions concerning job creation seem to be stifled by the corruption that poisons every level and structure of Congolese society. We hear countless stories about embezzlement schemes, the misuse of public funds, etc. Some of these funds are meant to pay civil servants and other government officers, to finance social services dedicated to caring for society's vulnerable members, and to support social partners – including churches – in their work related to the struggle against poverty and the protection of human dignity. In most cases, these funds, once allocated, end up in the pockets of administrators and never make their way to their intended recipients. This is why the actions of the State and other humanitarian organisations seem to be so limited and seem to have a barely perceptible impact. For example, the Department of Elderly Services [*Direction d'Encadrement des Personnes de Troisième Âge (DEPTA)*] operates 16 retirement homes that serve about 25 residents and 85 non-residents. The people's quality of life and the quality of the services they receive are far from what is necessary to live with dignity. Some of the homes have no clean drinking water. Others have no electricity or no dependable food supplies. Things become more complicated when the elderly people get sick. Their lives are often saved by the generosity and compassion of private citizens, charitable organisations, and churches.

As we see from the examples above, there is a paradox. Despite the existence of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which guarantees social security and the protection of human rights to all people, the vast majority of the population lives with social insecurity. This paradox can be turned into absurdity: How can we rationalise such a high degree of social insecurity in light of the fact that the DRC is endowed with enormous natural resources? The DRC has 60% of Africa's

forests, great geological wealth (large mineral and gas deposits), 40% arable land, 60 million inhabitants, 2,345,000 square kilometres of land, many lakes, the Congo River, and national parks that are home to large numbers of animal species.

What I have briefly described, shows, that social security in the Democratic Republic of Congo is in a critical situation. This situation prevents the population from exercising its most fundamental rights, specifically socio-economic rights, despite legal entitlements. When a population does not enjoy social security, it is difficult to speak on respect for human rights. Laws alone are not enough, no matter how strong they may be. There must also be a collective political will in order to promote human dignity and to guarantee the implementation of the rule of law.

By proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which confers on man and woman all their dignity as beings created in the image of God, and undertaking actions that free people from poverty and engage them in a sustainable integrated development, the church simultaneously guarantees social security and the protection of the rights of man in developing countries. The gospel contains values that should be inscribed in everyone's actions, particularly loyalty and transparency in the management of public affairs, respect and care for human life, solidarity and mutual love, the pursuit of the common good, protection of the weak, and the promotion of an equitable society, distributive justice, and peaceful coexistence. These values must be lived each day both in our personal lives and in global society. By doing this, we take the first steps toward a Congolese society where each and every person, without discrimination, will enjoy the rights accorded by God, the Creator, and by law.

This vision can also be realised by putting all the available legal instruments to work for social security. One of the church's missions is to watch over this process and hold accountable the people and institutions charged with the applications of these laws. This task cannot be accomplished without educating the population and strengthening its ability to make use of these laws. The *Church of Christ in Congo*, along with other civil society organisations, will take care of it.

Human rights, poverty and social security in Cameroon

DAVID WAFO

I – Spotlight on the current situation in Cameroon

The rate of poverty is ever increasing in Cameroon. This is obvious in some observable factors:

- **Unemployment:** More and more young people are unemployed in Cameroon. This is due to the reduction of personnel in companies with a view to mastering the expenditures. At the same time, many young people are graduating from universities and others are dropping out of the formal educational system. These youths have followed formal education with no orientation towards employment. They have good general knowledge, but no professional skills and are of no use to companies. The school system and programmes need to be revised to meet the new challenges.

Because of the structural adjustment plans, the state, which is the biggest employer, has not recruited staff for about a decade now. The very high fiscal pressure and the whole economic crisis have led to many companies going into bankruptcy.

