



**Award of U.S. Government-funded Grants to
Assist Orphans and Vulnerable Children
Go to School, Stay in School and Do Well in School
Remarks by USAID/Namibia Mission Director, Gary Newton
Rundu College of Education, Kavango Region
June 22, 2007**

- Honorable Mr. John Thighuru, Governor Of Kavango Region
- Mr. Alphons Dikuaa, Director, Kavango Regional Education office
- His Worship Mr. Mandema Shikerete, Mayor of Rundu Town
- School board members, principals, teachers and learners from beneficiary schools
- Representatives of Namibian Government ministries, NGOs, and Churches
- Members of the Media
- Dear Learners, Parents and Care Givers
- Ladies and gentlemen

We're gathered here today for three important reasons:

- to recognize that many of our dear children need a helping hand to enable them to go to school, stay in school and do well in school;
- to recognize the good, committed and talented people who are in fact extending a helping hand to these children; and,
- to provide the resources you need to extend the reach of your gracious helping hands; the resources you need to support children who have been orphaned or made vulnerable by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Today, on behalf of the United States Government and the American People, it is my pleasure to announce the award of an additional N\$1.6 million in grants under a program designed to help children affected by the AIDS epidemic *go to school, stay in school and do well in school*. These grants assist schools and communities to ensure children can pay school fees; have school uniforms, books, and supplies; and are provided nutrition and counseling when needed.

Today, 41 schools are receiving grants worth a total of N\$1,231,720 to expand care and support to children in need. In addition, 6,574 learners in 50 primary schools will soon receive special grants to enable them to contribute to their school's Development Fund. These grants together total N\$ 423,556.

The U.S. Government is helping to pay school fees temporarily, over the short-term. We are doing this with the understanding that the Ministry of Education is actively working on longer-term, sustainable solutions to a critical problem faced by the education sector. The problem is that schools with a high proportion of children who can not afford to contribute to their School Development Fund are disadvantaged. They have less to spend on their learners' education. They have fewer resources per learner with which to maintain – and improve – education quality. We encourage and support Ministry of Education efforts to find ways to routinely reimburse these schools for school fees they can not collect because learners cannot afford to pay them.

This round of grants increases the total number of orphans and vulnerable learners receiving support from 11,122 in 2005 to 20,850. We are glad to note that 850 OVC who received support previously successfully completed primary education at the end of 2006.

We applaud and support your efforts to continuously seek ways to improve the effectiveness of this program by:

- involving communities more in the design and implementation of school-based care and support for OVC;
- increasing the participation of volunteers in your programs;
- learning from the experiences of partners including Lifeline/Childline, Catholic AIDS Action, Project Hope, Nawa Life and Africare;
- providing a comprehensive set of services to OVC learners (e.g. including psycho-social support and counselling); and,
- providing more opportunities for OVC learners to express themselves; and to listen ever more carefully to them. The Writing by Kids initiative is

This program is funded by the American People under the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Since March 2006, close to N\$5,000,000 have been made available to help improve education for orphans and vulnerable children.

This program is one initiative under a comprehensive program of PEPFAR support of Namibian efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The U.S. Government is deeply committed to help Namibia win this fight. Our assistance to Namibia for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment has increased from US\$24 million in 2004 to US\$91 million in 2007 (N\$637 million), and is expected to increase again next year.

You may be aware of the worst case orphan scenario for Namibia – that by the year 2021 there could be an estimated 250,000 orphans in Namibia -- 1 of every 3 children!

It goes without saying that every one of us finds this scenario unacceptable. It will not come to pass.

It will not come to pass because there's a growing coalition of Namibians and friends of Namibia who are working aggressively to avert this scenario, working aggressively to

avert the overwhelming challenge of having more than twice as many children in need of care and support 14 years from now.

Working side-by-side with those of you who are helping orphans and vulnerable children, are colleagues providing ARV treatment to HIV-positive parents and caregivers so they can care for their children; and colleagues imparting the information and skills people need to *prevent* HIV infection and prevent more children from vulnerability.

At the end of the day, an effective prevention program is key to controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the orphan crisis it has produced.

In closing, we offer a sincere *thank you* to all of you who are extending a helping hand to orphans and vulnerable children:

- *thank you* to the parents, caregivers, volunteers, teachers and administrators;
- *thank you* to Ministry of Education officials -- the Regional Education Directors and their Deputies, the Regional Education Officers who serve on the BES 3 Steering Committees, the education inspectors and the Circuit Support Teams, and senior leadership of the Ministry;
- *thank you* to our excellent Academy for Educational Development (AED) partners; and,
- *thank you* to my fine USAID colleagues on the education and HIV/AIDS teams.

Finally, we offer our respect, admiration and support to the children. We deeply admire the way they are facing the challenges to getting a good quality education; they are facing these challenges with determination, courage and fortitude. Good for you!

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