

Food bank; beacon of light

At the age of 68, Kuku Lavinia Johannes can be mistaken for a 90 year old; frail, fragile yet hopeful. For many, the Food Bank has been met with mixed feelings however for households such as that of Kuku Johannes, it is a beacon of hope. "Life used to be harder without the Food Bank. The little we had we had to spend on food but now we are at least guaranteed food every month end," said Kuku Johannes.

Kuku Johannes lives in a small shack in the Tobias Hainyeko Constituency, inside the shack there is one single bed. Against the shack's walls are a few household goods such as pots and other loose household items.

At night, two members of the family of ten squeeze on the tiny bed, while others sleep on a thin mattress. With everyone unemployed and Kuku Johannes the breadwinner, the food parcel from the Food Bank ensures that the children have something in their bellies before going to bed.

The family has been staying in Okuryangava for over ten years. "We have no food right now. What we are getting is not enough, but we are truly grateful and thank the President for the Food Bank. I have many children, I have to feed them but I am unable to," she said.

The household of Kuku Johannes receives a food parcel from the Food Bank at the community hall, Okuryangava. If utilised sparingly, the food lasts them up to two weeks. A few meters away from Kuku Johannes lives Kaikaria Tjuine. Their household is made of 19 family members, their main source of food is now from the Food Bank. Twenty in total, three of the household members are babies with the eldest being Tjuine, aged 56 years. All are unemployed.

Poverty comes in different forms and dimensions. For households such as that of Tjuine, collecting firewood on the outskirts of Windhoek is the order of the day; rarely ever do they have electricity for cooking purposes. When they do have, they leave it for the school going children to study at night.

Tjuine and her family praised government efforts. "The Food Bank is benefiting those that have nothing to eat. Poverty is real. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you have nothing to eat?"

"We never have enough to eat. Although what we are getting does not last us for long, we are able to sleep with a full belly on several days," noted Tjuine.

She added that they are appreciative of what President Geingob and the Ministry of Poverty Eradication is doing for them. "I wish I could meet the President. I just want to thank him for what he has done for me and my family. God Bless him," said Tjuine.

Since taking office, President Geingob has declared all-out war against poverty. Hunger poverty is one of the key factors in government's fight against poverty eradication. Even though the Food Bank is faced with various challenge, it is evident that the food parcels go a long way. Currently, food parcels are distributed across six constituencies, benefiting more than 5,000 households.