

***THE ROLE OF
JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT NAMIBIA IN
YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT-***

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Mr. Moderator

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentleman

I am reliably informed that Junior Achievement Namibia (JAN) represents a unique entity that offers business and economic related education, specifically designed for young people such as you to develop entrepreneurial skills and workforce readiness.

Allow me to inform you that I feel proud to be associated at this fundraising event and that I do challenge every institution, organization and business community to recognize the worthwhile contribution JAN brings to Namibia.

The issue of economics education is very close and dear to my heart and I also believe with you that theoretical education that we learn in schools represents only one crucial but essential step to learning and that assimilation and understanding of economic issues should remain a key priority. Hence, I am fully supportive of the Junior Achievement International's slogan which reads as follows: *"Where the world turns to economic education."*

Ladies and Gentleman, I am not here to focus on what JAN represents as an entity. I am quite sure the presenters have amply amplified that. I am here to give you a perspective on what JAN can do within the economic sphere of Namibia and why its existence is essential to carry out its vital objectives and programs.

Mr. Moderator, when the word "youth" is mentioned, it is always the case that from a mindset perspective, we think of youth in terms of schools, tertiary education, sports, arts and culture. But we do not think of them in economic terms.

Hence, JAN serves as an important tool for youth empowerment whereby the youth of Namibia becomes part of an overall economic empowerment process in the economy. JAN's

mission as preparing the youth as responsible members of the community and partakers in the economic wealth of the country through an entrepreneurial drive and training can ideally put the youth as future assets who are firstly earning future good incomes, secondly, manage, control or drive entrepreneurially the income generating processes such as the Small and Medium Business (SME's), and thirdly owning an existing or upcoming economic ventures and lastly, possessing marketable, entrepreneurial and sustainable skills.

Even though the youth represents viable economic assets for the future, we all are aware that there is a concern among us that youth unemployment is one of the major economic problems facing Namibia, as also indicated in the NDPII plan. According to the *Labour Force Survey 2000*, we do not take cognizance of the fact that of the current unemployment rate of 33.8%, about 41% constitutes youth unemployment which are aged between 15-24 years.

Historically, we all know that it is increasingly difficult for young people to find work – partly because there are not enough jobs and partly because the young do not have the skills that are in demand in the labour market. Currently, too few young people are given opportunities to improve their skills in areas that will enhance their employability.

But I am not here to give you a grim statistics on youth but to indicate that the JAN's mission and vision of educating and inspiring youth to value themselves as economic agents and as viable entities capable of economic self sufficiency through the provision of JAN's quality, customized enterprise education and business development programs is a singular leap towards solving youth unemployment in the country.

Mr. Moderator, JAN's mission and vision should therefore be analyzed from a broad-based youth economic empowerment in terms of contributing to job creation, skills development and self-employment opportunities. This can enable the youth of Namibia to equip resourceful assets that can allow them to contribute meaningfully to the sustainable growth and

development of the Namibian economy. The old adage *“Youth represents our leaders of tomorrow”* is true and factual within this context and I am sure that the greatest yearning for the youth of Namibia today is for economic participation, for economic opportunities.

Furthermore, the aspirations of the youth of Namibia cannot be separated from those of the people of Namibia as a whole. Care should be taken that the aspirations of the youth as a sub-element of the broader category of the aspirations of all the people should not be neglected as it could lead to socio-economic marginalization of the youth, Hence, such a situation of having many young people economically un-engaged and unproductive would certainly rob the country of the energy and genius of the youth, and would pose a serious social threat to the future economic prosperity of the Namibian economy.

I am equally impressed by a number of strategic interventions that JAN has done since its inception in 2001. JAN has been strategic in having a proper targeting strategy for identifying beneficiaries of their projects which are school learners and youth at educational institutions. The programs that they have such as a enterprise basics and dynamics programs are well designed to promote skills training which are economic activity related.

