

**Remarks by USAID/Namibia Mission HIV/AIDS team Representative Peter Gichangi, Senior HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment Advisor on the occasion of the official closing of the VCT and New Start Centers, workshop, Rock Lodge  
Wednesday, 31 October 2007, at 12:30 p.m.**

The Ministry of Health and Social Services, Representative, Sarah Fuller

The Managers of the VCT and New Start Centers

Staffs of VCT and New Start Centers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It's an honor and a pleasure to be able to join you today for the official closing of the VCT and New Start Center Workshop under IntraHealth/Capacity project.

I know that you have been working hard these past few days to understand the operational aspects of these sub-agreements. You have been dealing with financial requirements, reporting procedures, and grants management and it's my pleasure to join you at the very end. I hope that this workshop has provided you with a forum to understand the activities being implemented by different partners, and also learn from one another. I am also pleased that you will be the driving force to utilize the electronic patient management system. Data reporting and strategic use are key to us improving service delivery at these sites, so I commend you for taking the time to go through this workshop.

I am confident that after spending 3 days on these very important topics which will impact your work, you are ready and energized to make a difference in the lives of people who you will support. In the world of HIV/AIDS, counseling and testing is the entry point to any prevention, care, or treatment service. High quality counseling and testing services can make a significant contribution to our efforts of controlling HIV/AIDS. If C&T services are made available, the door to promoting prevention with positives, providing referrals for reproductive health services, and other primary health care needs is opened. Remember; until someone knows their status, there is nothing anyone can do to help. Life-extending antiretroviral therapy is available, and every one in this room will be a part of the scale up C&T services in Namibia. I thank you, in advance.

I hope that this workshop will allow you to improve counseling and testing services, data collection, and strategic use at the district, regional and national level. I encourage you to continue to collaborate with the MOHSS to compile complete and accurate data on the reach of Counseling & Testing services in your sites.

We all know that HIV/AIDS is a threat to this nation and its progress. Through funding from the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, USAID is very proud to be a partner with you in this work. Namibia is one of 15 focus countries under the U.S. Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which is providing US\$ 15 billion dollars over five years for HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care, and Treatment. Together with the commitment of the Namibian Government and the determination of the Namibian people, we hope to conquer this disease.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is committed to provide those who are HIV positive with access to treatment, prevent new infections, and care for many more that are infected and affected by HIV. Here in Namibia, we are fortunate to be working with a very dynamic Ministry of Health and Social Services under the Government of Namibia's National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS. USAID remains committed to increasing access to anti-retroviral treatment across the country, and looks forward to continuing to work with Namibian non-governmental and faith-based organizations to support the Ministry's National HIV/AIDS Strategy.

I would like to acknowledge and applaud the good work being done by Intrahealth and the Ministry to bring us a few steps closer to implementing stronger C&T programs. The Directorate of Special Programs, in particular, has been a strong source of support and advice through the VCT team and has supported the Capacity project through this process. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership with our new partners to assure that C&T services are not interrupted throughout Namibia.

It is my honor and duty to declare this workshop officially closed. Congratulations to you all.