



Republic of Namibia

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By

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

EDUSECTOR HEALTH DAY

KATIMA MILILO, CAPRIVI REGION

20 FEBRUARY 2009

Director of Ceremonies;

The Honourable Governor of the Caprivi Region;

Honourable Councillors;

His Worship, the Mayor of Katima Mulilo;

The Secretary General of NANTU

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Mr. Alfred Ilukena;

Director of the Caprivi Region;

Management and other staff of the Caprivi Region;

Teachers of Caprivi Region;

The Rector and staff of the Caprivi College of Education;

Head Office Representatives;

NANTU Representatives;

Development Partners;

Sponsors;

Service Providers;

Culture Groups;

Invited Guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Education, Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, for the kind invitation to me to address you on a subject, which is so dear to all of us. HIV/AIDS remains a critical issue for development in Namibia.

The scale of HIV infection, the number of deaths that will occur mainly in the main productive population, the rising number of orphans and the burden on the productive and social sectors continues to increase. I know for a fact, that the Education Sector is equally hard-hit by the epidemic.

In the words of the greatest statesman of our time, Nelson Mandela, I quote "*AIDS has declared war against humanity*". Therefore, there is need to fight it head-on. I am glad, together with the Education Sector, we are heeding to this clarion call. I thank you for organizing this meeting.

The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2004-2009, acknowledges the great role the Education Sector has to play in contributing to the multi-sectoral response. The Sector is the single largest employer with over 40 000 people and vast numbers of students and learners. Clearly, the Education Sector has an immense responsibility to ensure the preservation of its human capital if national and international development targets set by UNGASS and the MDG's are to be reached.

The current national prevalence rate of 17.8%, and Caprivi Region with 31.7%, requires more concerted efforts in addressing HIV/AIDS. There is a need to put measures in place that specifically addresses HIV prevention, care and support and impact mitigation programmes within the workplace, to address the socio-economic impacts currently being felt through reduced service delivery escalated by increased rates of absenteeism and funeral attendance and increased compassionate leave. This scenario, if allowed to continue, will have an adverse effect on productivity and delivery on core mandates of the Ministry of Education and other agencies which will in turn affect the target set in NDP3 and Vision 2030.

In an effort to mitigate these impacts, interventions pertaining to behavioural change, stigma reduction, access to prevention, care and support services within the workplace need an enabling policy environment to harness them. Therefore, the importance of the implementation of the HIV and AIDS workplace policy that includes activities such as the EduSector Health Days cannot be overemphasized. I am therefore delighted to be part of today's event spearheaded by the Ministry of Education where you are gathered to learn more about available medical and other health related services.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Minister of Education and indeed myself, I would like to welcome you all to the third EduSector Health Day. I would like to thank you for joining us for a unique fresh way of approaching health care and awareness of health matters.

I am reliably informed that, for the past month and in preparation of today, a team consisting of the Ministry of Education head office and regional staff, NANTU representatives supported by AED criss-crossed the Caprivi region, educating the people with regards to the importance of Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) and how to live a healthy life.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, while appreciating your efforts as stated above, and considering the magnitude of the challenge in the Caprivi Region with a prevalence rate of 31.7%, I suggest the following key messages for consideration by Edusector role players.

1. Behavioural change by men and women e.g getting married without knowledge of their partners HIV status. A case in point are widows and widowers. Teachers and other Edusector workers must lead by example on the above.
2. Commitment from all to limit new infections through prevention. Let us not shy away from informing the learners the advantages of abstinence and focus on their education first, and delay active sexual relationship.
3. The need to re-examine the role of Traditional Leaders, Uncles and Aunts as Custodians of moral values.
4. The UN Secretary General's Report during the 2008 UNGASS, put more emphasis on prevention. As a result, the Ministry of

Health and Social Services has re-doubled efforts on the prevention strategies.

5. Similarly, the role of the Church as a custodian in instilling moral values to the society at large. More than 90% of the people of Caprivi Region are Christians. How much does Edusector collaborate with the churches and its membership to strengthen moral values?
6. The rate of alcohol abuse in Caprivi Region has become a serious source for concern. Tombo is now found in remote villages of the region. How can Edusector in collaboration with other stakeholders change this sorry state of affairs?
7. Clearly, the cost of providing treatment to those who are affected and caring for the orphans and vulnerable children places a huge burden on state coffers.
8. Given this background, I challenge the youth to join the Government efforts by saying, *“no Sex until school is completed”*.
9. When I was growing up, the teachers of our time were role models to most of us. What has happened that today, this seems not to be the case?
10. Similarly, the quality of education in this region was one of the best, but as we speak, where does Caprivi Region feature in terms of the passing rate? Grade 10, Junior Secondary Certificate results for 2008, Caprivi region was **No.6**; Namibia Senior

Secondary Certificate, Ordinary Level results for 2008, Caprivi region was **No.10**; and Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate, Higher Level results for 2008, Caprivi region was **No.13** out of 13 regions. Clearly, this is a state of affairs we should not be content with.

11. Therefore, I am appealing to you, the teachers and your learners to commit yourselves to reduce the infection rate by 5% in Caprivi Region by 2010, and to reverse the quality of education to its former glorious status.

Director of proceedings, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the third of 13 celebrations, which will be held in each one of Namibia's regions and whose main objectives are:

- a) to expose and provide the education sector employees and their families with healthy lifestyle messages; and
- b) to provide and encourage the uptake of voluntary counselling and testing to all education sector employees.

The Ministry of Education is committed to positioning the Ministry as not only a trendsetter in Namibia, but as having the foresight to provide a national platform, such as the EDUSECTOR HEALTH DAYS to allow the staff and their families to know their health status with regards to; Blood sugar level, Blood pressure, Cholesterol level, Cholera, Malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS.

These illnesses are all preventable and treatable, and if detected in good time, most can be cured with medication. In all cases they can be prevented if people are educated on how to live a healthy lifestyle.

Professor Lovemore Mbigi (the famous African author and philanthropist) said: *“In Africa you cannot effect change through a memo. You must touch the hearts and minds of the people”*. It is on this note that the Ministry of Education decided to embark on the national road show to talk to Namibians in their regions and in their own languages about health related matters.

We have seen many similar campaigns, with the best intentions and important messages start off with lavish media launches and gala events only to fizzle out and fail to deliver on their original goals. This is primarily, because of lack of direction and inability to meaningfully involve teachers and other Education Sector employees and their families.

I invite you to stay, enjoy the activities and events which have been planned, and remember to take advantage of the health services, which are on offer to everyone.

Finally, in our efforts in addressing HIV/AIDS, wherever we are, the key word should always be **prevention** and **prevention** and **prevention**.

I thank you.