

**U.S. Ambassador Thomas Daughton**  
**MOHSS HIV Clinical Mentors' Program and Induction Workshop**  
**Monday, November 9, 2015, Windhoek**

Honorable Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Bernard Haufiku

Permanent Secretary, Dr. Andreas Mwoombola

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Dr. Norbert Foster

Ministry of Health staff

Development partners, and

Colleagues from the Embassy and from the United States

Good morning and welcome to the official launch of the Ministry of Health and Social Services HIV Clinical and Nurse Mentors' Program.

Mentors play an important role in every profession – for lawyers and teachers, for architects and accountants, and even diplomats. Virtually every successful professional can tell a story about how a mentor played a key role in his or her development. But perhaps nowhere is mentorship more important than in medicine.

That is why I am pleased to have the opportunity to be here with you all today to emphasize the value that we place on mentorship -- in this case, on clinical mentorship.

Because of the importance we believe clinical mentorship plays in the fight against HIV and AIDS, the U.S. government is committing US\$4 million (NA\$55 million) over the next two years to create a cadre of clinical mentors who will help strengthen Namibia's human resources in public health.

A lot of time and hard work has gone into planning this clinical mentor program – a program designed to reach the almost 40,000 people still in need of antiretroviral treatment services nationally. I want to thank all of those involved in making this happen – from the Ministry of Health leadership to the technical staff, nurses, and doctors who are on the front lines of the HIV response.

I am sure that many of you are aware of the latest “Test and Start” guidelines from the World Health Organization. These new guidelines are based on new data that show that antiretroviral treatment reduces overall mortality as well as other diseases. My question to you is: Are you actively sharing this information with others?

That is your role. That is why you are here today – to learn and then to share your new knowledge with your colleagues, the health professionals who aren't here.

We are counting on you to help show the way, to share your knowledge and experience and thereby build a healthier, more prosperous Namibia. This week, you will learn how to manage patients with HIV more effectively, how to monitor viral load, and how to use new mobile data collection tools for monitoring and evaluation. You'll also get a sneak-peek at new mobile technology that will enable you to take your cell phone into the field to collect and analyze patient data right from your phone. You are the trailblazers.

I want you to look at the person sitting to your left. Now look to the person on your right. The people you see, the ones sitting on either side of you, are your confidantes, your greatest professional resource. They are your network. Our hope is that you will learn and grow together as professionals working to strengthen Namibia's health system as a whole. The ultimate goal – the one you will all contribute directly to accomplishing – is to achieve the National Strategic Framework target of ensuring that 95% of people living with HIV are on lifesaving treatment by 2017. The only way to reach that goal is to rely on networks and decentralization – in other words, to rely on mentors.

In closing, please keep in mind that we are counting on each of you to take the new knowledge and skills you gain here this week and share them by showing the way to nurses and other clinical staff across Namibia. And keep in mind that not only we are counting on you: your colleagues and patients afflicted with HIV are counting on you. It's a big responsibility, but through you and your leadership – through your mentoring – we can together save thousands of lives and achieve an AIDS-free Namibia. Good luck, and thank you.