

**Remarks by U.S. Ambassador to Namibia, Joyce Barr**  
**Launch of a new initiative to**  
**improve the quality of education**  
**for orphans and other vulnerable children**  
**Saturday, March 11, 2005, 9:30 – 11:00**  
**Ongwediva Trade Centre**  
**Ongwediva, Oshana Region, Namibia**

Honourable Minister Nangolo Mbumba, Minister of Education  
Honourable Clemence Kashupulwa, Governor of the Oshana region  
Honourable Usko Nghaamwa, Governor of the Ohangwena region  
Honourable Sackey Kayone, Governor of the Omusati region  
Honourable Penda Ndakolo, Governor of the Otjikoto region  
Regional Education Directors and all members of the education profession  
USAID/Namibia Mission Director, Gary Newton and colleagues  
Representatives of Namibian Government ministries  
Partners from the NGO and Church community  
Members of the Media  
Learners, Parents and Care Givers  
Ladies and gentlemen

It's a pleasure to be here today with the Honourable Minister of Education Mbumba -- and all of you.

We have come together to launch a new initiative to help ensure orphans and other vulnerable children can *go to school, stay in school, and do well in school.*

Children orphaned by AIDS have a special need for a quality education given the special challenges they face.

This initiative is intended to help remove barriers to a quality basic education faced by vulnerable children.

Assistance is intended for schools in the six northern regions which have the highest proportion of vulnerable children. These schools themselves are *vulnerable*. In these schools it is more difficult to improve the quality of education for all learners.

Our assistance is intended to help ensure that every orphan and vulnerable child:

- feels sufficiently comfortable at school to fit-in and focus on learning; this means having a clean uniform, shoes, book bag, and basic school supplies;
- feels well enough and has the energy to concentrate, think and achieve at school; this means for many being provided a nutritious meal at school;
- and, receives the quality of education they require to overcome the formidable challenges they confront.

Initial grants totalling N\$ 528,000 are being awarded this month to eleven schools and the community groups which support them to meet selected educational needs of over 3,300 vulnerable children.

An additional N\$1,375,000 will awarded during the second half of 2006.

This initiative is part of a larger program of U.S. assistance to vulnerable children. The U.S. Government, through USAID, is providing approximately N\$35 million in 2006.

This funding will assist the Ministries of Education and Gender Equality and Child Welfare, and fifteen Namibian NGOs and faith-based groups, to provide critical care and support services to over 59,000 orphans and other vulnerable children.

We are helping to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable children over the short-term as the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) implements policies and programs that expand access to care and support services that can be sustained with local resources over the long term.

Support for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment in Namibia is being provided under the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Under this program, funding for Namibia increased from US\$24.5 million (approx. N\$ 160 million) in 2004, to \$42.8 million (approx. N\$ 270 million) in 2005, to \$57.3 million (approx. N\$350 million) in 2006. Funding has more than doubled in three years because Namibia is using these resources well and is achieving significant results. We expect a further increase in 2007.

Finally and most importantly, I want to acknowledge and applaud all those who are doing such good work on behalf of children in need:

- We thank you who are providing the love, care and support, and education vulnerable children require: parents and caregivers, teachers, school administrators, concerned community members;
- We thank you who are working for the Government, NGOs, faith-based groups and the private sector to ensure service delivery programs for orphans and other vulnerable children are adequately financed and staffed, well planned, vigorously implemented, and carefully monitored and evaluated;
- And a special thanks to our friends and colleagues at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the Urban Trust of Namibia, and the Ministry of Education Regional Education Offices who are working on this important initiative as part of the USAID-funded Basic Education Support (BES III) project.

It is indeed encouraging that there's a growing coalition of Namibians and friends of Namibia who are actively working to provide support to vulnerable children.

With help from their government, family, school, church, and friends – including those of us here today – these precious children will receive the care and the education they need to become productive, independent citizens of this remarkable young nation, and to become someday themselves healthy and caring mothers and fathers.

Congratulations to the schools and community support groups who are receiving these initial grants.

We wish you strength and every success.

Thank you.