

# Presentation by the U-BIG Coalition

@ National Council Standing Committee  
on Health, Social Welfare and Labour Affairs

*...intended to guide the CONVERSATION*

## OVERVIEW

1. BIG Pilot Project
2. What good will it bring?
3. Why Unconditional vs. Conditional?
4. Options & Ways Forward



*"We are too few to be poor..."*

Windhoek, 9 May 2025

# 1 - BIG Pilot Project – Otjivero (Omitara)

- ❑ Composition of the (U)BIG Coalition back then and now ...
- ❑ Why BIG → UBIG or UBI?  
Note: Government's conditional “BIG” was actually a ‘Harambee Cash Grant’
- ❑ Summary of BIG Pilot in 2007/8: beneficiaries, amount, add. measures)

QUESTIONS: *Who of you was there?*  
*What were your impressions?*

- ❑ IMPACT & RESULTS (next slide)

**Various Studies** back then and years later:

[http://bignam.org/BIG\\_publications.html](http://bignam.org/BIG_publications.html)

## Basic Income Grant

Otjivero, Namibia - 10 years later



# Impact & Results from BIG Pilot, based on Studies

## Key Successes in Figures:

<b>Malnutrition</b>	=	42% children (low weight-for-age)		Start = Nov. '07
(clearly reduced)		17% children	“	After 6 months (Jun. '08)
		10% children	“	After 12 months (Nov. '08)

**Poverty** = 76% below poverty line (Nov. '07) → 37% a year later (Nov. '08), and only 16% without 'migration' (= outside people moving to Otjivero during the pilot)

**Entrepreneurship** = Income-generating activities up, from 44% to 55% in one year.

**Education** = School drop-out rates:

- 40 % in Nov. '07
- 5 % after six months (Jun. '08)
- 0 % (almost) after one year (Nov. '08)

**Access to Health** increased &

**Crime Rates** were reduced by 42%

# Global Pilots, Studies & Established Programs

## Namibia's UBIG in a Global Context:

- 130+ pilot projects worldwide, e.g., in Brazil, India, Kenya, South Africa, Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Finland), Canada, USA

## Findings of studies conclude that a BIG/UBI:

- Increases employment and entrepreneurship
- Reduces poverty (= more equality) + better food/nutrition security
- Improves education, health statuses & overall quality of life
- Changes financial behaviours (more positive spending & savings)
- Gives a greater 'sense of security' and ability for long-term planning

+ ***Studies overwhelmingly prove that it does not 'make people lazy'!***

# Recent Developments & Studies in Namibia

**Situation:** Growing Inequalities & Affects of Climate Change: Drought & Floods

- **Unemployed** = 36.9% of Namibians unemployed (NSA, 2023)
- **Poverty** = 43.3% of Namibians living in multidimensional poverty (UNICEF, 2021)
- **Malnutrition** = 41% of Namibians live in Crisis/Emergency (IFSPC, 2025) + ¼ of children stunted  
→ Costs of Hunger in Namibia = N\$ 11 billion per year (5,22% of GDP) in 2016 (COHA Study – NPC, 2022)

❖ **Old Age Grant** evidently **reduced child poverty** (J. Steytler) → Grant was increased!

❖ A **Universal Child Care Grant** (0-18 years) was attempted by MGEPE SW

## Recent Studies & Resource Documents:

- Diverse funding options for BIG/UBI, incl. disbursement models
- Impact on BIG/UBI on Education (draft) (Namibian researchers at NUST)
- Efficiency of UBI against Malnutrition (London School of Economics & NAFSAN)
- Draft BIG/UBIG legislation (UBIG Coalition)

# 2 - What Good Will It Bring?

## Understanding the **Dual Benefits**:

### 1) Social Protection:

- ✓ **Helping the Vulnerable**, like the unconditional Old Age Grant does.
- ✓ **Relieving Pensioners** from the burden to cater for (grand)children
- ✓ **Other Benefits** ...as per studies (previous slides)

*Imagine a rural/urban settlement... and don't think of it as a cost but as an **investment**.*

### 2) Local & National Economic Stimulus:

- Increases local food production and local markets
- Enables job-finding, covering logistics for taxis, CVs etc.
- Improves small income opportunities and self-employment
- Reduces crime rates, and mitigates urban rural migration trends
- Enhances human capital (= labour force) through investing in health, nutrition, education, and overall improved living conditions etc.