- **Popular manifestations:** in February 2008, there was civil unrest in the country which led to the death of many citizens. Even though some people think it was because of political problems, it could be seen on placards that the questions at stake were economical. The people on the streets were mainly youths and their claims as we could read were focused on employment, the purchasing power, the high rate of inflation and the inability of the population to meet their basic needs. In the end everybody understood that it was a hunger riot. Therefore, though the army intervened to repress the unrest, the president later on recognised that something needed to be done to respond efficiently to the concerns raised by the young people during the riot. During a ministerial conference, he asked the ministers what should be done to help the desperate population. He then took the decision to reduce the prices of some basic commodities and announced that in a near future, there would be a national policy for employment.
- In the meantime, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. The rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. What is worse, these rich people are so very arrogant, since they can achieve everything they need with their money. Corruption has grown in such a way that it is possible to buy almost everything, including qualifications. Access to employment depends on relations

and also on the influence that people can have. Yet there are young people who are highly qualified in a variety of fields, but who are jobless.

Social security

As a whole, the rate of poverty is increasing, there are “new poor” everyday due to health problems and insecurity in addition to the reasons raised above. What is worse is that there is no social security system for the whole population. The state has the National Social Insurance Fund, but this fund is mainly there to take care of retired people of the private sector. During their period of activity, their employers deduct a portion of their salary which is then paid on a monthly basis to the fund on behalf of each person and this constitutes a capital from which they receive a retirement pension when the time comes. For the public sector workers, the state deducts 10% of their salary each month and keeps it in the treasury for their retirement pension when the time comes.

Apart from these two categories, there is no provision for social security for the other groups of the population. They are left with the only possibility to take out private insurance for themselves and their families. The other observable fact is that for those who have a job, it is also a kind of social security for the members of their families in case of problems. Sometimes, we have one individual who bears the responsibility for often more than ten other people besides his immediate family. This leads to the impoverishment of the worker where one income has to support many people in need. This is a heritage of the cultural African solidarity whereby “when there is provision for one, there is provision for two”. This refers to areas such as health, education, food, clothing, shelter, etc. One cannot use the income for himself and his children alone, he has to take care of many other people (uncles, parents, aunts, cousins, nephews) without forgetting that the demands of African solidarity extends the responsibility even for neighbours.

This system is not efficient, since the salaries are too low compared to the inflation rate. Thus, instead of responding totally and efficiently to a need, the person who earns a salary will divide his income into small pieces and give a small and insufficient share to each person. Instead of providing good healthcare for one person, he will use it to buy partial treatment for many and eventually, the diseases will become resistant.

Although there are good health structures and generic drugs are cheap, it is still possible to find many people who die because they cannot afford treatment for common diseases. For example, many people continue to die of Malaria. Vulnerable people like children, women, unemployed and old people have no specific treatment. There is no universal grant for old people. These vulnerable people rely on the charity of family members who have an income, if there are any.

The policy that exists in this field refers to people living with HIV. They receive

free treatment with antiretroviral drugs. But apart from this, they have to pay for the CD4 counts and other laboratory tests and proper disease treatment. Some of them cannot even feed themselves properly and are more vulnerable to these diseases. Fortunately, the disabled are given some advantages. They need not pay school fees and are given priority of service almost everywhere.

The purchasing capacity of citizens

As far as health and education are concerned, it has become very expensive for such impoverished parents to afford what is necessary for their families. The state used to equip public hospitals and schools and even subsidise private institutions. Nowadays, and because of the economic crisis and the structural adjustment plan imposed by the IMF, the state has been unable to continue. And these expenses are now carried by the population. They have to pay more for their health and education. Those who resort to private structures in the pursuit of quality have to pay the price because, in the absence of the state subsidies, the policy holders have to raise enough money by doing business. Those who are able to pay the price are few. The distribution of the national wealth is unfair. It is said that 15% of Cameroon citizens have 85% of the wealth while the remaining 85% of the population are left with only 15%.

It is worth noticing that this situation has not always been like this. Before the 1990s Cameroon workers enjoyed good salaries which enabled them to take care of their needs, those of the extended family and still save some money. But the 1993 double salary cuts reduced some salaries of the public sector by about 70%. We can imagine that somebody who used to earn CFA 100,000 was then reduced to 30,000 as a monthly salary. In the meantime, the cost of living has always risen; rent, food, energy, clothing. This was worsened by the devaluation of the local currency at a rate of 100% in 1994, making the price of imported goods twice what they used to be. Since then, nothing has been done to mitigate this situation. The salaries that had been reduced by 70%, have witnessed an increase of only 15% recently. Thus, the social security system in Cameroon still has to be improved and made universal as a right for each citizen.

