

BIG Pilot Project: Lessons for Namibia and southern Africa

*“The majority of our people are so
disempowered that, to them,
living means not dying.”*

Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe,
January 2011

The BIG policy proposal

- Monthly cash grant (e.g. N\$100) paid to every Namibian citizen (as a right)
- The money of people not in need or in poverty is recuperated through the tax system
- The BIG is redistributive, the rich will pay more to finance those in need

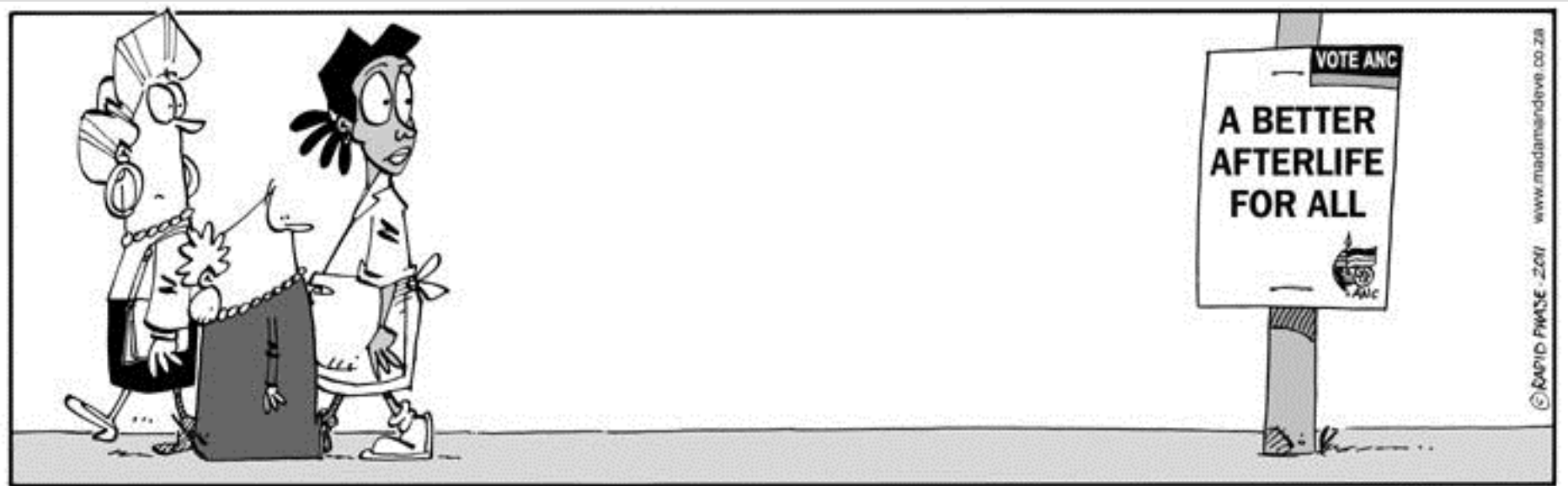
The Pilot Project

- January 2008 to December 2009 in Otjivero-Omitara
- Everybody in the village below 60 years (930 recipients) received N\$ 100 (US\$ 13) every month
- Comprehensive Research
- Financed through private donations mainly from Germans and Namibians: redistribution of wealth