# 3 - Why Unconditional vs. Conditional?

QUESTION: *How was the experience with the recent Conditional Grant?*

**Current Social Grant System:** Fragmented / Inefficient / Administratively Costly  
+ **CONDITIONS:** requires 'means-testing' = who qualifies and who doesn't.

## **BENEFITS of UNCONDITIONALITY** ('Universal')

- **Efficiency**, less administrative burdens and 'hoops to jump through', reduced risk of double-payments, fraud, corruption, as well as the feelings of being 'left out' (excluded)
- **Proven Benefits & Impact** (as previously stated),

However, there are often some concerns raised...

# Possible Responses to Typical Concerns

- a) ‘Why me?’** - a question often asked by people who already have a good income.
- Namibia highly unequal society → UBIG is an effective redistributive mechanism.
  - Recover costs from well off individuals (e.g., via taxes) to help those in need.
  - Universal approach is key to avoid high administrative costs, bureaucratic hurdles, and risks of mistakes and corruption associated with means-testing and targeting.
  - **Principle:** Everyone receives UBIG, yet those above a certain income ‘pay it back’.
- b) ‘People will just abuse the ‘money given for free’?’** - as some recipients of food parcels have been seen selling those parcels, sometimes for alcohol.
- People need more than just food, e.g., soap, rent, transport to clinics
  - Alcohol addiction is more complex, and – like poverty – intergenerational.
  - Pilots show that it’s merely a minority ( $\pm 5\%$ ) who ‘abuses’ money/handouts
- LSE-Study (2025): *“Rather pay some who may not ‘deserve’ it, than leave out those who really need it.”*
- UBI helps reach the **crucial age group** of **0-5 years** (= highest return on investments!)

