



Republic of Namibia

Remarks

By

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

**During the Launch of the Namibian Alliance for
Improved Nutrition**

8 December 2010

Programme Director – Dr Norbert Forster

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister – Cde. Nahas Angula

Your Worship, the Mayor, City of Windhoek –
Cde. Ellaine Trepper

UN Resident Coordinator – Ms. Kari Egge

The Managing Director, Namib Mills – Mr. Koos Ferreira

Representative, Civil Society – Mr. Len le Roux: Namibia
Alliance for Improved Nutrition/Synergos

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are gathered here to witness the beginning of a laudable effort geared towards ensuring a Healthy Nation. Indeed, it is an opportunity where the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister is spearheading this effort by launching the Namibian Alliance for Improved Nutrition also called **NAFIN**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malnutrition is a global concern and is cited as the gravest single threat to the world's public health and single biggest contributor to child mortality. The cycle of malnutrition is complex. It feeds the emergence of diseases, which leads to more malnutrition. Nearly one-third of children under 5 years of age in developing countries are malnourished. In Namibia, the picture is similar. This situation reflects the urgent need to improve general

nutrition as well as current breastfeeding and weaning practices of children especially under 5 years.

As prerequisite for healthy children, it is important to ensure that women are healthy and well nourished before they become pregnant and remain well nourished for the time of their pregnancy and beyond. Every Namibian from birth has the right to good health. Access to the right quantity and food of nutritional value is the most basic of human needs and rights. My Ministry is therefore committed to ensuring equal access to primary health care services, including Nutrition, for all people especially our vulnerable women and children.

The target for Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 is to reduce child mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters by the year 2015. It is estimated that through prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices, child mortality can be reduced by as much as 13%.

Breastfeeding improves both short- and long-term maternal health and can contribute to the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 4 on reducing Child Mortality and Goal 5 on improving Maternal Health. Many countries, including Namibia, are fully committed to this. If we succeed in promoting appropriate nutritious and timely complementary feeding in addition to breastfeeding at 6 months after birth, child mortality can be reduced by a further 6%.

Programme Director

Our challenges is to move progressively in this direction and I am convinced that through this multi sectoral and broad movement which is launched today will indeed bring about many positive changes.

It is widely recognized that success of programmes starts with good policies followed by proper planning, good implementation and ongoing coordination, monitoring and evaluation. In this regard, as a Ministry we are very pleased to be part and parcel of the Namibian Alliance for Improved Nutrition. I can see clearly the great opportunities for an alliance that is led by the Right Honourable Prime Minister. This will bring all major stakeholders in the fundamental area of the nation's nutrition and health around one table.

Programme Director,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ultimate goal of improving the quality of life of the people of Namibia lies with the Government of Namibia and is set in Vision 2030. One of the objectives is to ensure a healthy, food-secured and breastfeeding nation, in which all preventable, infectious and parasitic diseases are under control, and in which people enjoy a high standard of living, with access to quality education, health and other vital services, in an atmosphere of sustainable population growth and development. To address the above, my Ministry has developed a Strategic Plan on Nutrition

for 2010-2014 which has set among other objectives the reduction of malnutrition, decrease morbidity rates, and decrease mortality rates, all of which require substantial contributions from nutrition programmes and many partners in various sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with these objectives, the Ministry of Health and Social Services is currently promoting **Growth Monitoring and vitamin A supplementation** in all children under 5 years to ensure proper growth and development. However, despite these efforts, some children still end up becoming malnourished. For that reason, the Ministry of Health and Social Services is currently piloting the integrated management of acute malnutrition (**IMAM**) programme with the aim of treating severe acute malnutrition in children under 5 years. This programme is expected to be scaled up beginning of 2011.

In addition, for a similar programme to treat both severe and moderate acute malnutrition targeting HIV positive adults and older children is being finalized. The programme, to be known as **Nutrition Assessment Counseling and Support (NACS)**, is expected to roll out in pilot districts early next year.

I am therefore very encouraged by the focus, the energy and the additional resources NAFIN brings to our joint struggle. It is my belief that our concerted and complementary efforts in addressing malnutrition are a major investment in the future of the Nation.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services is committed towards improving the position of nutrition in national policies and programmes; expand existing interventions for improving nutrition and integrating nutrition into existing services.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our development partners in Nutrition and Health such as UNICEF, WHO, USAID and all our local partners for their continued support of our efforts.

I wish NAFIN much success in joining and complementing our work towards ensuring a Healthy Namibian Nation.

I thank you All.