II – The role of the government in providing and promoting economic security

As presented above, the state is inefficient in its responsibilities because of certain factors while we still would expect to see the state taking care of everybody and living up to its duties. Yet, with the slight economic growth that we are experiencing now and thanks to the debt cancellation process and the HIPC initiative, there are some signs of hope.

Employment

In the field of employment, the government has created a Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training in charge of taking initiatives that will reduce joblessness. What they are presently doing is setting up vocational training centres that will help the youth to acquire some of the professional skills needed on the job market. It is worth noticing that because of the absence of professionalisation in education, some job vacancies required some basic skills that young Cameroon citizens did not have. They also make assessments on the market to identify the skills which are most needed and then conceive a plan for the provision of such skills through training.

There is also the National Employment Fund which helps the professional integration of those who are trained. They make a link between job providers and job seekers. They collect the files of job seekers that they keep in a database. When job providers come to them, they try to see which jobseeker's profile matches the requirements of the vacancy and call and ask the person to go for an interview. In case no file matches, they look for the one which needs just some adjustment or additional skills. They call the person and tell him to try to acquire the additional skills needed. For the unqualified jobseekers, they make arrangements so that they undergo training in one of the small enterprises that exist and are prepared to offer training.

Support programmes

Another ministry has emerged to specifically care for their issues of the youth. Apart from organising the youth, they have put in place some programmes to help them in their initiatives towards economic autonomy. They are the Pajer-u and Piassi. These programmes aim to help the youth in their projects. These youth do not have enough security that can help them to get access to a loan from classical banks. So, their initiatives generally fail because of lack of funding. In the framework of these programmes, the ministry helps them to design their projects better and in case they are eligible, the government gives them an interest-free loan that is to be reimbursed after a period of business. The technical support in the project design is done through technical advisors who counsel the youth in specific project ideas that they have and also in training programmes or workshops organised to build their capacities in this light.

The state authorities have been complaining recently about the fact that about 30% of loans have not been reimbursed. Yet, according to official figures, around 8,000 youths have been able to receive loans from these programmes for their initiatives which have created 24,000 jobs, thus fighting unemployment. These efforts are laudable, yet they are still insignificant compared to the needs.

Human Rights

The human rights issue in Cameroon is very controversial. Depending on where one

finds oneself, it is considered that human rights are respected or abused. From the government's perspective, everything is alright in the country and the few incidents that exist are just the result of the fact that no human action is perfect. It is good to note that Cameroon has ratified almost all the international human rights treaties and that the constitution of the country acknowledges the basic inalienable rights of the citizens in its preamble. But from the legal provisions to the practical daily experience, there is a great gap.

The first violation is the fact that though the country enjoys a lot of wealth, not everybody has access to a decent living. Many people live below the poverty line. The other violations are so varied. The majority is committed by the forces of law and order. But they sometimes overuse their power and authority to the detriment of those they are supposed to serve. They intimidate citizens; bully them especially if there is no one to testify. The cases are abundant.

However, for about a year now, the Minister of Defence has been systematically and severely punishing all those who are guilty of such actions. In February 2010, about seven soldiers were jailed and many others were dismissed from their job. They had assaulted some civilians in a remote area. Of course, we know that these abuses will not end overnight, but the extent is declining seriously. The only problem is that the victims are not always eager to sue their tormentors maybe for fear of possible retaliation. But it is a cultural issue which needs to be addressed and people should be sensitised in order to defend their rights when necessary. There are judicial and administrative ways to complain in case a state agent has done something wrong.

The administrative way consists of going to the superior of the state agent to complain. After investigations, the superior will take administrative sanctions against the agent and this can even mean losing his job. This is very common in the police and the army. The judicial way consists of suing at court and leaving the judiciary to investigate and sentence. This often happens, but could be more efficient if the judiciary were really independent. From time to time, the executive or the political power wields some influence over the magistrates whose decisions are biased. We fear such influence in the cases where the political power is accused of violating the rights of people.

