

--Donation of 17,000 books from the International Book Bank--
Draft Remarks by USAID/Namibia Mission Director, Gary Newton
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National Institute for Educational Development
Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

- Honorable Dr. Becky Ndjoze-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Education (MoE)
- Mr. Stanley Simataa, Deputy Permanent Secretary - MoE
- Mr. Alfred Ilukena, Under Secretary of Formal Education - MoE
- Mr. Charles Kabajani, Director of Education Program Implementation - MoE
- Mr. Willie January, Acting Director for NIED and Master of Ceremonies
- Ms. Ellen Namhila, Director of Education Library Services
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the U.S. Government and USAID, I am pleased to be at NIED today to participate in this book donation ceremony.

Namibia is well known for the remarkable progress you have made improving children's access to education over the past 15 years; and Namibia is well known for the relatively large proportion of the national budget you choose to invest in education.

With access expanded, Namibia has been focusing on improving the quality of education. Very few things could be more important, or more challenging.

A good textbook in the hands of every learner is critical to improving quality. Sadly, there are still not enough textbooks in Namibia's schools. The last education sector assessment set a goal of reducing the number of children per textbook from five to three.

Two weeks ago, I spent a few days traveling around the north with colleagues visiting schools and talking with principals, teachers, parents, and learners.

What we saw was heartening. There's a great deal of good work being done by a great many hard-working, creative and caring principals, teachers and staff. Many children's needs are being met, and there is much to be optimistic about.

But, what we saw was also disheartening. 20%, 30%, even 40% of the learners at some schools we visited are orphans and vulnerable children. One school's "feeding program" for orphans consisted of an apple twice a week! In one school circuit, teachers were absent 1,605 days last term due to illness or compassionate leave. School Development Funds are depleted, with as little as N\$15.00 per learner per year for relief teachers, school maintenance, extra-curricular activities, and learning materials such as additional textbooks.

So, these 17,000 books from the International Book Bank are needed, and it is heartening to know that these books will soon be in the hands of learners who need them most.

Last year, the International Book Bank donated 22,000 books that were distributed to thirteen primary schools around the country.

In July 2005, the United States Government through the USAID-funded *Textbooks for a Global Society* program, handed-over 10,000 textbooks for primary schools in the north.

In addition to books for primary schools, over the past three years USAID has also facilitated the donation of books to education institutions such as UNAM's northern campus, the National Education Library and the International University of Management (IUM).

USAID support for textbooks is provided in the context of a broader program of support for basic education. As I think most of you know, USAID support to the education sector began shortly after independence -- and continues.

We are responding to Ministry of Education (MoE) requests for assistance with primary education in the north where the needs are greatest. Specifically, we are asked to focus on helping the Ministry improve the teaching of math, science, and English in grades 1 through 7.

Our support is mainly provided under a bilateral assistance program popularly known as the "BES" project -- Basic Education Support. We are up to "BES III", the *Best BES* yet!

Since 1991, USAID has provided approximately N\$263 million Namibian dollars in support of basic education in Namibia.

Assistance for basic education is provided in the context of a broader program of US AID bilateral support. In addition to supporting education, US AID is:

- helping create jobs in Namibia by supporting the development of Small and Medium-sized enterprises and Regional Trade;
- supporting efforts to improve rural livelihoods by assisting Namibia's conservancies to manage their natural resources prudently and profitably.
- helping Namibia further strengthen democratic culture and key institutions by assisting with the establishment of a home-grown, "*Naturally Namibian*" "Democracy Support Center"; and, we are supporting the expansion of your national anti-corruption campaign; and,
- Through the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, US AID is supporting the national effort to fight the AIDS epidemic and to minimize the epidemic's toll by assisting with the rapid scale-up of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care.

Development support from the United States to Namibia is increasing. Assistance from US AID to Namibia has more than doubled in the past four years from N\$ 70 million Namibian dollars in 2002, to N\$178 million dollars in 2005. And we expect a further increase this year to N\$ 186 million Namibian dollars.

Assistance from US AID is just a portion of the total assistance Namibia is receiving from the US Government. The US Embassy in Windhoek, the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Peace Corps, provide significant -- and growing -- support in addition to that of US AID.

So clearly, the U.S. is standing solidly beside Namibia and your national effort to achieve the goals spelled-out in *Vision 2030*, including those that envision a higher quality education and a knowledge-based economy.

In conclusion, US AID is pleased to be in a position to assist such a vital and vigorous sector. Congratulations on your good work, and a special thanks to the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) for your leadership in the sector; for your speedy distribution of these books, and for being such a good partner over the years. Thank you.