

Uplifting the lives of ordinary Namibians

Born and bred in the Windhoek Rural constituency on a farm in close proximity to !Areb (on the way to Klein Aub, outside Rehoboth), Ouma Paulina Boois is indeed worthy of admiration. At the age of 72 years, she still looks after her livestock and washes clothes.

Moreover, she also takes care of her grandchildren and great grandchildren from her old age pension of N\$ 1 200 per month.

The breadwinner in a family of over thirty people where no one is employed, Ouma Boois narrated her story seated on a pile of rocks a few metres from her corrugated iron house. Ouma Boois takes care of two households with her old age pension.

She has two daughters and one son, 18 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Five of her grandchildren are in school, four of whom school in Rehoboth hence a second home in Rehoboth as daily commuting between !Areb and Rehoboth is nearly impossible.

Ouma's dream is to see one of her grandchildren complete secondary school, as none of her children made it past grade 10.

Feeding two households with her monthly pension money, Ouma Boois said that life became tougher after her husband passed on ten years ago. "Town (Rehoboth) is far. It costs as much as N\$500 to hitch-hike from her to Rehoboth on. I still have to buy food for this house and the second one in Rehoboth," she lamented.

With what is left, the octogenarian buys food and other household necessities such as maize meal, sugar and meat, other food stuff as well as soap and vaseline. When groceries run out, the family lives off pap and milk from the few family cattle and goats. At times, she also has to buy feed and medication for her own lamb and one sheep. The rest of her livestock she had earlier divided amongst her offspring.

Ouma Boois stated that she and her family are happy with the old age pension increase as it has improved their lives for the better. "I am really grateful for the increment we got. I also look forward to the back pay. The government did well to increase the old age pension. We have a lot of responsibilities as old people, you know."

Additionally, Ouma Boois stated that the drought relief is of great help as it supplements their diet.

Ouma Boois lives at Bloudam !Areb, a government resettlement farm.

The story of Ouma Boois is not unique, Elias Motinga, a 76-year-old resident from Groot Aub takes care of his household with his old age pension. Originally from Windhoek, Motinga and his wife have been living in Groot Aub since 2007, together with their four children.

"The increase in the old age pension has made a big difference in our home. I cannot wait for the next increment to come. The government has our interest at heart really and I commend our President for this," shared Motinga. He said that whilst they are grateful for the old age pension that has increased, the money is simply hardly ever enough.

“We get into debt for basic necessities and when the money comes, we have to pay back what we took during the month, but we don’t want to complain, we are grateful,” he stated matter-of-factly.

Asked what they used the money for primarily, Motinga said they mostly buy food and when they are able to, also electricity and at times books for the children.

The couple expressed their gratitude to the government for the generous increase. “I want to say thank you to our President. God bless our President, he is a good man with good intentions.”

Hon. Penina Iita, Councillor for the Windhoek Rural Constituency noted that the old age pension is enhancing the livelihood of elderly people, especially around her constituency. “It does not only improve their own lives but that of their loved ones,” she said.

It is stated that young people migrate to the city in search of a better life and they leave their children at their parents (grandparents). “We have an elderly from Baumgartsbrunn who started her business from the old age pension increase. This has improved her life for the better; had that not have been there, that might not have been possible,” shared Iita.

In 2015, President Hage Geingob declared all-out war on poverty, stating that ‘No Namibian should die of hunger.’ Currently, old age pensioners receive a pension of N\$ 1 200, a double fold increase from N\$ 600 in 2014.