

NAMIBIA NEEDS YOU

We all have a choice to grow up and take ownership.

I am writing this article in the wake of the passing of the third Constitutional Amendment Bill, which I believe had been dealt with in a most undemocratic manner. The amendments are purported to improve service delivery and governance but most do not adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability and that of good governance. The current concentration of power paves the way for potentially grave abuses. The promise of service delivery is contradicted by Government's failure to address urgent matters of human rights and the welfare of the people. As a citizen, who demanded for a participatory process to be followed, I now have a choice. Do I become increasingly critical of government's act-alone policy or do I take ownership of that which I am capable of affecting constructively?

It is important that I balance two realities. For all the negative criticism government deserves in terms of its service delivery, it also deserves a great deal of applause. Secondly, despite the valid explanations for government's underperformance, their great achievements in certain areas testify that they could perform better in the underperforming areas if they shifted priorities. But. It should also be admitted – we, the Namibian people – are also underperforming. We do way too little to show ourselves as a spirited partner driven by vision to see our society reach the goals we accuse government of neglecting.

Government can be seen as a parent. With that analogy in mind, I want to tell you a little story. Two brothers – twins to be exact – appeared on Carte

Blanch. One was a hobo, the other a medical doctor. When asked what propelled them in these contrasting directions, both answered, "My father was a drunk." Even if our government is a drunken father, we, the people, are collectively and individually responsible for ourselves and future generations. Our insistence on Government as our sole caretaker stands in our way of taking ownership of our neighbourhoods, our schools, and becoming a civil society of exception. I do not deny the unfairness and injustice

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often perpetuated as evinced by parastatal bailouts and the profits of Namibia's natural resources landing in the pockets of a few and not the nation, BUT this should not render us powerless over what we can do.

I am a great believer in the power of choice. Whether you see Government as a wonderfully nurturing parent or inhumane in its neglect and abuse of us as a nation, you have the choice as

a citizen to become better and build, or to become bitter and destructive. Even in our legitimate demand for good governance through accountability and the just investment in society, we still have our part to play as citizens. As the father's drunkenness spurred the one boy on to study hard and excel, so there have been those in our society that decided to be spurred on by the deplorable state of public schools and hospitals to go on and respond constructively.

Namibia is alleged to have more politicians than state doctors. So stop only being a Maths teacher for a salary, consider yourself called to inspire your students to become doctors. Are you an Accounting teacher? Teach your students how to access the Development Bank's opportunities. Teach them that financial opportunities are not only for the tenderpreneurs. There is the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Namibia Youth Credit Scheme, Development Bank of Namibia, SME Bank and other possibilities Government has rolled out to assist the people to help themselves.

And even though we blame THEM at the end of the day because we feel THEY did not assist us sufficiently, we can't say Government doesn't try – as we see with the building of 47 schools from 2012 – 2013, with more having been built and renovated in 2014. This is one of numerous investments Government has made and successfully completed.

Let us become an inspired people that will take what we have even if it is sometimes appallingly little, be grateful for it and make the very best of it.

By Vida de Voss

