

Summary of concerns and points raised at previous civil society online consultations on the National Budget (held in 2021)

① Tax and fiscal issues:

- Concerns about public debt level. Can we have more information on who government currently owes money to and the terms and timetables involved?
- What is the progress on removing VAT from sanitary pads?
- Are there any thoughts of raising the tax threshold from N\$50 000 per year to ease the pressure on people on low incomes who still pay tax? In South Africa the current threshold is R87 300.
- When will the long-talked about Special Economic Zones be established?
- What is the status of proposed environmental levies?
- Is it possible to strengthen revenue streams through taxing electric geysers since we have solar power and can then depend less on electricity imports.
- Why not encourage healthy eating by raising tax on unhealthy food products e.g. sugary drinks?

① Civil society concerns:

- The Ministry of Information is currently training staff on the implications of the access to information law. What are the chances of money being put aside to implement this law in the next budget?
- Ditto - the Whistleblower and Witness Protection Acts - can we get these operational to show commitment to fighting corruption and other wrongdoing?
- Lack of census, and recent surveys. Isn't it short-sighted to delay the census? Both civil society and the government need the data for development and policy planning purposes.
- Sports development - Any news on the renovation of stadiums?
- How can the budget do more to provide support to SMEs by means of funding for business development, training, equity etc.
- Lack of collateral for the youth when applying for business funding. How can it be solved?
- The budget should prioritise spending on social infrastructure to improve health and education facilities and curb income inequality.

- In view of worrying data from the UN on food security, widespread hunger there needs to be a rescue package to curb hunger; help for people to sustain themselves e.g. growing their own produce
- Namibia needs to take some hard decisions to free up funds for social spending (healthcare, education, housing, sanitation). If a significant reduction in the size of the civil service is not politically possible then cuts should be made elsewhere - defence (cancel weapons purchases), foreign affairs (reduce number of missions), S & Ts (stop all unnecessary trips), spending on VIPs and VVIPs (farm security?). Cuts in top salaries (even if mainly symbolic) would be an important act of solidarity with those going through the extended cost of living crisis in Namibia. The President should also pay tax.
- Access to urban land - focus should be on enabling urban land delivery in efficient and cost-effective ways
- Urgent programme needed to improve sanitation in informal settlements.
- What is happening with the plans to reform PSEMAS (government medical aid scheme). Still reports of fraud in PSEMAS.
- NGOs need funding from GRN for their work in the public health sector
- Progress on the National Pension Fund and the National Health Insurance Scheme?

② Gender issues:

- Why has the Ministry not introduced the gender budgeting approach as recommended by the Ministry of Gender?
- There is a need for specific allocations to tackle SGBV e.g. courts for SGBV cases, SGBV protection units, police to be trained and provided with necessary resources, more women and child abuse centres, more shelters for women and children across the country
- Sanitary pads can be produced locally (to make them more affordable and accessible)
- There should be a budget around reproductive justice that prioritises family planning services and equips health care services to handle it. Suggested due to the high rate of teenage pregnancy that reduces access to education for girls.