

Remarks by Ambassador Makila James
U.S. Ambassador to Swaziland
USAID and Mothers2Mother Partnership Launch
January 23, 2013

Honorable Minister of Health
Regional Administrator of the Manzini Region
Distinguished Mission Director of USAID/Southern Africa
CEO of Mothers to Mothers
Mentor Mothers
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

It is such a pleasure for me to be here for this launch of a very special partnership between the U.S. government, through USAID, and mothers2mothers. I am very proud that Swaziland is the first country to participate. This is a tribute to the outstanding work being done here already by mothers2mothers and the Ministry of Health, together with USAID and PEPFAR.

Over the past decade, the U.S. government has made a substantial commitment toward eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and improving the health of women, newborns and children. USAID's partnership with mothers2mothers will help advance these goals by strengthening the capacity of health care workers, communities and governments to deliver vital maternal child health services. This is an opportunity to do even more to build a healthier, AIDS-free future for the people of Swaziland.

In recent years, considerable progress has been made in keeping mothers and children healthy and HIV-free, particularly in Southern and Eastern Africa, the regions hit hardest by the

epidemic. However, while much has been accomplished, many countries are still struggling with high rates of pediatric HIV. Most of the 330,000 children infected with HIV each year live in Sub-Saharan Africa and most acquire HIV from their mothers during pregnancy, child birth and breast feeding.

To change this, women need access to information and counseling to keep themselves and their children healthy. This is not always easy. One of the biggest barriers to eliminating pediatric AIDS is the severe shortage of medical professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa. Health facilities are frequently understaffed and doctors and nurses often do not have the time or the resources to provide adequate information and counseling to women so that they can make smart and informed decisions to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

That is why this new partnership between the government of the United States through USAID and mother2mothers provides such an exciting opportunity. It empowers women to educate themselves and their peers and will help ensure that all women can make informed choices about their health and the health of their children. All mothers want a healthy future for their children. This program will help them make that happen.

I look forward to watching the partnership develop in Swaziland as we work together to achieve our common goal of eliminating mother-to-child transmission and pediatric AIDS. I am also delighted to be here accompanying my colleagues from the USAID Mission in Pretoria, particularly our USAID Mission Director Jeff Borns, too oversee the launch of this program. They bring expertise, dedication and a commitment on behalf of the U.S. government that will ensure the most successful implementation of this new program. I am confident that they will find Swaziland's commitment to addressing mother to child transmission exemplary and that together we will make a significant impact through the Mothers2Mothers Partnership.