



Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Dennise Mathieu  
At the Handover and Inauguration of the National Health Center's  
Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit  
August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Good Afternoon.

It is an honor to be here today to celebrate the opening of the improved Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit within the National Health Training Center (NHTC).

In 1999, his Excellency Founding President Dr. Sam Nujoma and then Honorable Minister of Health and Social Services Dr. Libertina Amathila, officially opened the doors to this Center and stressed the importance of human resource development both in the health as well as the social welfare sectors. Since that day, Namibia has come a long way. Congratulations to each and every one of you.

The National Health Training Center has indeed become a cornerstone institution to train health care providers throughout Namibia. It plays a vital role, particularly in the battle against HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. I am pleased that the United States Government has been able to support this Center and continues to contribute to its development.

Pharmaceutical services, as we all know, play a key role in helping Namibians to manage pain and provide high quality health care treatment. Well-trained pharmacist assistants are central to ensuring that the correct medicines are available in sufficient quantities, counseling patients on the proper use of medication, monitoring adherence, and tracking treatment defaulters.

All of these activities are critical not only to saving lives, but also in preventing drug resistance, particularly given the scope and impact of HIV/AIDS and TB. Unfortunately, Multi-Drug Resistant TB and Extensively Drug Resistant TB are realities here in Namibia.

Pharmacist assistants, therefore, do have a crucial role to play in averting drug resistance in the treatment of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Since 2004, through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, USAID has partnered with Management Sciences for Health (MSH) to strengthen the pharmaceutical system in Namibia. This newly renovated training unit will support nationwide training of pharmacy assistants and strengthen the medical sector and its ability to provide pharmaceuticals to Namibian patients.

At the program's inception, only 8 to 10 students enrolled as Pharmacist Assistants each year. Today, we expect up to 20 students in each class. To the students here today, I commend you for your dedication and your commitment to improving health care for all Namibians. Make good use of these new facilities and keep up the hard work!

In addition, MSH has seconded 49 pharmaceutical service providers to the health care system, 25 (63%) of whom have already been absorbed by the Ministry of Health. We understand that the Ministry will continue to retain these staff members, further testimony of its belief in the importance of these positions and the program.

The United States Government remains committed, working with other development partners, to helping the Namibian Government understand and address the human resource challenges that Namibia faces and we look forward to continuing our support to the Ministry of Health and Social Services. This recently refurbished training unit is just one of many necessary steps to ensure that skilled health care workers are available in country to support access to health services.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming America's support for Namibia's fight against HIV/AIDS and TB. We commend the Government on its commitment to deliver sustainable HIV/AIDS and TB services to all Namibians.

Honorable Minister, may I now take this opportunity to hand over to you the keys to the renovated Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit. Congratulations to everyone who worked very hard to make this day a reality and may this center train top flight Pharmacist Assistants for many years to come!

Thank you very much.