



**Launch of the Pharmacy Management Information System
Remarks by United States Government Representative
Gary Newton, USAID/Namibia Mission Director
Heja Lodge, Windhoek
8:30 a.m. July 3, 2007**

- Honourable Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Social Services,
- Ms. D.J. Tjipura, Director, Tertiary Health Care and Clinical Support Services,
- Dr. Ithindi Shapanga, Director of the Khomas Region,
- Senior Ministry of Health and Social Services Officials,
- The Pharmacy Management Information System Task Team,
- MSH/RPM Plus Namibia,
- Members of the Press,
- Invited Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

We're gathered here today for a very important purpose -- to launch the Pharmacy Management Information System.

We are pleased to be in a position to support your good work. Few things could be as important as ensuring the people of Namibia have access to the medicines they need when they need them. Our support of your excellent initiative comes from the American People under a program I believe everyone is familiar with -- the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, known by its acronym, *PEPFAR*.

Since 2004, with funding from PEPFAR, USAID has provided assistance to our partner, Management Sciences for Health (MSH), for an initiative called *Rational Pharmaceutical Management*, or simply, *RPM Plus*. The role of RPM Plus in Namibia is a simple one, and this is, to support the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS). Specifically, to support Ministry efforts to improve the pharmaceutical sector's ability to ensure access to quality medicines and pharmaceutical care services.

We acknowledge and applaud the progress made by the Ministry with support from your friends at RPM Plus. For example, you have:

- strengthened supply systems, significantly improving the availability of ARVs and other pharmaceuticals in health facilities;
- increased human resource capacity through training and the recruitment of pharmacists and pharmacist assistants, among others;
- strengthened the drug regulatory system to ensure the availability of generic multi-sourced ARVs;
- established a system for the provision of unbiased information and the tracking of side effects and adverse reactions to ARVs and other medicines;
- established staff committees and dispensing databases in 24 out of the 35 ART facilities, providing more effective delivery of pharmaceutical services; and,
- absorbed PEPFAR-funded technical staff into the Ministry;

With this highly successful collaboration, we shall continue to support the Ministry with 21 technical staff positions this year. We know the Government of Namibia is committed to absorb these additional technical officers into public service. This will help ease the human resource constraint faced by the health sector.

To continue our partnership in pharmacy management, today, the U.S. Government is donating computer hardware and software to all 13 regions of Namibia to facilitate data collection and analysis. The total cost of this support is N\$500,000.

Today's donation will help all 13 regions improve the vitally important work of tracking who needs which medicines, how and where to obtain them, and when and what to re-order to meet predicted needs.

A strengthened pharmaceutical management information system will provide valuable information to the medical community regarding trends in drug prescriptions and patient use of drugs, as well as critical information to assist facilities to comply with treatment guidelines.

As we know, making sure patients faithfully follow their treatment regimen is essential, particularly with regard to HIV/AIDS and TB. Patients who do not adhere to their treatment regimen are of course jeopardizing their own health, but they also make treatment more costly and complicated generally by necessitating additional treatment options and possibly contributing to drug resistance.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services to identify opportunities to further improve quality-of-care and further improve

adherence – in other words, ensuring patients use drugs correctly. And, we look forward to increased collaboration with the private sector in pursuing these opportunities.

The Pharmacy Management Information System is one initiative being supported under a comprehensive program of PEPFAR support for Namibian efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The U.S. Government is deeply committed to help Namibia win this fight. Our assistance to Namibia for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment has increased from US\$24 million in 2004 to US\$91 million in 2007 (N\$637 million), and is expected to increase again next year.

The U.S Government wishes to congratulate the Government of the Republic of Namibia for the leadership you have demonstrated in responding to HIV/AIDS. We look forward to the continuation of our partnership. We look forward to continuing to assist you establish sustainable health systems such as the Pharmacy Management Information System. These are the systems that will help ensure the good people of Namibia receive the quality of care they need and deserve.