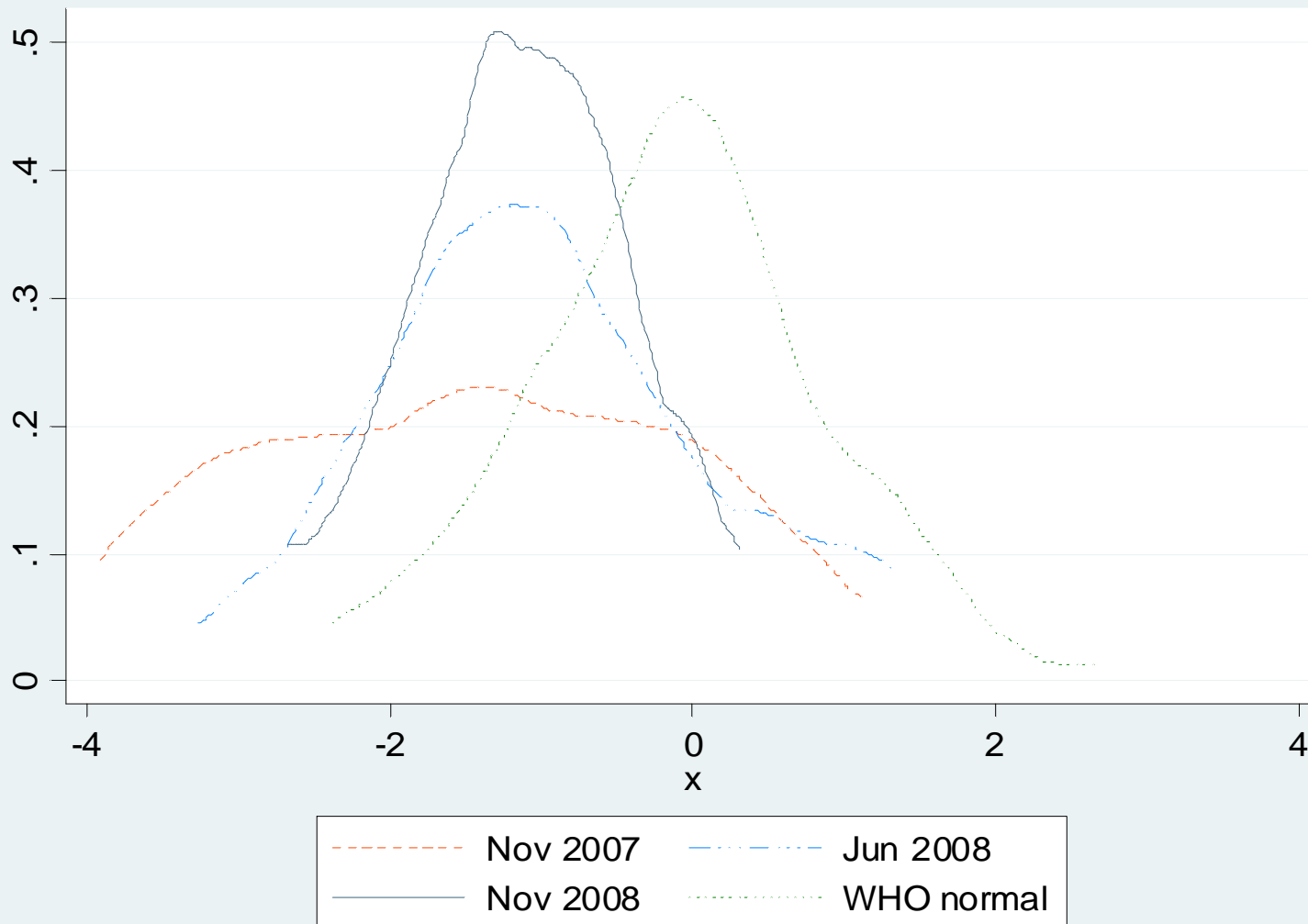
Social and Historical context:

”The majority of our people are so disempowered that, to them, living means not dying.”

- The main question for our people is: **Is there life before death?**
- BIG is a question of being human, lifting people up from the dust and to give them back their dignity



BIG – Food Security



Malnutrition of children was reduced from 42% to 10% in one year

“Since January we did not have a single case of malnutrition and that is how we see that this N\$ 100 really helps.”

Health

É the clinic reported a fivefold income increase to nearly N\$ 1,300: more residents came for treatment

É The number of people receiving ARVs increased twelvefold

BIG a prerequisite for Education and Employment

- To offset cash to people against education and employment is like asking a destitute person, to choose between water and food!
- The BIG is not an alternative to education and employment but a prerequisite!

