



Republic of Namibia

Keynote Address

By

***Dr Richard Nchabi Kamwi, MP
Minister of Health and Social Services***

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL INAUGURATION
OF
THE NEW KUISEBMUND CDC CLINIC**

**KUISEBMUND, WALVISBAY
05 November 2009**

Programme Director – Mrs. C. Thataone, Director of Erongo Region
Hon. Governor for Erongo Region – Cde. Samuel Nuuyoma
Her Worship the Mayor of Walvis Bay – Cde. Uilika Nambahu
H.E. the Ambassador of United States of America, Ms Gail Dennise Mathieu
Hon. Cllr. of Walvis Bay Urban Constituency – Cde. Hafeni Ndemula
Hon. Cllr. of Walvis Bay Rural Constituency – Cde. John Nangolo
Distinguished Development Partners
Senior Government Officials
Community and Youth Leaders
Representative of the Private Health Sector
Members of Business Community of Walvis Bay
Members of the Media
Distinguished Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Namibia is one of the countries who acknowledged that the AIDS epidemic constitutes, “a global emergency and one of the most formidable challenges to human life and dignity.” A challenge described by one of the greatest Statesman Nelson Holihlahla Mandela, “AIDS has declared war against humanity”. There cannot be any truth than that.

The HIV prevalence rate in pregnant women surveyed on a bi-annual basis in Namibia stood at 4.2 % in 1992 and rose up to 22 % in 2002. Since than, it steadily declined from 19.7 % in 2004 to 17.8 % in 2008.

However, the cumulative figures for people living with HIV/AIDS stands at 204 000. For a population of 2.04 million this figure remains extremely worrisome!

The highest age-specific prevalence rate is observed amongst those age 30-34 years. While the prevalence in adult age groups appears to be increasing, the prevalence in the younger age groups (15-19, 20-24 years) is decreasing from 11 to 5.1 % and 22 to 13.9 %, respectively between 2002 and 2008.

Programme Director

Epidemiologically, the epidemic appears to be centred on three geographic pockets where mobile populations are most likely to take temporary residence such as mining areas, tourist areas, harbour towns, entry and exit points.

No wonder, therefore that despite efforts by both the public and private sector in addressing HIV/AIDS in Walvis Bay, the prevalence rate only declined from 22.1 % in 2006 to 21.4 % in 2008.

I am glad that Government has put in place programmes including the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission, HAART and Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) in all the 13 regions of the country. These programmes have been rolled out from the district hospitals to the health centres and are now rolling out from the health centres to the primary health care clinics. As a result, we are beginning to see a glimmer of hope.

Overall, the trend of HIV prevalence rate by site in 2008 suggested that there is a decrease in HIV prevalence except Katutura Intermediate Hospital, Mariental and Tsumeb district hospitals where prevalence is levelling while at two sites, namely, Nyangana and Okahao district hospitals have registered a substantial increase in HIV prevalence.

In this regard, it is equally pleasing to note that the number of patients on HAART in the public sector as of March, 2009 stood at 64 637 Namibians.

In Walvis Bay alone, the district has managed to enroll 5 547 clients on HIV care and almost 3 000 who are on active ART.

Meanwhile, the programme of the PMTCT country-wide received a boost when we put in place the services of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for early infant diagnoses in January 2006. For example, during 2008, a total of 4 065 infants went through this test; of that number, 3 705 were negative whereas only 356 were positive. This figure suggests that more than 90 % of the infants tested were found to be HIV negative. As I said earlier, these are positive results.

The achievement that I had stated came about when the clients came to know their HIV status through VCT. Indeed, we are convinced that ARV has positive impact on the HIV viral load resulting in prolonged lives for those who are HIV positive and privy to the services. I therefore call upon men and women especially for those who are sexually active to please avail yourselves to this Centre.

Programme Director,

On 30 October, 2003, I had a rear privilege in joining His Excellency Ambassador Kevin Mcguire of the United States of America, together we inaugurated the first Walvis Bay Multi Purpose Centre with a provision of Voluntary Counseling and Testing services. Since then, the services were expanded to include Walvis Bay District Hospital. Today, we are having another rear honour for having Her Excellency Gail Dennise Mathieu, US Ambassador to Namibia to officially inaugurate a state-of-the-art Walvis Bay CDC Clinic. I am also glad to report that this Clinic was built with the assistance of CDC through PEPFAR funding at the cost of 4,364,543.93. Please join me in thanking the Government and the American people who made this immense support.

I wish to use this opportunity on behalf of the Namibian Government, the people of Walvis Bay and indeed myself to thank the people and Government of the United States of America who provided the financial assistance for the establishment of this Clinic.

Programme Director

During the HIV Implementer's Meeting held in June, 2009 in Windhoek, the major strategy that we learned was the promotion of prevention and prevention and prevention strategy. Prevention of HIV must be priority number one. This strategy focuses on comprehensive prevention targets, the underlining codes of the epidemic and has the greatest potential to reduce the scope of the problem.

Therefore, we need to break the trajectory of the epidemic by stopping new HIV infections. This means, focusing on prevention for an HIV free-generation.

In this regard, I commend the Church and our cultural norms which encourages the young men and women to remain single until they get married. The Church, as the custodian of moral values and respect should continue with this noble course.

The other method that needs to be encouraged is male circumcision especially in urban settlement where medical facilities are available at all times. I wish to encourage parents to bring the young toys for circumcision.

Programme Director

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I now have the honour to declare Walvis Bay CDC Clinic officially inaugurated.

Thank you.