



**Remarks by the Chief Executive Officer of the Road Fund Administration, Mr Penda Kiiyala, at the Prize-giving Ceremony and Hand-over of Books to Nossob Primary School in Omaheke Region on Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009**

Director of Ceremonies,  
Honourable Governor of the Omaheke Region,  
Honourable Minister of Education and Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources,  
Your Worship, the Mayor of Witvlei,  
The Principal of Nossob Primary School  
Esteemed invited guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocol observed,

Please allow me to make a few remarks on this auspicious occasion of the Inauguration of a Library of the Nossob Primary School and the Prize-giving Ceremony where the Road Fund Administration is invited to hand over some books that were identified by the Nossob Primary School itself. We therefore deem these books to be appropriate and indispensable to the Nossob School.

When the principal approached the Road Fund with a request to donate a number of books that are required in order for the school to provide quality education to the learners of Witvlei and the surrounding communities, we felt duty-bound to come to his assistance because we attach high-level importance to the laying of a strong education foundation to our future leaders and compatriots. The fact that the Namibian Government has continuously devoted over a quarter of the annual national budget to the education and the health sectors individually since the independence bears clear testimony on how much Namibians value education as a pillar of our building block to attain Vision 2030. However, the responsibility of providing quality education to our children cannot be left to the central or the regional government alone. All of us should contribute our fair share to this lofty goal in assisting our Government to ensure that it succeeds in satisfying our collective socio-economic needs. That's why the Road Fund Administration, despite many challenges associated with the collection of sufficient road user charges for the construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of our national road network, we have decided to fulfil our corporate social responsibility by making this humble donation. This is our first association with the Nossob Primary School and in the Omaheke region and it will definitely not be our last.

Director of Ceremonies,

Now allow me to make a comment or two on one crucial socio-economic issue related to our Namibian society and our future. Namibia is characterised by a highly skewed income distribution with a Gini coefficient of 0.604. Apart from South Africa and Brazil, Namibia has the most unequal society in the

world in terms of income distribution. While a lot of the attributes attached to this skewed income distribution are due to the deliberate apartheid policies, 20 years after our hard-won independence, the income disparities continue to prevail in our society. This means that few people who are very rich are filthy rich and the many people who are very poor live in abject poverty. The income disparities are so severe that the gulf between these two categories of people is so wide that it is next to impossible for the poor to cross the huge income divide to get to the category of the rich. Without a specially designed programme to assist those who are miserably poor to climb out of the poverty trap, these fellow compatriots will probably never be able to pull themselves up on their bootstraps. This socio-economic situation in our society is worrying and it affects the progress that we make in terms of education. It could lead to instability that might emanate from this untenable situation. The poor people do not have the financial means to put their children in school or to afford bread on their table. The prevailing adverse circumstances might cause them to revolt and I am more than ever convinced that prevention is better than cure.

The Basic Income Grant (B.I.G) that the Council of Churches in Namibia, CCN, is currently experimenting with in some selected localities in Namibia should be taken seriously and should be modified to suit the conditions of our society in order to design appropriate modalities to successfully implement such a programme. You will recall that our former Prime Minister and the current Minister of Trade and Industry supports this concept as practiced in a few quasi-socialist societies in the Nordic countries (i.e. Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark) as an attempt to equalise income distribution in

Namibia. You would recall that he made a supportive statement in Parliament about the B.I.G concept. I have no doubts that this Basic Income Grant, in a refined form, will empower the majority of our poor people by giving them the financial resources to buy basic food, to provide clothing to their babies, and to enable them to send their children to school. As I have mentioned, our Government has devoted priority funding to education and health. In tandem with this commitment, we need to feed all our children especially during their formative years so that they could develop strong and healthy minds to enable them to perform well throughout their schooling years. If their minds are slightly or severely retarded due to malnutrition during their formative years, they will never be able to cope with indispensable subjects such as science and mathematics at secondary and tertiary levels. I therefore earnestly urge our policymakers to consider the adoption of the B.I.G concept in a modified form in order to permanently correct the skewed income distribution and disparities prevailing in our society for a better future for all Namibians. Of course, this might not be a panacea to fix the income disparities in our society. However, the adoption and implementation of the B.I.G concept will go a long way in addressing the thorny issue of narrowing the gap between the haves and the have-nots in Namibia. I also believe that this will be a major step towards the attainment of Vision 2030.

With these few remarks and on behalf of the Road Fund Administration, I am proud to hand over the books to the value of N\$3,722-70 to the Nossob Primary School in its quest to achieve excellence in education.

Thank you.