Irrespective that the violations of human rights are not attended to as should be, they are at least denounced. The country enjoys the presence of a great number of human rights organisations which are very active and vigilant enough to identify the cases of violations and to denounce them. A gesture of goodwill from the authorities was to create a National Commission of Human Rights and Liberties. Although people do not give credit to such a commission, it denounces cases of abuse from time to time. But still, there is a necessity to educate the public to make everybody aware of their rights and impart on them the ability to defend them.

III - The contribution of the Church

Human Rights

The Church is sensitive to the condition of its members whose rights are at stake. Even though the work is not yet well organised, its impact is obvious in the country. More than a decade ago, some people came together to put in place what is called “Justice, Peace and Integrity of the Creation” (JPIC). They are organised in committees in each parish and their activities include dispute mediation for the amicable settlement of conflicts, human and legal assistance for prisoners and victims of abuse, restoration of the environment, civic education, election monitoring etc. For now, they are only to be found in the west region of Cameroon. Attempts will still have to be made in order to extend this work to the whole country which will be very difficult considering that the distances to the other parts of the country are significant. What is more, it is not sufficient just to go and tell people about it, it is necessary to hold information sessions on what the work consists of, follow up and help set up commissions. There is also a need for training workshops for capacity building and to ensure better effectiveness.

We can consider that this time it was a pilot period, but the results are encouraging if we look at their achievements. They take care of church members with respect to their rights. They carry out activities to defend the rights of those who are victims of abuse. They are the voice of the voiceless. For this reason, they have stood on behalf of many church members who were facing difficult situations. Among them, there were people who were victims of misuse of power and authority by those in power, victims of military and police violence and all sorts of abuse. They have intervened to see people get a fair trial who were wrongfully detained or simply set free after investigations. It is worth noticing that there are some people who can stay for a long time in jail without facing trial if there is nobody to take care of their case. This list is not exhaustive.

During election periods, they are also involved in the process of education of the citizens on electoral matters. They sensitise and encourage people to register on electoral registers and get voting cards in order to be able to vote. They carry out monitoring of the process and do the mediation with authorities in case some citizens face difficulties, denounce where it is obvious that the state agents want to hinder the fairness of the process. They continue this work by monitoring the ballot, vote counting and even dealing with contentious matters. Though these commissions are limited to the west region of the country, they have been doing a very good job in the interest and in the respect of human rights. Their presence acts as a deterrent to perpetrators of abuse. They are looking for ways and means to extend their presence to the whole country.

Education and health

Right from the time of its inception, the Eglise Evangélique du Cameroon (EEC) had two major concerns: taking care of the spiritual needs of people and also responding to their material needs. They set up works of testimony in the fields of education and health. The purpose was to proclaim the Gospel by taking care of people's health and education.

These two fields contribute to the fight against poverty and the promotion of economic welfare. An uneducated person will always be poor. Disease also leads to poverty. The EEC has a network of 269 primary and nursery schools with about 1,624 workers and 15 secondary schools for general and technical education; a High School Institute for Pedagogy (IPSOM), which recently became the Evangelical University, offers training in education and medical studies; 14 hospitals and 40 health centres with 1,221 workers. All these institutions provide education and health to help to develop strong people.

Development

In recent times, the church has created some organs to foster individual and church development.

- The Centre of Animation, Training, Research and Support to Development (CAFRAD). Here, young people are taken care of and trained in various skills. The micro projects are financed to allow professional integration. There are examples of dressmaking shops in the vicinity of Douala.
- The DETAP, Department of Studies and Accompaniment of Projects, where studies are made to see what projects are necessary and how they should be designed. The work mainly refers to global church projects.
- The Church and Self-Development Commission was put in place to conceive and study projects and programmes that can ensure economic sustainability and support the livelihood of people. This commission has worked on many projects among which the Camed microfinance project is still working in order to identify and conceive other projects.
- The PADECO, Programme of Support to Community Development, is to help communities to identify what is priority for them and take initiatives in development. This programme has been particularly active in the northern part of the country in the milk production initiative which involves individuals who milk their cow(s) and bring this milk to the programme headquarters where it is processed and commercialised.

Apart from this part of the global policy of the Church in fighting against poverty, there are other initiatives.

