



**WOMEN'S ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Incorporated Association Not For Gain)**

P.O. Box 370
Windhoek/Namibia
Tel: (+264-61) 227630
Fax: (+264-61) 400156

3 Rühr Street,
Northern Industrial Area
E-mail: wad@mweb.com.na
Website: www.wad.org.na

**Response by Veronica De Klerk
WAD Executive Director
on receiving 10 Computers from PricewaterhouseCoopers
and WAD's take on Baby Dumping, GBV and Teenage Pregnancies
PricewaterhouseCoopers Boardroom
Thursday, 2 August 2012**

**Ms Nangula Uaandja: - Managing Director of PricewaterhouseCoopers;
Management members of PricewaterhouseCoopers & Women's Action for
Development; and Members of the Media:**

Good morning!

Today is indeed an occasion of great joy for Women's Action for Development, since the organisation is taking another step towards assisting many more young people to secure jobs in the labour market.

I therefore, take great pleasure in extending my most sincere appreciation towards PricewaterhouseCoopers and its Managing Director, Ms Nangula Uaandja, for their kind generosity to donate 10 computers to Women's Action for Development, which will be utilized for the specific purpose of training many more young, unemployed job seekers in Computer Literacy and Office Administration at 3 Training Centres under the organisation's supervision, namely the Omusati Training Centre at Omahenene; the Karas Training Centre at Keetmanshoop; and the Hardap Training Centre at Rehoboth.

This will invariably give young people an opportunity to empower and equip themselves for a more progressive life; to market themselves more competitively; and to make a leap into the world of modern technology.

This sponsorship is very important because the extremely high unemployment rate of 70% among the youth in the country is well-known. It is further known that the unemployment figure increases every year with the addition of large numbers of new school-leavers who are unable to find jobs.

This situation looks grim, since our economy grows much too slowly to be able to absorb all the job-seekers in the near future.

Other factors which compound the situation are that our school curricula simply do not prepare learners adequately to be taken up into job positions without further preparation, and furthermore, the available capacity of all our tertiary institutions is so limited that thousands of applicants are turned away every year to join the hordes of job-seekers.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that the number of bursaries available is simply not enough to assist students to enter tertiary institutions.

Bearing the aforementioned in mind, the Private Sector and NGO's such as PWC and WAD, are compelled to assume co-ownership of the responsibility to meaningfully contribute towards preparing young Namibians for the labour market.

It should further be realized that investing in education and training, means investing in the growth of our economy and the growth of markets.

This sponsorship of computers by PricewaterhouseCoopers, is therefore, a very thoughtful and sensible investment in the youth of our country, which undoubtedly will bear abundant fruit.

Thank you very much PricewaterhouseCoopers for your kind generosity and goodwill towards the youth of the country. You have clearly proven the point that you wish to be partner to the preparation of the youth for a better future!

I wish to assure you that this investment will be put to excellent use, while being positive that it will eventually surpass its direct monetary value.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Just as our name indicates, women remain close to our hearts and remain our business! Just as it is a day of joy to receive these computers, so is it equally disheartening for Women's Action for Development to express its horror and condemnation regarding the spate of gruesome killings of women which have sent shockwaves all over the country.

At the same time WAD expresses its shock and disappointment regarding the high rate of teenage pregnancies in the country, and expresses its horror and condemnation towards young women who are simply throwing their babies away in rubbish bins as if they were refuse. To say the least - this is gruesome, inhumane and above all - it is criminal and amounts to attempted murder!

Allow me to mention just some of the following disturbing newspaper headlines of the past week which caught my eye, namely:

- *"The carnage continues - Butcher confesses to slitting girl's throat";*
- *"Mother kills her baby with Battery Acid";*
- *"Angolan Pastor allegedly rapes a 16 year old girl on the altar on which unleavened bread and holy wine are consecrated during communion";*
- *"A staggering total of 6 217 young girls, between the ages of 10 and 19 have fallen pregnant since 2010 in the Kavango region alone".*

and so it goes on and on.....

The question is, Ladies and Gentlemen: What has gone wrong in our society today? Where did we go wrong and what on earth have we become as a nation?

Although Namibia would certainly not be unique to such evils on the African Continent, It remains shameful that Namibia counts among those countries in which horrific violence against women and baby dumping are such conspicuous social evils. Hardly a day goes by without reports of the killings of women, or the discovery of a new born infant, unscrupulously dumped by its mother!

Poor people scavenging for food at rubbish dumps regularly make shocking discoveries of decomposed baby bodies among the rubble, while indications mostly point at babies dumped after normal births, which amounts to murder cases.

Key to this issue is undoubtedly the parental home which has failed society in the upbringing of their sons and daughters. If this were not true, why then are our sons and daughters engaging in gruesome passion killings today and dumping their babies?

It is within this context that WAD commends the Ministry of Education for having appointed close to 1 000 fully-fledged “Life Skills” teachers this year, in all secondary schools, which are regarded as an extension of the parental home.

