



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**MINISTRY OF SPORT, YOUTH AND NATIONAL SERVICE**

Tel: +264 61 270 6528  
Fax: +264 61 245 764

Private Bag 13391  
Windhoek, Namibia

**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Attention: News Editor**

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**MINISTRY PRODUCES CROPS FOR TRAINEES AT BERG AUKAS YOUTH SKILLS TRAINING CENTRE IN GROOTFONTEIN**

**GROOTFONTEIN, 17 March 2017.** In pursuance of the ideals of inclusivity adopted by the Harambee Prosperity Plan, the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service rolled out a training programme for the Children of the Liberation Struggle (CLS). The ministry enrolled two hundred and sixty five (265) CLS at Berg Aukas Youth Skills Training Centre in Grootfontein, training them in various trades such as agriculture, carpentry, welding, bricklaying, hospitality, hairdressing, junior computer technician, office administration, fashion design and tailoring.

The programme also provided an opportune moment for the ministry to revive its agricultural division, by transforming its one hundred and thirty (130) hectares of land into a productive farming unit, as well as transfer practical skills to CLS that are specializing in agriculture. Out of one hundred and thirty (130) hectares, the ministry managed to utilize forty (40) hectares of land by planting various types of crops such as; maize, sunflower, watermelon, pumpkins, soya beans as well as brown beans, intended for feeding trainees at the Centre. “We knew that part of what we will be training as a trade here was agriculture, therefore, reviving the agriculture division positioned the ministry in a unique position of imparting practical skills to the young people, that they can transfer from here once they finish and they can apply it to wherever they go” so said the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Alfred Ilukena during his interview with NBC.

According to Mr. Ilukena, the ministry wanted to utilize about one hundred (100) hectares of its arable land, but had to settle for the forty due to financial constraints. “We wanted to ensure that we continue to expand because our intention is to turn this project into a green scheme. One of the things that we did when we first started was to appeal to some businesses for assistance. Unfortunately, nothing came through, that affected us in utilizing the whole area. Our intention is to continue with this project. But again, it’s just the question of resources, because we have been struggling on our own.”

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He also indicated that the expansion would also enable the ministry to feed trainees undergoing training at its other four (4) Centers that are scattered around the country.

Despite the well documented financial constraints affecting the ministry, Mr. Ilukena is still optimistic about the future of the project. “I still believe we can do it, currently, we have companies that we hire to provide food to the young people that we have at the Centre, but if we are able to produce our own food, it will bring the cost of food down, resulting in savings that could be used elsewhere. Also, increased production will result in these companies having to buy produce from the ministry, thus also creating a form of revenue for government, so said the Permanent Secretary.

Apart from imparting skills to the trainees, the Ministry also aims to assist government’s efforts in fighting the war against hunger and poverty, by contributing to the food security of the country. “As a ministry, despite the financial challenges, we would like to transform the farm into a productive farm that would be able to contribute to food security, but also help the ministry in particular, so that it becomes a demonstration farm where young people can come anytime, throughout the year to come and learn specific skills at a given point in time.”

The agriculture division at the Centre is headed by Dr Buba Gure, an Agricultural Specialist, who indicated that although the ministry is currently training the youth, its training was open to any person who is interested in farming. “Our target is not only limited to the CLS, our target is the entire nation and we are not narrowing ourselves only to the youth, we bring in farmers from various parts of the country who visit the farm to see what we are doing and also learn from it.”

**Ends.**

**For more information, contact:**

Mr. Chris Kakuizike

Head of Centre

Berg Aukas Youth Skills Training Centre, Grootfontein

Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service

Cell: +264 814 072 750