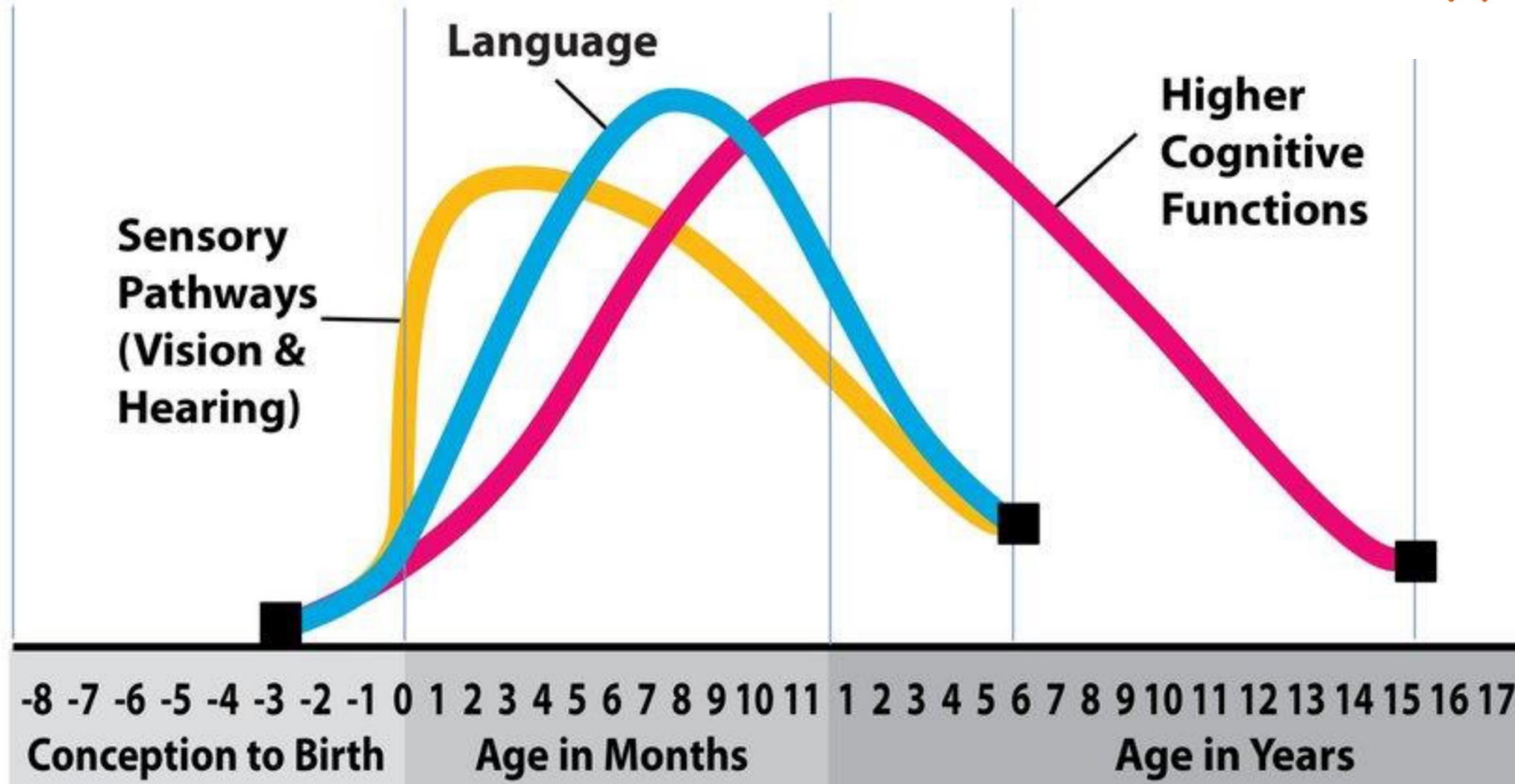


# Human Brain Development

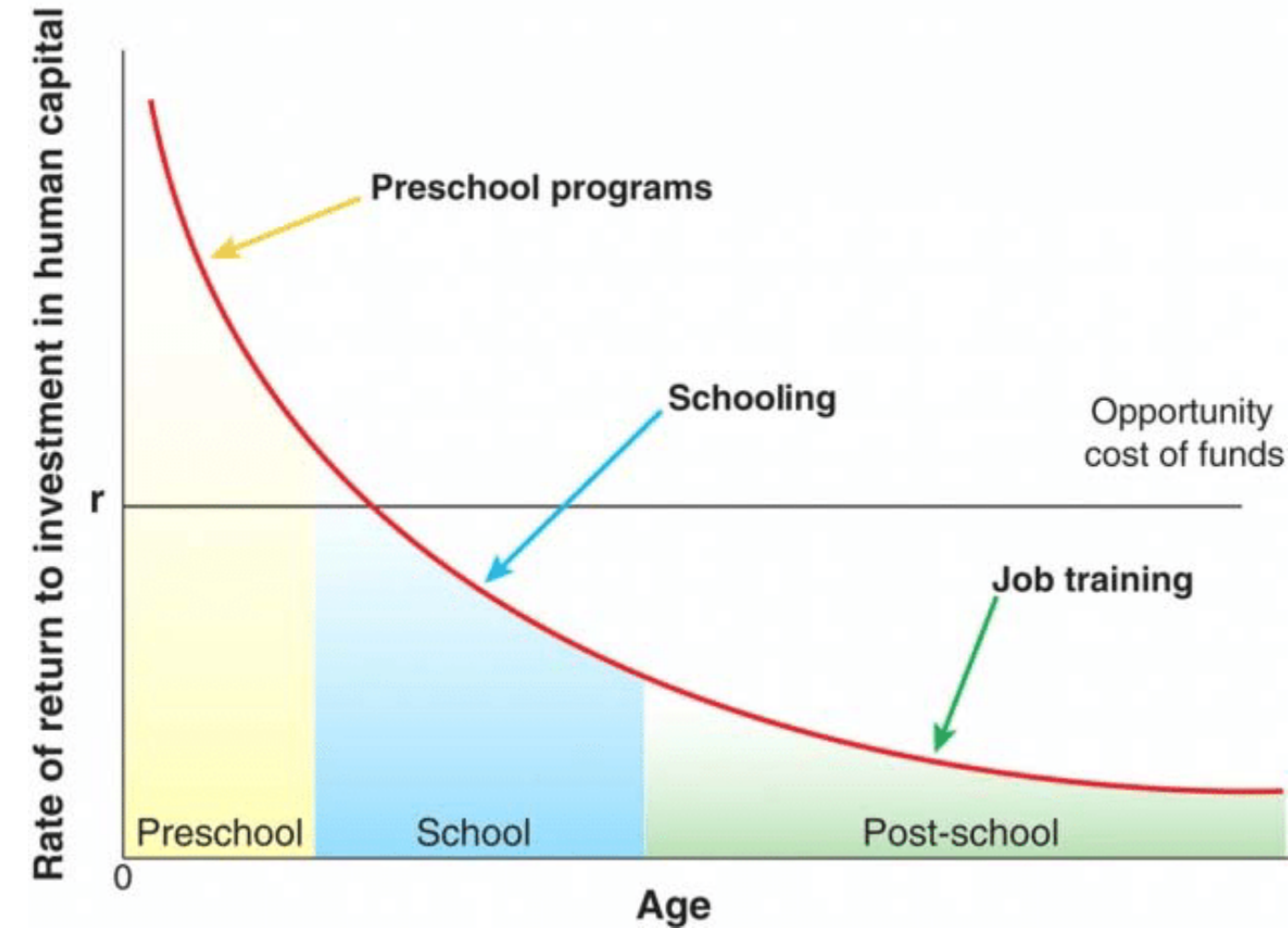
Synapse formation is dependent on early experiences



