

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES,
HON. RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI**

**AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE CATHOLIC AIDS ACTION BUILDING,
THE "NEW START" VCT BUILDING AND THE US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE
FUNDED WALVIS BAY MULTI-PURPOSE CENTER EXTENSIONS
31 OCTOBER 2003**

Master of Ceremonies - Mr. Levy-Lee Abrahams
His Worship the Mayor, King Mandumo Muatunga
H.E the American Ambassador to Namibia, Mr. Kevin McGuire
The Hon. Regional Governor, Cde. S. Nuuyo
The Hon. Regional Councilor, Cde. H. Ndemula
Director of the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center, Ms. B. Figaji
Members of the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center Steering Committee
The acting Chief Medical Officer of Erongo Region, Dr. Tshiteta
The acting Principal Medical Officer of Walvis Bay, Dr. Mayama
Member of the health and social welfare team
Development Partners
Walvis Bay Community members
Distinguished invited guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great honour and pleasure to be here today. Projects such as this one, which further the control of HIV/AIDS in Namibia, are very close to my heart and they have my strongest support.

In July 2001 I had the privilege of opening this Multi-Purpose Center. I am particularly thrilled on returning today to see how far the Center has gone to achieve its goals and to see how well it has served the community of Walvis Bay. I am informed that the multi-purpose center is very popular – that no less than 23,000 community members have made use of the center and have been involved in its various projects since it opened its doors 2 years ago. The underlying theme for most of the projects is HIV/AIDS – whether they offer “*edutainment*” to the youth, counseling, practical training, workshops, income generation and many other opportunities. There are not many Multi-Purpose centers in the country which can boast of being as active and successful as the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center.

When I was here in July 2001, I informed my audience that my ministry conducts sentinel surveys every 2 years throughout the country to determine the prevalence of HIV amongst the population the reproductive age group, who are 15-49 years of age. At that time I reported to you that the 2000 HIV prevalence in Walvis Bay was 28%, the third highest prevalence in the country at the time. The next results had a different picture. The results for 2002 showed that in Walvis Bay the HIV prevalence had actually decreased to 25%, and Walvis Bay was now 7th from the highest in prevalence. Although this is still above the overall National prevalence of 22%, it is truly encouraging. I know that the health and social welfare staff in my ministry have been working hard to curb this epidemic, as have many other sectors. It is likely that the excellent work emanating from this Multi-Purpose Center has contributed amongst many other laudable efforts in your region in general and Walvis Bay in particular to the favourable control in HIV prevalence seen here in Walvis Bay.

I tell you this in order not to relax, but rather see that it is indeed possible to make a difference and to get this plague that is upon us under control. I would like to encourage you to fight even harder – to follow in the footsteps of your initial success.

This brings me to the purpose of this happy occasion. We are celebrating three major developments this morning, namely: the donation to Walvis Bay Municipality of the Catholic AIDS Action building, the “*New Start*” VCT building, and the United States Department of Defense funded extensions to the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center. This center provides counseling and testing services in an excellent and confidential environment. Too many people in this region still do not know their HIV status. This is unfortunate, since they may be spreading the virus to their loved ones without even knowing, while we have a number of prevention measures in place. So I would like to welcome the establishment of this center in Walvis Bay, since it also perfectly complements the new PMTCT and HAART programmes. New services will now be available for the community members in Walvis Bay – all made possible by these generous donations. The impact on Walvis Bay is likely to be immense, and the community in Walvis Bay has already proven that they know how to maximize their opportunities.

To the donors of these much-needed buildings, be informed that they will be utilized and appreciated to the fullest extent and with all the projects at the Multi-Purpose Center including those inaugurated today.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, whilst the Ministry has taken steps to roll out the ARV therapy gradually to all the 13 Regions, I would like to call on the partners in control to consider the importance of nutrition in debilitating diseases which includes HIV/AIDS and TB. Drugs in an empty stomach many manifest adverse effects resulting in a patient stopping taking drugs. Food items which can boost the immunity must be emphasized and taught to all Namibians. It is therefore important that foodstuffs with nutritional value, particularly those that are locally available and affordable such as green vegetables including spinach, garlic must be used. Similarly, food supplements particularly those containing trace elements like zinc, selenium and vitamins like A, C and E is very important in this respect.

Master of Ceremony, I would like to seize this opportunity to inform you of another project which has been approved by my Ministry. It concerns Tuberculosis, a disease which has been increasing in our country due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Some buildings at the previous “*North*” hospital will be converted into wards for patients with Multi-drug resistant TB. This will allow us to ensure complete and continuous care for these patients through their lengthy recovery period.

With these few words, I now have the honour and pleasure to declare

- The Catholic AIDS Action building
- The “*New Start*” VCT building
- And the United States Department of Defense funded extensions to the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center officially inaugurated.

Thank you.