



Republic of Namibia

Keynote Address

By

**Hon. Petrina N Haingura,
Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services**

**At the Commemoration of Global Hand Washing Day
15th October 2008 ,Ohangwena Region**

Programme Director - Mr. H. Udjombala
Governor of Ohangwena Region
Your worship the Mayer of Helao Nafidi
WHO country Representative - Dr. Magda Robalo
UNICEF Country Representative - Mr. Mcleod
Management and Staff of the Ministry of Health and
Social Services and other line Ministries
Invited Guests
Media Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure and great honour for me to be with you at this unique occasion. Today we are commemorating the first Global Hand Washing Day and at the same time we are commemorating 2008 as the year of Sanitation. The purpose of these two events is to raise effective public awareness on hygiene and to encourage our Nation to use sanitation facilities available to them in order to reduce water borne diseases such as cholera, polio, and diarrhoeal diseases.

Director of ceremony I' am informed that during this week health education messages on hand washing with soap will be delivered to the public through the media other channels of communication including facilities. The dissemination of information on hygiene will continue throughout the year under the slogan, Clean Hands Saves Life's. In Namibia, diarrhoea is the third most common cause for hospital attendance and the second highest cause for paediatric admissions. Diarrhoea accounted for 23% of the under five mortality in 2005.

The poor sanitation coverage and sub-sequent hygiene outbreak in 2006. During 2007 and early 2008 the Ohangwena Region has experienced the cholera outbreak. Why by 12 people last their life due to acute westerly diarrhoea disease in 2007.

Director of ceremony ladies and gentlemen.

Without Sanitation facilities to safety disperse human faces the health of over Nation water borne diseases can be reduced by improved Sanitation and washing of hand after using the toilets. This commemoration comes at the time when our country experienced the most destructive National diseases after severe flood's in the North West and North East of the country.

The demographic Health survey of 2000 shows that the coverage for sanitation in rural areas stands at 20% and has even been reduced to 0% many of the flooded areas. I therefore urge the Environmental Health Practitioners country wide to ensure that sanitation facilities are available to our rural communities.

This will help to minimize water borne diseases in our country. The main aim of the campaign during this year of sanitation is to raise awareness and mobilize communities on the benefit of hand washing with soap and improved sanitation in the development and promotion of safe hygiene practices. The U.N. Government Assembly designated the year as the year of sanitation to focus the worlds attention on one of the contributing factors of poverty.

I have been informed that local authorise Regional Councillors traditional leaders and other Senior Government Officials from different line Ministries are present here to commemorate this important day. To me is very important in making our intervention relevant and able to meet the needs of our people at National and Local Levels to ensure that our loved nation have access to adequate safe water and sanitation by 2015.

The Namibian Government has put certain approaches e.g.:

- Vision 2030
- Millenuim Development Goals
- National Development Plan 3

Which is emphasising for each citizen of the country to work towards the reduction of poverty.

Our challenge will be to transform hand washing with soap from an abstract good idea into our automatic behaviour performed in homes, schools and communities.

Director of ceremony Ladies and Gentlemen. Improved Sanitation reduces environmental burdens, increases sustainability of environmental resources and allows for a healthier nation, more secure future for children.

I therefore once again call upon the civil society, the private sector and international development partners to be fully involved in supporting hygiene and Sanitation in our country. A National Sanitation forum must be set up

to promote and support sanitation and hygiene. Our woman must be fully involved in all aspects of Sanitation and hygiene.

In conclusion I want to emphasize the following:

- Hygiene promotion in schools and informal settlements is of importance.
- Raise awareness on the importance of using toilets.
- Raise awareness for washing hands with soap after using toilets.

At this juncture, I place on record our appreciation for the support we have received from UNICEF, Glasco Smith Kline, Ohangwena Regional Council for hosting this important event, last but not least the Helao Nafidi town council.

With these few words I now have the honour to Launch Global Hand Washing Day and the year of Sanitation. I wish you wisdom and strength.

I Thank You.