[www.RightStart.com.na](http://www.RightStart.com.na)

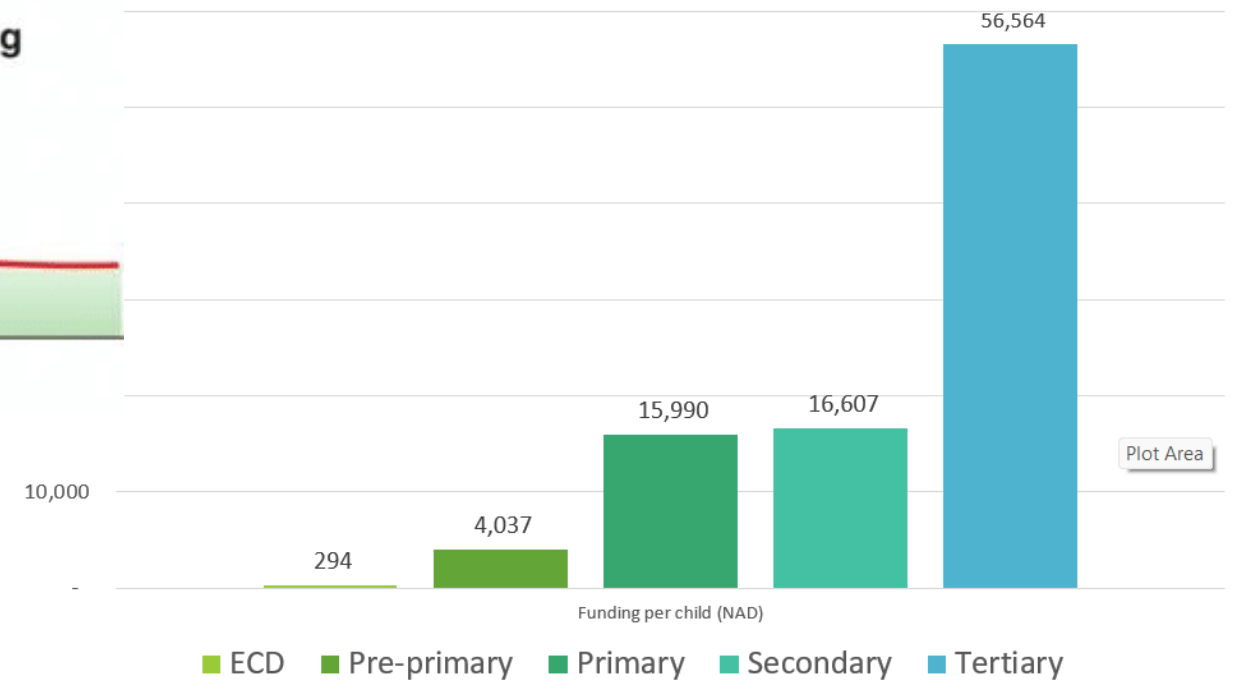


## Rates of return to human capital investment



[www.RightStart.com.na](http://www.RightStart.com.na)

## Annual GRN spending per child per phase



# 4 - Options & Ways Forward

- **Multi-Stakeholder Task Force** (GRN, CSOs, Private Sector) on a future UBI, as a matter of national importance. → Solutions can only be found together.

## By end of 2025:

- ✓ Develop **models for UBI** at different levels (N\$) and age-groups, including funding sources (e.g., tax, natural resources) and disbursement mechanisms,
- ✓ Clarity on **alignment** with **existing grants** and **stakeholders' responsibilities**,
- ✓ Consider **gradual approaches**, as long as they are “Unconditional”
- ✓ Continue developing **draft legislation** for UBI
- ✓ Design **complementary interventions**, such as educational, entrepreneurial, and nutritional programs, financial management, psycho-social support etc.

**What are Parliament's next steps? &  
How can we as Coalition support you in your work?**