

**July 15, 2009**

**U.S. Embassy Windhoek**

**Note to Editors**

**MGECW and PEPFAR Launch New Standards for Residential Child Care Facilities**

The media are invited to attend the Launch of the new Standards for Residential Child Care Facilities on Friday, July 17, at the Namibian Children's Home, on Heliodoor Street, in Eros. The event will commence at 8:30 a.m. Dennise Mathieu, U.S. Ambassador to Namibia, will speak on behalf of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The Honorable Marlene Mungunda, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, will be the keynote speaker.

As the world has focused on the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children in Africa, particularly due to HIV and AIDS, the Government of Namibia has established itself as a leader in meeting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. The Ministry of Gender Equality developed standards for Residential Child Care Facilities to ensure that orphans and vulnerable children are cared for, supported and protected with quality services. PACT - supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the U.S. Agency for International Development - partnered with the Ministry to produce these critical standards.

Under the Ministry's oversight, residential child care facilities are an essential component of promoting child welfare in Namibia. With as many as thirty-six percent of children under eighteen not living with either of their biological parents, residential child care facilities fill a critical need. Namibia's rural population is disproportionately impacted, with the rate of children under eighteen not living with either of their biological parent as high as forty four percent.

At the 2009 HIV/AIDS Implementer's Conference, recently held in Windhoek, a number of the presenters spoke eloquently about the need to involve those who are infected by the disease in the design of their programs. The Ministry included children in the development of it's the standards, incorporating their voices, needs, priorities, and perspectives.

The Ministry will also partner with NGOs and Residential Child Care Facilities to implement these standards. This partnership between will strengthen services for children in residential care. It is civil society, communities, and families who will ultimately have the greatest responsibility for the children in their care.

The next step will be a challenge – ensuring that residential settings implement the new guidelines. Residential care in Namibia is moving more and more towards a family-based system -- care in small groups, in community settings, with more permanent caregivers and role models for the children. This is important for their development, and critical to their transition into healthy young adults who will become productive members of Namibian society.

Namibia will make this happen by implementing these new standards so that there will be uniform, quality service care for all orphans and vulnerable children. By doing so, caregivers and facility managers will improve the overall care for children who are in residential care settings.

In 2009, PEPFAR will donate approximately US\$ 107 million to work in partnership with the Namibian government and its nongovernmental, community, and faith-based partners to prevent further infections and provide treatment and care to Namibians infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Between 2004-2009, the American people have provided US\$ 429 million to fight HIV/AIDS in Namibia.

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