In this context, WAD makes an urgent plea to the Ministry of Education to view “Life Skills” as a subject, crucial to prepare learners for life; crucial to prepare learners to respect the lives of other human beings, to uphold and respect our moral values and integrity.

Therefore, in view of the significance of the subject, WAD urges the Ministry to consider pronouncing “Life Skills” as an examinable subject within schools.

Although calls have gone up from many platforms to stop the phenomenon of baby dumping, it continues to occur, even with intensified regularity! Common sense suggests that “baby dumping” requires a multi-sectoral scrutiny with perspectives to be provided by sociologists, psychologists, social welfare specialists, educationalists, spiritual leaders, etc.

In view of the crisis dimensions of the problem, WAD is compelled to propose that the Ministry of Health and Social Services as well as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, take the lead to convene a National Conference on Baby Dumping, Teenage Pregnancies and Gender Based Violence.

If a conference of this nature were held before, it should be replicated, since it ostensibly did not have a lasting impact!

Since baby dumping has reached such alarming proportions in the country, such conference should also consider, among others, installing “Baby Safes” within selected buildings, to allow mothers to leave unwanted babies there anonymously, for the babies to at least be protected from harm, and for mothers to give their children up for adoption safely, without any fear of recrimination.

The “Baby Safe” is a most unusual initiative which was already launched in South Africa during 2011, after a charitable organisation, namely the “**Out of Africa Children’s Fund**”, installed a secure dumping unit at a community centre in Cape Town.

This unique and secure 2-way safe, allows a desperate mother to deposit her baby in a locked safe without identifying herself. It allows her to open the door of the safe on the outside wall and to deposit the baby inside. However, when she closes the door of the safe, the baby is immediately locked in and can only be picked up from the inside.

A sensor on the safe then alerts volunteers working on the project, on their mobile phones to the child's arrival. The volunteers then pick up the baby from the inside of the safe, before taking it for medical examination. Thereafter the baby is put in social care, until a suitable new home is found for the baby.

The introduction of the Cape Town "*Baby Safe*" follows the successful use of a similar scheme in Johannesburg.

Although the aforementioned project is merely treating the symptoms of the problem, no stone should be left unturned to identify the root cause of unwanted pregnancies and to stop it in its tracks! According to media reports in Namibia, an average of 40 bodies of new-born babies are discovered each month in human waste flushed down toilets, while most of the dumped babies are from students, which is very sad.

Ladies and Gentlemen: This situation has taken on crisis proportions right under our noses and it is high time that we do something tangible about it!

Talks on sexuality from parent to child, should therefore, no longer be taboo, but rather one on which parents, schools, churches, youth groups, the media etc, should debate and seek solutions to this mammoth challenge in our society.

In conclusion, Ladies & Gentlemen: There is no doubt that Namibia is in a serious crisis. In fact, the country seems to be at war with itself. It is therefore of paramount importance for ALL stakeholders to urgently and purposefully stop for a while to contemplate on these monsters which are destroying the human fibre of our country.

- We as parents, should stop for a while and do honest introspection to determine where we went wrong to prompt our sons to unscrupulously rape and kill without blinking an eye, and for our daughters to compromise their education through the trap of teenage pregnancies and thereafter to throw their babies away like refuse;

- At the same time schools should do honest soul-searching if justice were really done in the past to the subject: “*Lifeskills*”, which should have complemented that which is being taught in the parental home and through which learners should be educated on how to respect and honour women; how to respect and value themselves; and how to honour our norms, values, our nationhood..... our national pride;
- Similarly, spiritual leaders should do honest introspection if the churches are really doing enough to assist in curbing these evils in society from their pulpits.

It is imperative that we should all work together, towards the effective elimination of these evils, because it cripples the economy; it enhances poverty and unemployment; it strips women of their dignity..... it destroys the very fibre and cornerstone of our nation.....the parental home, where parents are expected to establish exemplary moral values and discipline among their children. But the question is: “Can this be done effectively in the face of Domestic Violence in our homes?”

WAD therefore, seriously calls upon all men across the country, to stop abusing women physically and emotionally. Men who are guilty of these cruel and despicable deeds are called upon today, to stop the never-ending raping, the killing; the humiliation of women which we are witnessing every single day of our lives.

We seriously and urgently appeal to men to respect women; to love and cherish them..... because God did not create women to be mutilated, humiliated and to die at the hands of men. He created women to be your life-long companions; your soul-mates.... the mothers of your children.....!

We have seen enough bloodshed; enough tears; enough suffering; enough loss of lives of our mothers and daughters.....!

So, the challenge will be for all of us to join hands to transform Namibia into a safe and peaceful country, for the benefit of our entire nation, but also for potential tourists and investors, because this in turn, will contribute greatly to the economic stability and well-being of our country.

THANK YOU!