



**Republic of Namibia**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**DR RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI  
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**AT THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CATHOLIC AIDS ACTION**

**19 SEPTEMBER 2008  
Bernard Noordkamp Centre**

**P**rogramme Director – Mr. Namu Musulwe

**P**resident of CAA Board of Trustees – His Grace Archbishop Liborius Nashenda Ndumbukuti

**E**xecutive Director of CAA – Fr Richard Bauer

**D**irector of Operations: CAA – Godwin Chisenga

**A**ll Speakers at this important occasion

**I**nvited Guests

**M**embers of Media

**L**adies and gentlemen

I wish to thank the Executive Director for Catholic AIDS Action who extended a kind invitation for me to join you on this very important occasion commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> Catholic AIDS Action anniversary. Catholic AIDS Action is one of the largest NGO's responding to HIV/AIDS in Namibia.

According to the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2004 – 2009, calls for amongst others, a multi-sectoral approach in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I am grateful to note that Catholic AIDS Action was founded in 1998 by Sr. Dr. Raphaela Handler with Dr. Lucy Steinitz as Namibia's first church-based response to the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Indeed, a Catholic AIDS Action had since grown up to be one of the largest NGO's responding to HIV/AIDS in the country having spread to 14 regional offices in nine political regions of the country.

## Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is now ten years since this organisation was established through the auspices of the Namibian Catholic Bishops Conference hard at work in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is for this reason that I wish to use this opportunity on behalf of Government, the Ministry of Health and Social Services as custodian of health, indeed myself wish to heartily congratulate Catholic AIDS Action for being there for the Namibian nation.

Catholic AIDS Action focuses on the following four programme areas namely, home-based palliative care, youth education and prevention, care and support to orphans and vulnerable children, and voluntary counselling and testing.

Clearly, the philosophy of Catholic AIDS Action is rooted in a client-centred approach that seeks to build on existing resources within the family and community at large. I was reliably informed that CAA currently have over 1 600 active and dedicated volunteers providing services to over 6 000 HIV positive clients and their family members on a monthly basis.

Through the home based care programme CAA is piloting a project integrating true palliative care into CAA's existing home based care. With technical support from the African Palliative Care Association, this pilot project is being undertaken at two CAA office sites in Anamulenge and Rehoboth.

In addition, I was reliably informed that planning is now underway to expand this pilot project from these two sites, to three

additional sites in October 2008 and a further two additional sites in April 2009. Thus, by the end of September 2009 there would be seven sites, out of 14 CAA regional offices.

Programme Director,

I am also gratified to note that Catholic AIDS Action had put in place programs in line with the National Strategic Plan against HIV/AIDS including voluntary counselling and testing, the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission and ARV complementing Government efforts. However, the transmission of HIV virus is still on the rise. Thus, my appeal to stakeholders, NGO's including Catholic AIDS Action is to focus more attention on the concept of prevention and prevention. I am happy that Catholic AIDS Action as a church a living to that standard.

Programme Director

I wish to remind ourselves that for a successful response to the epidemic, it is of paramount importance for us to understand the experience of those who are afflicted with the disease, and not just by our intellect but also offering practical support. Without visible practical support, we keep ourselves at distance from these people and we fail to see ourselves linked to them and their experience. This basically is a form of prejudice. Prejudice reduces a human being to a thing. Prejudice says to a person living with HIV/AIDS, "you are a disease, you are unclean". This evil of prejudice destroys the dignity of the sufferers.

For this reason, I would like to urge all to actively participate in the lives of those who suffer from the disease with compassion and not just mere sympathy. People who are infected with HIV/AIDS deserve more from us, rather than distance sympathy, judgement or abhorrence. We must uphold the dignity and rights of those who are afflicted by the disease by working to end discrimination. Besides, we need to praise and actively support those who care for the suffering and follow their example. The HIV/AIDS crisis can be an opportunity for us to experience God's love by giving unconditional love for everyone of His children and by serving the sick in our communities.

Programme Director

Your grace Archbishop, distinguished members of the church community, ladies and gentlemen, at this juncture, I would like to commend the initiative of the Catholic AIDS Action in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is my sincere feeling that this undertaking will be scaled up to reach all those who need the spiritual support and be emulated by all other religious communities in our country. I urge the public to extend its helping hands to this noble objective.

I wish Catholic AIDS Action many more happy returns as they celebrate their ten years of existence.

**I** thank you.