

TB COMBI Launch
Friday, 5 October 2007, 11:00 a.m.
Safari Hotel, Windhoek
Remarks by U.S. Government Representative
USAID/Namibia Mission Director, Gary Newton

- Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Richard Kamwi
- Director of Ceremony and Permanent Secretary MOHSS, Mr. Kahijiro Kahuure
- Your worship the Mayor of the City of Windhoek, Mr Mathew Shikongo
- Governor of Khomas Region, Hon. Sophia Shaningwa
- Acting WHO Country Representative, Dr. Desta
- Development Partners
- Distinguished Invited Guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It's a pleasure to be here today representing the United States Government (USG) at the Launch of TB COMBI – or Communication for Behavioural Impact.

Let me begin by expressing our admiration of the work you're doing.

The accomplishments of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) and your TB Control Assistance Program (TBCAP) and partners are impressive:

- the TB treatment success rate increased (from 70% in 2004 to 75% in 2005);
- TB cases notified per hundred thousand population declined (from 809 in 2005 to 765 in 2006);
- the proportion of TB patients tested for HIV increased (from 16% in 2005 to 30% in 2006);
- TB screening is now a standard-of-care for all patients seen in ART clinics;
- All 13 regions have established regular quarterly review meetings creating a forum to enhance TB-HIV collaboration;
- Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) tablets are available in all 13 regions, including paediatric formulations;

... and, I could go on. Congratulations.

Honourable Minister, in March, at the World TB Day commemoration in Ohangwena, you said the TB COMBI launch would take place this year -- and here we are.

On behalf of your U.S. Government partners, I'd like to congratulate you and your Ministry for moving forward with this initiative.

TB COMBI is an initiative of great importance which we applaud -- and support financially. It seeks to raise awareness about tuberculosis and promote positive behaviour change; it seeks to ensure those with TB symptoms seek treatment early and, once a diagnosis is made, complete the full course of treatment.

As you all know, early treatment is crucial. It renders TB non-infectious within 72 hours, thus protecting families and communities. And, a full course of treatment is crucial. A full treatment course reduces the spread of TB and drug resistant TB.

Preventing drug resistant TB is of pre-eminent importance at a time when the horrible spectre of Extensively Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB) looms.

Honourable Minister, we look forward to assisting your Ministry this year to fully understand the extent of TB drug resistance in Namibia, and prevent extreme drug resistant TB by improving Directly Observed Treatment, Short Course (DOTS) and the management of multiple drug resistant TB.

The U.S. Government is committed to support Namibia's fight against tuberculosis. We look forward to continued participation in your National TB Steering Committee to ensure our assistance is aligned with your priorities.

In closing, on this day, when we focus on the formidable challenge and threat posed by TB, we wish all of you who are fighting this disease on behalf of the good people of this great nation, ever greater resolve, determination and success.

Thank you.