



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Keynote Address

By

Hon. Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi
Minister of Health and Social Services

At the

Launch of the Star School Project
Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School

Windhoek

06 June 2008

**Honourable Governor of Khomas Region, Ms. Sophia Shaningwa
The Director of Education for Khomas Region, Ms. Claudia
Tjikua**

**The School Board and Management of Immanuel Shifidi
Secondary School**

The Principal of Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School

Distinguished Invited Guests

Dear Learners

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to officiate at this very important and historic day in which your school is officially launching the “Star School Project”. I commend your continued efforts in addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Please keep up the good work!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Learners,

HIV/AIDS remains one of the greatest developmental challenges faced by Government. Indeed, within the context of the project we are launching this morning, HIV/AIDS contributes negatively to progress in education as some teachers and learners attend to family members who may be infected by HIV. In the process, absenteeism of both teachers and learners is experienced in some schools. As a result, most of us are affected in one way or another.

With a prevalence rate of 19.9% by the end of 2006, Namibia is rated as one of the most hard-hit countries in Southern Africa. If we are to win the fight against the spread of HIV infection, it calls for a multi-sectoral approach. Certainly, the youth should be seen to spearhead the campaign.

It is for this reason that I commend the Principal, teachers and learners of Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School for the launch of the Star School Project as one of the strategies in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Learners

In the fight against HIV/AIDS there remains a need for belief and behavioural change at individual and community levels. We need to accept that HIV/AIDS is not a mysterious disease, and there is need to improve the behaviour of men and boys in particular. Equally important is the need to accept and support those infected members of our society, and to ensure their humane treatment.

Director of Ceremonies

Since 2002 the Government's national response has been the development of an aggressive, broad-based and multi-sectoral approach that integrates the private sector and civil society. However, the infection rate has been increasing.

Thus, it is clear that we need to re-examine the strategies in place. For example, one area which calls for our collective attention is a focus on prevention. This is the area where youth must, no doubt, be the major role players. For this reason, I encourage you learners to join in our efforts geared at messages promoting prevention of HIV, aimed to reach, educate and empower 100% of our population in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Undoubtedly, while prevention is the backbone of our intervention strategy, other types of intervention are not ignored. Let us continue prioritising counselling and testing which is very critical to management of the pandemic.

Therefore, the initiative taken by your school to ensure that appropriate and correct information is provided to our young people to facilitate the positive change in attitudes and sexual behaviour is highly commendable and deserves the full support of both the public and private sectors. I am equally delighted by this initiative as I look at it from a view to deepen our understanding of HIV/AIDS and our individual and collective role in defeating the scourge. I find this project stimulating and thought-provoking, and trust that will bring about a constructive change in life style among the young generation.

We have seen a significant contribution by young people's interventions such as the "My future My Choice", "HIV and AIDS Clubs", "Teenagers Against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse", "Windows of Hope" and the "Girl Child" programmes among others.

Thus, I urge you, the youth, to continue on in the fight, soon we will overcome. Note that a better tomorrow for this country lies in your capable hands. Maximise your efforts towards your careers, in particular work hard in your studies of mathematics and science. These are key subjects for the development of any country.

Director of Ceremonies,

I would fail in my duty if I do not commend the Ministry of Education which has been the driving force of these programmes in our schools that are ensuring that young and productive people are saved from contracting HIV. I wish you all the best and good luck in the implementation of your activities and believe that tangible change in attitudes and behaviour amongst our young people will be realized through the "Star School Project" campaign.

Director of Ceremonies, Madam Principal, Staff and Learners,

I now have the honour to declare the “Star School Project” of the Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School officially launched.

I thank you all!