



Republic of Namibia

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HON. DR RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

AT WORLD TB DAY COMMEMORATION

28 MARCH 2008
Mariental, Hardap Region

Director of Ceremony Mr Kahijoro Kahuure

Governor for Hardap region Honourable Katrina Hanse-Himarua

Hon. Regional Councillors

Her Worship the Mayor of Mariental -

WHO country Representative, Dr Magda Robalo

Director of US Agency of International Development,

Mr Gary Newton

Director of the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention,

Mr Jeff Hanson

Distinguished Development Partners

Regional Director for Health; Hardap Region, Ms Bertha Katjivena

NGOs

Distinguished invited guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed delighted to be with you at this important commemoration of World TB Day in Mariental, Hardap Region which is one of the four Regions most hard hit by TB infection. Hardap Region has the highest TB burden in the country as it Reports 1,27, cases per 100 000 population. This is indeed worrisome.

I am therefore grateful to the Hon. Governor for the challenge of hosting this important event on the calendar of WHO and her membership. This will create an opportunity for the stakeholders to refocus the attention to the disease burden. It will also direct stakeholders to commit more resources both human and financial in scaling up. TB in the Hardap Region and Namibia at large.

Commemorating World TB Day has become an important health event on our National Health Events Calendar to remind ourselves of the discovery of the germ that causes TB by, a German scientist Robert Koch on the 24th March 1882. Namibia commemorates this day on the 28th March 2008, in collaboration with NGO's, the private sector, and Development partners by re-committing ourselves in the fight against TB.

Director of Ceremonies,

Ladies and gentlemen

The transmission of TB is through airborne from person to person. Anyone can get TB. The fight against TB therefore involves each and every one of us. Thus, this tallys well with this year's global theme is: "I am helping to stop TB". Indeed, we are meeting here to ask ourselves, individually and collectively: Am I helping to

stop the spread of TB? How much efforts are we putting in as a Ministry local & Regional Councils, as farmers to our farm workers.

TB has become a very serious public health problem. During 2007, a total of 15,205 cases of TB were reported of which 5 091 had infectious form of TB that can be transmitted from one person to another. By contrast, 2007 experienced case rate was 720 cases per 100,000 populations where it was compared to 2006 765 cases per 100,000 population. However, when compared to TB rates on the WHO African Region, Namibia has the 2nd highest TB rate with Swaziland ranking the first.

Director of Ceremonies, it is equally worrisome to note the challenge pored by the relationship between TB and HIV co-infection. For example, out of the total number tested for TB 55% were TB positive whereas 59% HIV positive infection. For this reason, I call upon the stakeholders to refocus our attention to the dual epidemic of TB and HIV co-infection. We know for certain that TB is curable, even in the presence of HIV infection or AIDS. Therefore, we encourage TB patients to know their HIV status and vice versa for those who are HIV positive.

I wish to reiterate my statement I made in Otjiwarongo during the Enlarged Ministerial Management meeting that:

For this reason, my emphasis in the fight against TB is that of a multi-sectoral approach. It calls for amongst others Political commitment at Public, Private, NGOs, the Church, Civil Society, the Community Leadership and not forgetting our development Partners. Each one of us should be seen in action: “I am helping stop TB”.

The Health workers should stay alert, diagnose promptly and give appropriate treatment;

Please ensure patients with HIV infection are counseled and tested for TB;

Educate all patients, family members and our community on all aspects of TB, what are the signs and symptoms. What should be done once suspected!

Director of Ceremonies, the community members, family play a key role by encouraging those individuals with persistent coughs for more than 3 weeks to be tested for TB.

- Assist the family members, friends and co-workers on the importance of TB treatment compliance.
- Remember TB and DOTS strategy.

Stop spreading TB to others by adhering to the directives given by health workers

Finally, we want to see role model patients, those who will educate others on adherence and completion of the TB treatment.

Director of Ceremony's, ladies and gentlemen,

As I stated earlier, there is need for Government efforts to be complimented by development partners. Thus, I wish to acknowledge with thanks the human and financial support received from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for increased support from U.S.\$ 1.2 million to U.S.\$ 2 million in 2007 in support of TB programme. . In addition, we are

grateful to the Global Fund for a sum of U.S.\$ 19 million for the next five years financial assistance to TB Programme. Similarly, we remain grateful to the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the continued technical support to the TB program.

While we remain grateful for the financial assistance from our most valued development partners, I wish to inform that we remain constrained by shortage of skilled personnel in the fight against TB. Clearly, if we are to make an impact in the control of TB considering the reported MDR and the concern related to the XDR-TB we wish to appeal for assistance in the fight of medicine including medical doctors with technical knowledge in TB and Counsellors.

I wish to reiterate that the nursing staff are over worked. For this reason I wish to make a call for assistance for more to skilled human resources.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, I would have failed in my duty to acknowledge with thanks the emmense assistance received from the NGOs for dedicating your time in the control of TB in Namibia: Red Cross, Penduka, Johanniter Hilfswerk,

COHENA, CESTAS, Health Unlimited and Medicos del Mundos. Your continued support to the programme areas including expansion of community Directly Observed Treatment, Voluntary Counseling and Testing and Home Based Care Service, health education and much more are highly appreciated.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen,

I now have the singular honour to declare the World TB Day Commemoration officially opened.

I thank you.