



USAID | NAMIBIA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**USG Representative remarks at Official Handover
of the School Development Grants
November 19th, 2007.
Katima Mulilo**

**Honourable Minister of Education, Nangolo
Mbumba**

**Directors of Education from Caprivi, Kavango,
Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena, Oshikoto;**

Regional Education officers;

Constituency Councillors;

Representatives of NGOs and CBOs;

Inspectors of Education;

Principals, Guardians, parents and teachers;

Boys and Girls

I am very pleased to be here today on behalf of the US government to announce the award of special school development grants.

These grants will help fill a critical resource gap faced by schools which have a high proportion of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) -- children who cannot afford to contribute to their School Development Fund.

The schools receiving these grants are themselves vulnerable because they have fewer resources with which to maintain – and improve – education quality.

Today, U.S. Government will donate grants -- totaling more than N\$ 442,000 -- to help fund approximately 6700 OVC, in 53 primary schools identified as vulnerable by the Ministry of Education's regional offices.

These development grants will enable schools to improve existing school facilities such as libraries, classrooms, and hostels, purchase text books, and provide additional teacher support.

As a result, educational resources and opportunities will be expanded for all the learners at these 53 schools.

The U.S. Government is helping to pay school fees temporarily, over the short-term.

We are doing this with the understanding that the Ministry of Education is actively working on longer-term, sustainable solutions to this critical problem.

We encourage and support the Ministry's efforts to find ways to routinely reimburse these schools for school fees they can not collect because learners cannot afford to pay them.

In addition to the grants we are awarding today which are focussed on supporting overall school development, U.S. Government support over the past two years has provided assistance to individual OVCs to help them to go to school, stay in school and do well in school.

We released the latest round of U.S. Government OVC grants in June of this year, providing additional an N\$1.2 million in assistance.

These grants assist schools and communities to ensure children are able to pay school fees; purchase school uniforms, books, and supplies; and provide nutrition and counseling when needed.

Overall assistance to orphans and vulnerable children is a key component of the United States Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

PEPFAR has allocated over \$N 98 million for OVC care and support since 2004, with an additional \$N 60 million planned in 2008.

These resources sustain OVC in many areas: care giver training, access to education, economic support, targeted food and nutritional assistance, legal aid, medical care, psychological and emotional counseling, and other material support.

Working in partnership with the Namibian Government, committed Namibian citizens, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based organizations, we can improve the lives of these children and the outlook for their futures.

While we are pleased that we can increase our support for Namibia's children affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we, certainly all of us, want to turn the tide against the HIV/AIDS epidemic and slow and ultimately stop its toll on these children, their families and communities.

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.

We urge the Government of the Republic of Namibia to continue its good work to implement policies and programs that expand access to care and support services that can be sustained with local resources over the long term.

We commend you on your efforts thus far to expand your ownership of OVC care and support services.

The recent launch of the National Plan of Action for OVC underscores that this is a national priority – let us all work together to ensure that the work that went into the development of this Plan of Action is translated into real action and results on the behalf of Namibia's vulnerable children.

In closing, I want to encourage the children who are here today to persevere in the face of all odds.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to the dedicated teachers and other education professionals, the local communities, and particularly the caregivers who so tirelessly attend to the needs of these children. We recognize and applaud your efforts.