



Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Dennise Mathieu
Event to celebrate 15 years of USAID assistance to
Namibia's Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program
June 12, 2008 at 17:30
Polytechnic of Namibia, Hotel and Tourism School, Windhoek

Thank you for joining me on this very special occasion. This evening, we are celebrating fifteen years of USAID assistance to Namibia's Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program.

We are here to celebrate a real success story that began shortly after the independence of Namibia. Fifteen years may sound like a long time, but in reality, it's a relatively short time. After watching the video, seeing the pictures, and learning from the speakers about just how much all of the partners have accomplished in the life span of Namibian independence, you should be justly proud.

It is quite evident that your partnership and collaborative efforts are the reason for this great success. A broad range of government agencies, NGOs, Community Based Organizations, private sector groups and development partners worked together to reach communities in the most remote parts of Namibia, in nine of its thirteen regions.

Congratulations to you all on a job very well done. I'm proud, and the American people are proud, that USAID has assisted Namibian communities to organize themselves as conservancies to better take care of, and gain from, their wildlife and other natural resources.

Fifteen years ago, the USAID-funded LIFE Project started as a pilot program. Now it supports a nation-wide conservation and rural development movement that involves one out of every eight Namibian citizens. When international organizations are looking for a good CBNRM model, they turn to Namibia.

The story I was told of the Kwe San community of West Caprivi illustrates the kind of impact which has earned your program such respect. I understand the Kwe San, one of the poorest communities in Namibia, generated the equivalent of \$416,000 U.S. dollars last year from which they paid US\$170,000 into the Namibian Game Products Trust Fund and retained the rest for community development. Due to their management of resources, the population of most game species has increased. Ten community members receive income and training as employees of hunting operators and the community received more than 40,000 tons of meat valued at over \$52,000 US dollars.

And, colleagues have told me of other conservancies that are generating impressive amounts of income and using that income to improve the management of natural resources, upgrade schools and rural water supplies, support HIV/AIDS activities, enhance rural transportation, and support income-generating enterprises.

The recent USAID-commissioned assessment of CBNRM found that three main factors contributed to the success of this program: the longevity and continuity of our support to you; the fact that you established a supportive framework of legislation, policies and institutions for CBNRM; and, the attention you paid to the creation, expansion, and facilitation of partnerships.

Again, a job very well done.

Since 1991, USAID has been a dependable development partner in Namibia. Over the past 17 years, USAID has contributed over US \$250 million to support Namibian efforts to improve Basic Education; Small and Medium-sized Enterprise development; Democracy and Governance; HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis prevention, care and treatment; and, of course, Community-Based Natural Resource Management. During this period, the American people provided US \$41.6 million for CBNRM.

As we move forward, however, there will be change in the strategic focus of USAID assistance. USAID assistance will focus on what is regarded by many to be Namibia's greatest health and development challenge – fighting the dual HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics. While we will end our bilateral CBNRM assistance program, I look forward to the continuation of our partnership in the fight against HIV/AIDS within conservancies, through the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO) HIV/AIDS Support Program.

In closing, I again would like to acknowledge our main CBNRM partners – the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), International Resources Group (IRG), the Cooperative League of the United States of America (CLUSA), and the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO). We admire the great work you are doing and wish you success in the future. I will be watching your progress with great interest. You have a wonderful foundation upon which to continue building, and I look forward to seeing the Conservancies continue to thrive in Namibia.

Thank you.