

**Project HOPE Event to Award Scholarships
to Orphans and Vulnerable Children
who are Heads-of-Household and Caregivers
Remarks by USAID/Namibia Mission Director, Gary Newton
January 30, 2008 15:00
Oshana Regional Counselor's Office Board Room, Oshakati**

I'm happy to be here today in Oshakati to take part in this awards ceremony. It's an occasion that gives one hope. In fact, whenever Project HOPE brings us together, we're *hopeful*.

Today, we're focusing on an exciting initiative to assist young people whose lives have been turned upside-down by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

We have the privilege to spend the afternoon with a group of children who -- due to circumstances beyond their control -- have been forced to become adults far too soon and have been forced to assume adult *roles and responsibilities* far too early.

These young people are *Heads of Household*. A survey by Project HOPE found that some caregivers are Orphans or Vulnerable Children (OVC) themselves -- children taking caring of other children.

"Childhood" was not meant to be like this.

Dear friends, we admire your courage, your determination and your sense of responsibility towards your brothers and sisters.

You've earned -- and you deserve -- a helping hand. Thanks to Project HOPE, you're being offered a helping hand. You're not being offered a *hand-out*. You're not getting a blanket, a pair of shoes, a food pack, or a sweater. You're getting a gift that *keeps on giving*. You're getting the kind of help that will permanently strengthen your capacity to take care of your family.

Today you're being awarded scholarships to attend vocational and commercial training programs. The scholarships will pay for tuition, accommodation and a monthly allowance.

Once you complete your training programs, you will have the skills necessary to start small businesses with small loans from Project HOPE.

Your own business will allow you to earn some of the financial resources you need to continue to be a *caregiver* for your family.

Of course it's not going to be easy. But judging from the courageous way you've coped thus far with the challenge you've been given, we are confident you will make it. You will succeed.

Project HOPE

Project HOPE runs a good program. They listen carefully to those they serve. They listen to the voices of children, families and caregivers. Last year, they talked to 285 orphans and vulnerable children and caregivers to ascertain their needs in terms of safety and protection, education, health and nutrition, psychological support, and other needs.

Knowing the needs and perspectives of children and caregivers is, of course, fundamental to designing effective and efficient interventions to meet their needs. The program being launched today is one such program.

Project HOPE is one of America's best known and most well-respected humanitarian and development organizations. Since 1958, they have been providing health training and services to people around the world. As a USAID officer, I first worked with Project HOPE in 1988 in Malawi, and I can tell you they're a good and capable organization.

Led by Nelson Prada, Project HOPE has a strong team here in Namibia, and they're doing good work helping children-in-need by providing micro-credit and educational opportunities to caregivers, health education to communities and care and support to OVC.

USG/PEPFAR/USAID

The resources for this program come from the American People through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). USAID is one of the U.S. Government (USG) agencies implementing PEPFAR in Namibia and in this capacity we administer a grant to Project HOPE to do this important work.

The USG provided over N\$48 million in 2007 to assist the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, the Ministry of Education, and seventeen Namibian NGOs and faith-based groups to provide care and support to over 56,000 orphans and vulnerable children in Namibia.

The U.S. is pleased to be in a position to help Namibia meet the urgent needs of its OVCs over the short-term as Namibia implements policies and programs that will incrementally expand children's access to care and support services that can be sustained over the long-term with local resources.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is leading the nation's response to the orphan crisis, and is providing vision, leadership, talent and resources.

Local government -- represented here today by His Worship and the Honorable Counselor -- is playing a vital and critical role providing the enabling environment, the support and encouragement for Project HOPE and other NGO partners. Thank you.

The Namibian people have what it takes to confront and overcome the challenges faced by so many of their children.

There is no work as important on this Earth today as the work you all are doing to help children in daily and sometimes desperate need of care and support.

With help from their government, family, school, church, and their friends -- including their good friends at Project HOPE -- these precious children will receive the care and the education they need to become productive, independent citizens of this remarkable young nation, and become someday themselves healthy and caring mothers and fathers.

We wish all of you who are working together on behalf of the nation's vulnerable children, strength and every success.

And to the young people receiving scholarships today, once again, congratulations!

Thank you.