



STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE MINISTER DR RICHARD NCHABI  
KAMWI

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

AT

THE OFFICIAL HANDOVER OF EMERGENCY  
OBSTETRIC CARE EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008  
Windhoek, Namibia

Director of Ceremonies, Mr. Kahijoro Kahuure  
UNFPA Country Representative Ms. Nuzhat Ehsan  
Heads of Diplomatic Mission  
Deputy Permanent Secretary, Dr. Nobert Foster  
Under Secretaries  
Directors  
Senior staff of Ministry of Health and Social Services  
Medical Practitioners  
Distinguished invited guests  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
All protocol observed

I am extremely grateful that after I had just launched a worrisome Report on the “State of the World’s Children” 2008 and the Namibian Supplement, we gather here to receive a donation in response to the challenges cited in the Report. Today we are witnessing the donation Emergency Obstetric Care equipment and vehicles from UNFPA another way of bringing comprehensive health care to the people of Namibia.

The Republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Health and Social Services appreciates the donation of Emergency Obstetric Care equipment. Indeed, I am pleased to receive these equipment and vehicles from UNFPA who have been working in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Namibia through various ministries including my Ministry to help improve health standards of the Namibian people particularly women in this regard.

As you know, Namibia faces many challenges in delivering health services to the community. Some of the major constraints to quality health services include lack of transport, inadequate medical equipment and supplies and human resource shortage. All of these factors affect the quality of services being provided to the people.

Director of Ceremonies,

Access to free comprehensive maternal health care is a fundamental right to the mother and the entire. The Millennium Development Goals sets a target of reducing by three quarters the Maternal Mortality Ratio, between 1990 and 2015. In the third National Development Plan of Namibia, my ministry is committed to increase the availability and use of Emergency Obstetric Care services to deal with complications of labour and child birth and prevent maternal and child morbidities and mortality. Maternal Mortality Ratio in Namibia has however increased from 271 death per 100.000 live births in 2000 to 449 death per 100 000 live births in 2006. This calls for urgent and concerted attention ladies and gentlemen! A mother's death can be devastating to the children left behind, who are more at risk of falling into poverty and become objects of exploitation.

Maternal death is often the result of complex and multiple factors. There is a strong correlation between safe deliveries, a woman's educational level and contraceptives usage.

While the underlying causes of maternal death stem from the risk factors related to anaemia, infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, the major medical causes of maternal death are haemorrhage, eclampsia or convulsions resulting from hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, abortion complications, obstructed labour and infections.

Despite this alarming maternal situation, my ministry with the support of various partners as we are about to witness, is working tirelessly to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. I was reliably informed that the Namibian roadmap for accelerating the reduction of maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality has been finalized.

Among the Ministry's main strategies for reducing maternal morbidity and mortality as outlined in the roadmap are to improve access to and coverage of cost-effective and quality maternal health care through equipping all district hospitals, health centers and clinics with essential equipments, drugs and supplies that are needed for the provision of essential and emergency (basic and comprehensive) obstetric care; to build more effective partnerships through cooperation between programmes, institutions and partners; to empower individuals, families, and communities by improving their knowledge and involve communities in the provision and utilization of available maternal health services, to mention but a few. Special thanks go to the Directorate of Primary Health Care that is coordinating all these efforts.

Director of ceremonies,

The Ministry of Health and Social Services enjoy cordial relations with United Nation Population Fund .The Ministry therefore views this donation as an important gesture that deepens the continued cooperation between these two institutions. This contribution will therefore go a long way to promote quality service delivery particularly with regard to maternal health care services and consequently ensuring healthy living of our communities.

Now I would like to direct myself to the Ministry's Management team. Colleagues, there is now no excuse. There is no reason to hear of preventable premature death of mothers and infants. We have, right here, the necessary obstetric tools to address maternal and infant health. Also, there is no excuse for a shortage of personnel. 2007 was a challenging year; the deficit in Management truly challenged us. I worked tirelessly to address this deficit and am glad to state that we emerged victorious.

With Management in place I urge you to refrain from being remote-control managers. Move out from your desks and offices to see with your own eyes whether all is well in our wards and clinics. Are our mothers, those who are expecting, and our infants, are they receiving the necessary care, treatment and education both ante and post natal?

Indeed, with proper education, the equipment right here, trained and caring staff, we will be assured of safe deliveries. The instruments are now in place, use them for the purposes they have been donated.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank UNFPA for this kind donation. This donation comes at a critical time and in direct response to an urgent need. I am confident that through concerted effort and dedication of all of us, we shall emerge victorious in reducing the Maternal Mortality Ratio.

I thank you for your kind attention.