I am pleased that JAN emphasizes soft skills approach of training by developing interpersonal skills through success skills and networking skills through the global trade institute as well as the Public Private Partnerships. JAN’s strategic mandate of ensuring education for school leavers after grade 12 through University of Cambridge Youth enterprise examination is also welcomed.

I would in this spirit encourage JAN to fulfill its strategic mandate but equally also draft a policy on youth economic empowerment as a subset of the overall black economic empowerment programme and law in Namibia. Such a policy should be integrated and coherent taking into account strategic interventions that are currently done by JAN.

Secondly, The policy should take into account JAN strategic interventions as regards youth employment job creation and a creation of platforms where youth can be heard.

There is still a concerted effort needed to ensure that youth get involved in structures of civil societies, governmental institutions and private and public sector. JAN's role is indeed commendable where it organizes youth as a target market who actively engage in youth dialogue and amplify their concerns to the Namibian society through the youth agenda. Such a process can ensure that there is a political, socio-economic change on the part of youth development and inclusion within overall policy making of the country. This should ultimately avoid the danger of defining youth participation purely as human resources and skills development, but as economic agents worthy to be listen to and as a force to reckon with.

The *singular* strategy that JAN needs assistance on and which I call upon the business community is that all of the objectives and aims of this noble cause can only be realized if there is ensured adequate financing for the activities of JAN. As a means of sustainable financing, I will challenge all financial service providers and creators to establish a Youth Empowerment Fund where financing and utilization guidelines can be established targeted at the Youth age profile. Other institutions such as the banking industry and Microfinance institutions can also play a role in terms of re-orienting its financing profile towards youth empowerment, and JAN in particular.

Other aspects could relate to entrepreneurial culture. I want to congratulate JAN for having to focus on reviving entrepreneurial culture in Namibia that has been virtually non existent in 1990. I would further like to challenge our government of building procurement opportunity for JAN in its tendering procedure so that through a well thought out procurement policy that targets youth, tendering can be set aside to promote SME enterprises which are youth driven.

Lastly, I challenge the private sector, civil society, trade unions and government alike to assist JAN in building capacity of the

youth at the regional and local levels. JAN's role of various strategic interventions such as workplace internships and basic skills development should be encouraged and supported to equip the youth with the capacity to access information, access support for their projects and participate in or implement those projects. Today, I can confidently say that the problem of not fully utilizing information as a productive asset stands as one of the greatest obstacles towards youth economic empowerment, and addressing it would unlock the real and full potential of the youth of Namibia.

Allow me to conclude with a cautionary note. JAN's mandate of ensuring youth empowerment process can only be effective as the effective implementation of the strategies. I would also challenge JAN to ensure an effective and visible youth representation of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) structures which have been set up. JAN should ensure that there are youth targets included in the BEE programme and sector charters – to enforce youth economic empowerment.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, you have realized that my speech has been confined on what JAN has done immensely given that it is only 2 years old. I would propose JAN to spearhead drafting a youth economic empowerment policy and law in Namibia which is consistent with those of the envisaged broad-based BEE. The strategic interventions that JAN has brilliantly carried out so far does contain salient features of such a youth economic empowerment policy but it should be formulated under that heading and be consistent with the overall BEE policy objectives, in tune with a sectoral charter that promote SME development which are youth driven.

I do once more welcome JAN's well targeted strategy of the youth profile. But allow me to end on a cautionary note that JAN needs to be mindful not to focus only on youth who are intellectually capable to partake in its programs. But that JAN needs to consider its developmental role of being gender, region and differently abled sensitive. I would like to say that the youth profiling targeting should consider strategic interventions for

youth that may be differently abled, rural and uneducated so that there are programs that caters for their developmental needs.

I am quite sure that such a process can only contribute towards the overall economic growth and development strategy, as contained in the National Development Plan II and Vision 2030.

I do hereby salute the noble efforts undertaken by JAN so far and commend them for a bold initiative they took to ensure that youth of today becomes effective leaders of tomorrow.

Without further ado, I am hereby launching officially the fund raising program of the Junior Achievement Namibia.

I thank you

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