- The women's department is particularly active. The UFC (Christian Women Association) chapter all over the country carries out training sessions for women in order to provide skills that they can make use of individually or collectively. Today, many of them are able to produce soap, to dye cloth according to the expectation of the customer, etc. Their exhibitions are always present whenever and wherever there is a church event and people can buy what they have made. This is part of the income generating activities which help at the individual and collective levels in the fight against poverty.
- The youth department also initiates income generating activities to fight against poverty and employ the youth. We can name examples of computing and secretariat shops open to the public.
- During national camps, young people are recruited, trained and offered temporary jobs as supervisors or peer educators.
- There are also places where the parishes have a lot of land. In such places, land is rented to members at a symbolic price. On these lands they carry out agricultural or pastoral activities for their own benefit. They can produce food for their families and sell what's left to get some money.
- There also used to be farm schools which used to train young people in agro-pastoral activities. There are many people who are running their own activities thanks to this training. Unfortunately, these farm schools were abandoned about a decade ago, while they are now being revitalised in Ndoungue and Bangam, and for this year six trainees are registered in Ndoungue.
- The last initiative to date is the creation of a microfinance institution aimed at financing church and church members' projects. The setting up of this institution is already well advanced and the doors and cash desks will hopefully open soon, as the state has not expressed any reservation until now.

These are some signs which show the active commitment of the church to fight for economic and social security and human rights.

The economic situation of Cameroon is not the best. Yet, some efforts are being made and bearing some fruits. It is interesting to note that the state and the church are both conscious of the emergency, since the citizens and the church members are facing a lot of challenges. We just hope that the current financial crisis will not take us back to the dark years of the structural adjustment plans when Cameroonian citizens had to make a lot of sacrifices. We are also confident that through education and activities carried out by the JPIC committees, the culture of respect of human rights will be reinforced. The need for this respect of the rights of others and good governance is crucial inside the church body and in society in general. This is a real challenge if we consider that presently, the activities of the JPIC committees are carried out sacrificially by some lay people with little support from the church leaders.

Epilogue

THEODOR RATHGEBER

What have been key obstacles in the previous texts which prevent the establishment or extension of social security systems in countries of the Global South? Predominantly it has been the lack of

- * the voice of the poor,
 - * an enforceable legal framework based on human rights,
 - * capacity in terms of rights-based orientation,
 - * unwillingness to reallocate existing resources,
 - * capacity in terms of technical assistance on optional tax and finance systems,
 - * political coherence between interests of the powerful and the marginalised poor.
- Conversely: what have been the conditions for successful attempts? Self-organisation by the poor in alliance with national and international supporters, the political and ethical weight of the supporters, assistance through policy and legal advice, commitment by international donors to innovative pilot programmes, tailor-made models for implementation at grass roots level, legal and human rights framework for legitimating and designing social protection systems.

In all these fields of deficiencies and activities the church has played, and is requested to assume, an active role. In some parts of the world – as outlined – the Church is needed to even publicly acknowledge that there is a social problem which causes significant parts of the population to suffer from unprotected risks. Whether a country establishes social security schemes is a political rather than an economic question which needs actors who are able to encourage the readiness of policy makers to give priority to social security spending. There are not only arguments but also conflicting interests and it is therefore necessary to address the government that it might be in its own interest to create social security for everybody, for social reasons as well as to spur economic growth and to safeguard political stability. This requires powerful counterparts.

In some cases, the challenged interests are not limited to the national area but linked up with international actors from the globalised economy. We need to be committed at this level too, and, again, the church is among the most genuine institutions which can interfere in the discourse as well as into the decision making process. With regard to BIG Namibia, in May 2010, church based organisations arranged a public panel on Basic Income Grant during the Ecumenical Church Conference and afterwards a delegation from Namibia talked with members of the German parliament (Deutscher Bundestag). These are small steps but indispensable in supporting people to cry out,

to express their grievance, and, thus, shift the discourse on economic and political paradigms on development. As Victor R. Aguilan points out: we need “manna from Heaven” to reach the Promised Land, to sustain the freedom of the people. There is still a long way to go, but with the churches’ commitment and its assets together with human rights defenders, there is the chance to refuse the “Bread from Egypt” which keeps the slaves alive in order to continue building the pyramid.

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