Education

É the number of children not attending school due to an increased ability to pay fees dropped by 50%.

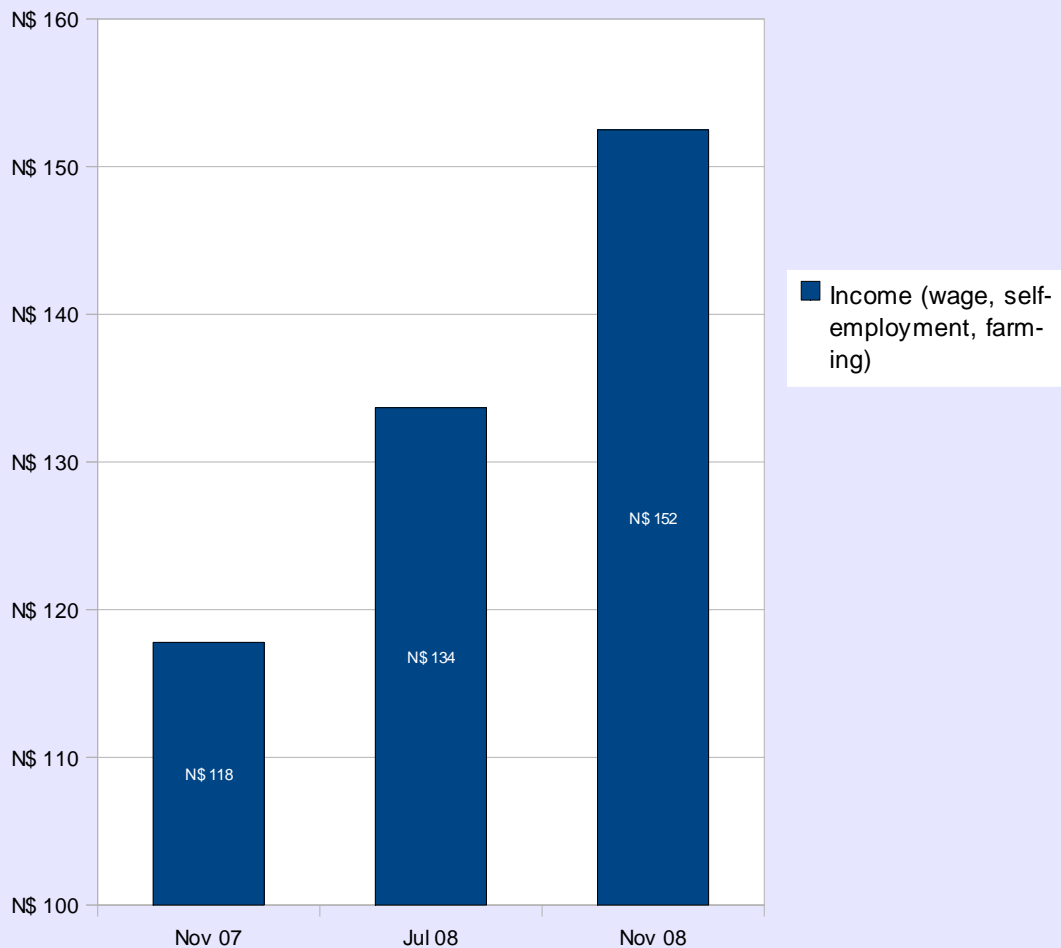
É improved health and nutrition status of the children

É improved facilities due to the ability of the school to pay for equipment

É drop-out rates before BIG 30-40%, by July 2008 reduced to a mere 5%.

