



Republic of **N**amibia

Keynote **A**ddress

By

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On the

Fifth (10th Anniversary) **C**elebrations of the **N**amibia **I**nstitute
of **P**athology (NIP)

03rd **D**ecember 2010

Programme Director

Chairperson of the Board of Directors of NIP –

Mr. Andre September

Representatives of UN and Development partners

Directors of NIP Board

Management and staff of NIP

Private Clinicians

Senior staff of the Ministry present here today

Representatives of the insurance industry

Distinguished invited guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to thank Cde. Tangeni Angula for for inviting me to be part of this joyous celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP). Our interest as government in NIP goes beyond being the owners of the company. We regard NIP as a strategic partner in all public and private health care efforts. We, as government, will therefore continue to do everything possible to create an environment that promotes and ensures NIP's success as a medical laboratory.

Director of ceremonies,

Distinguished guests,

In 1996, a wage and salary commission (Wascom) was set up, not only to look at salaries and wages of the civil servants but inter alia, efficient and effective delivery of public services as well as the long-term sustainability thereof. Based on recommendations from the Wascom report, the Office of the Prime Minister requested all line Ministries to identify core and non-core, essential and non-essential functions of Government with a view to investigate the possible outsourcing of such services.

Distinguished guests,

As you know, medical laboratory services are an essential and integral part of public health services. However, the provision of medical laboratory services was and is still not a core activity of the Ministry of Health and Social Services and therefore could be operated by an autonomous institution on behalf of Government. Hence, the establishment of the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP).

It should also be noted that the NIP is a fully Government owned institution, established by an Act of Parliament, Act 15 of 1999, better known as the Namibia Institute of Pathology Act. The Institute started operations on the first (1st) December 2000 and we are celebrating today ten years of laboratory service provision,

under the theme “ *A decade of pathology service excellence*”, with the NIP board, management and staff.

There were also other reasons behind the decision to outsource the medical laboratory services and I would like to share a few of them with you:

- **B**y keeping the Medical Laboratory Services fully oriented towards the public sector, opportunities to generate funds from the private sector work could not be capitalized on. The NIP, while acknowledging its social responsibility to provide countrywide laboratory services to the public health sector, generates additional funds from private health care.
- **I** am reliably informed, the additional income is used, , to maintain the quality of service and to keep smaller laboratories in more remote areas that cannot possibly be run on a break-even basis, by adopting an explicit policy of cross-subsidization.
- **A**nother reason for outsourcing exercise was for the downsizing of the public service, as per the Wascom recommendation, to reduce the payroll of the MoHSS and subsequently that of the public service at large.

On the other hand, Article 95 of the Namibian Constitution stipulates that “the State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting appropriate policies and measures”. For this reason, the Ministry of Health and Social

Services developed a *Patient Charter* way back in 1998 to reassure the Nation that the services received are of acceptable quality and are affordable. Following the above, there is need for the private health sector and state-owned-enterprises to join Government efforts to promote and maintain the health and welfare of the people of this country.

Clearly, is an increased demand for quality, effective and efficient public health services while financial resources to fulfill all obligations are becoming scarcer. In this regard, I advice NIP to consider the following important factors:

1. **T**he annual average population growth of 2.6% according to the last census report of 2001. However, important regional variations and increasing urbanization should not be overlooked;
2. **T**he disease pattern of the country, with a large burden of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria and an increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases and conditions;
3. **T**echnological advancement in the health field;
4. **T**he need for further extension of health care facilities (in the form of laboratories) to outlying areas of Namibia; and the
5. **I**ncreasing use of medical laboratory services by the private sector.

There is need for a cost-effective, accessible and equitable delivery of medical laboratory services in this country. These three elements are a basic requirement of public health provision of services, in line with the Primary Health Care principles.

Programme Director,

We all know that NIP has laboratories all over Namibia- I am informed that they are 37 in total. But what we need to see is the capability of these laboratories in terms of diagnostics and patient monitoring. The need for laboratory services is more pressing now than even before. This as we know, most of our patients on antiretroviral medicines need constant bioclinical monitoring to ascertain treatment efficacy or side effects that might be experienced by some patients. The Ministry relies heavily on the laboratory support of the NIP for both medical diagnostic and public health testing and expects no less than accurate and timely results from the NIP.

In terms of service delivery, NIP is carrying out its responsibility and tasks with great commitment. Thus, I urge you to continue to improving where shortcomings are identified, for us to give a comprehensive health service to our patients. The relationship between NIP and the Ministry goes beyond the fact that we are a line Ministry, as the Company, acts as a service provider for all our programs and services.

I am also aware of the fact that the NIP has embarked upon numerous projects to enable it to provide the required medical laboratory service. Amongst others, I can mention the opening of new laboratories and the re-opening of those that were closed before the inception of the NIP. Another step in the right direction was the establishment of the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) laboratory that makes it possible to detect HIV in infants very early as well as the measuring of the actual viral copies in the peripheral blood of those infected with the virus. This supports the guidelines of the MoHSS on both the Prevention of Mother-to-child Transmission of HIV Program (PMTCT) and the Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment Program (HAART). I have no doubt that our patients are getting the service they deserve but there is always room for improvement.

The continuous accreditation of the measles laboratory of the NIP by the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as Swamed and Katutura laboratories under South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) are testimonies that the laboratory testing is the best or is comparable to others in the region and the world at large. The new achievement is that the Windhoek Central Reference Laboratory attained SANAS accreditation during this year. This is the referral laboratory and all standards are set from here. It is therefore my sincere wish that the systems implemented here will be replicated to all other NIP laboratories.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services relies heavily on the laboratory expertise of the NIP in the rapid rollout of the HIV counseling and testing centers (HCT) especially relating to quality

assurance. As you may know by now that, HIV Counseling and Testing is an essential component of an effective response to the AIDS pandemic. Government is encouraging expansion of these services for people to know their HIV serostatus.

Programme Director,

Distinguished invited guests,

In celebrating this tenth anniversary of the NIP, let us remind ourselves about the importance of caring for those amongst us that are infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS. Two days ago, first of December, was the World AIDS Day on which we were remembering our loved ones who succumbed to HIV/AIDS and related infections. The message was and remains loud and clear for us to behave and to abstain, remain faithful to our partners at all times or to use a condom at all times when engaging in multiple sexual partnerships.

Programme Director, with these voluminous remarks, I wish you a happy tenth anniversary.

I thank you.