

**U.S. Embassy Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Mary Grace McGeehan  
at the handover of Primary Health Care mobile vans  
to the Ministry of Health and Social Services  
October 24, 2013**

Good morning. I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the United States government and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to join with the Honorable Deputy Minister Petrina Haingura and our Ministry of Health and Social Services colleagues in welcoming all of you to today’s mobile van handover event.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services has made tremendous progress in containing the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Namibia by expanding HIV/AIDS prevention services across the country and importantly, significantly increasing access to HIV counseling, testing, and treatment. We applaud the Ministry for its accomplishments.

Yet as we all know, despite the extraordinary strides that have been made, much remains to be done. HIV prevention efforts must continue to be expanded. And prevention efforts must be built on widely available testing services that increase an individual’s awareness of his or her own HIV status.

The PEPFAR program is working closely with the Namibian government to expand HIV prevention programs and increase access to HIV counseling and testing. To this end, on behalf of the United States government, I am proud to hand over to the Ministry seven mobile vans that will be used to bring HIV testing and essential primary health care services to remote populations in seven regions (Khomas, Hardap, Omaheke, Oshikoto, Kavango East & West, Erongo and Omusati) that do not have easy access to static health facilities.

These vans, which will be staffed by Ministry of Health and Social Services nurses, will bring communities much-needed access to voluntary, confidential HIV counseling and testing services that provide individuals with immediate feedback on HIV status and link individuals as needed with appropriate care and treatment services.

Along with four vans donated last year, these seven units will provide community members with essential primary health care services such as antenatal care, immunization, and other maternal and child health care interventions

The PEPFAR Namibia program has been committed, since the start of our work here, to containing the spread of HIV and improving the health and lives of the people of Namibia. Since the start of the PEPFAR partnership with the Government of Namibia nearly 10 years ago, the United States has provided over \$700 million U.S. dollars in support of Namibia’s national HIV/AIDS response.

Our joint aim is to continue to prevent new HIV infections, as a key strategy to achieving an AIDS-free generation. Namibia stands at the verge of this achievement, and the U.S. government is proud to support the country as it moves towards this goal.

PEPFAR support for HIV counseling and testing started in 2004 when we began working with the Ministry of Health and Social Services and its partners on facility-based Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) services.

PEPFAR has helped train and support over 600 community counselors who are deployed in public health facilities in all thirteen regions of Namibia. These individuals serve as the backbone of the HIV Counseling and Testing program and play a critical role in bringing HIV services to communities in remote and rural areas.

PEPFAR also worked collaboratively with the Ministry over the past year to support the development of the first national HCT Strategy in Namibia.

We will continue to provide technical support to the Ministry to further strengthen its national counseling and testing program, to roll out rapid HIV testing services and now, to build upon facility based services through mobile outreach testing services.

In closing, I would like to thank the Namibian government and the Ministry of Health in particular for its continued partnership with the United States government to promote public health and work towards an AIDS-free generation. I would also like to thank the Namibian government for its commitment to health and HIV services by increasing national resources for HIV prevention, treatment and support programs.

We look forward to our continued collaboration with the government and the Ministry of Health and Social Services on HIV/AIDS and to achieving the country's vision of an AIDS-free generation, together.

I thank you for your kind attention.