Local economic growth

Average monthly per capita income in N\$
- excluding BIG



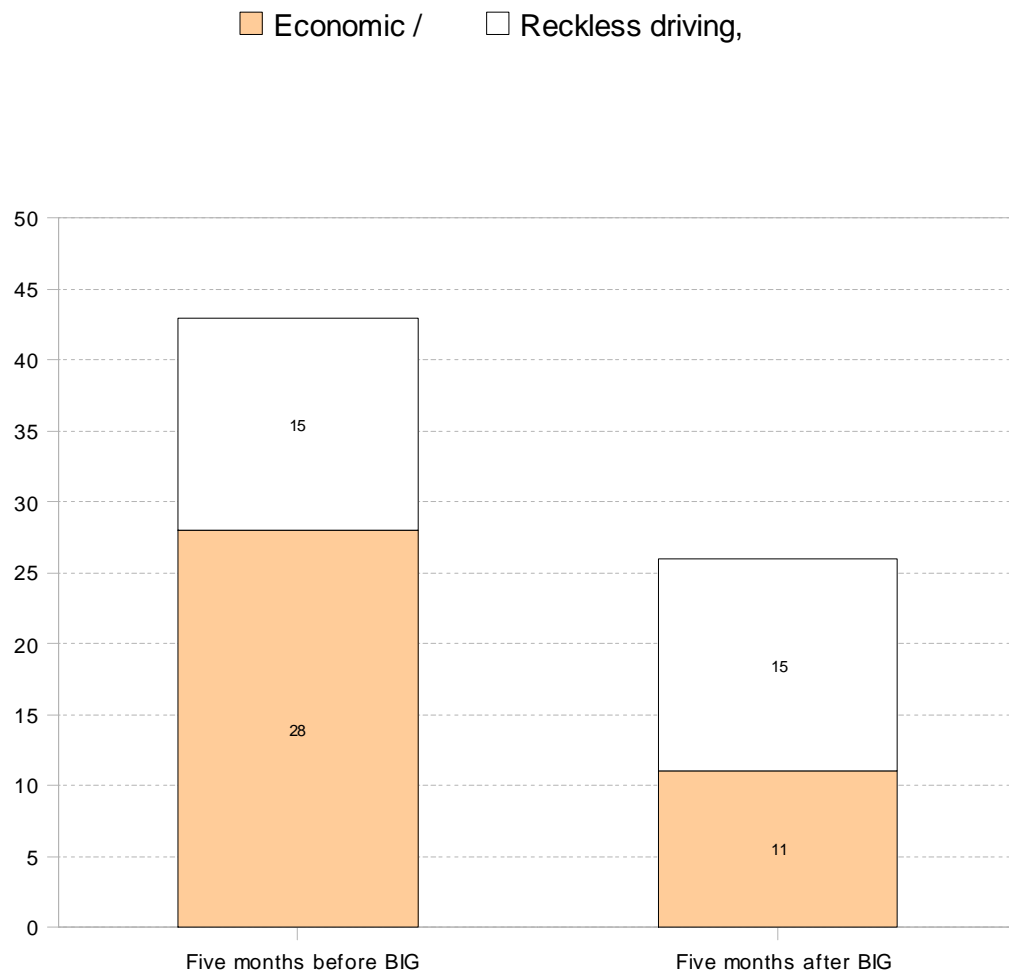
Income from:

- self-employment increased by 300%
- wage employment increased by 27%,

Crime

- É the incidence of poverty-related crimes (illegal hunting, theft and trespassing in search of fire wood) has fallen by over 20% after 6 month
- É Social solidarity developed and social control improved

Crime



- The incidence of poverty related crimes has fallen by over 60% since the BIG was introduced.

Obstacles for implementation in Namibia

- Lack of mass mobilisation around elections, weak civil society, weak opposition, weak state
- The Ministries supported Otjivero and engaged constructively, yet, some in Government act as if Otjivero does not exist
- World Bank/IMF opposed from the beginning, lack of international support
- Only country in the region: SADC protocol
- White/german speaking elite opposed massively
- Revolutionary aspect (Government)
- Redistributive aspect (Elite)

Way forward

- BIG Pilot Project has proven the effectiveness of a universal basic income to promote social development (eradicate hunger and destitution) and to foster local economic development
- Political struggle and mass campaign

