

Remarks by Ambassador Joyce A. Barr
Launch of the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Plus Program
June 14, 2007 at 11:30 a.m.
Gobabis Community Hall in Epako Township

Hon. Dr. Becky Ndjoze-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Education;
Dr. Theo Kamupingene, Omaheke Regional Education Director;
Mr. Brave Tjizera, Councilor for Epukiro Constituency and Acting
Governor;
His Worship the Mayor of Gobabis, Mr. M. P. Katjaoha;
Principals and Teachers from our Participating Schools;
Our Implementing Partners;
Girl Scholars;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Ladies and Gentleman.

I am very happy to be here with you to participate in the launch of the Girls' Scholarship PLUS Program. Today marks a very important step forward in our combined efforts to increase educational opportunities for Namibian girls. The PLUS program builds on the success and the promise, of the U.S. Ambassador's Girl's Scholarship Program (AGSP), initiated two years ago. As some of you may recall, that program provided assistance to girls in grades 1 through 7. Now, in addition to the support we already provide for primary education, AGSP PLUS extends this support to grades 8 – 12. I am so pleased that we have the opportunity to invest further in the future of these bright young girls. Helping girls to do well in school and to stay in school creates young women who are prepared to meet life's challenges. It helps them to contribute to economic development and to become a positive influence for future generations.

Over the next two years, this new USG program will provide approximately \$1.4 million Namibian dollars in support to a total of 340 girls so they can continue their education. Assistance will be similar to that provided under the original AGSP program – school uniforms, school supplies, boarding and lodging fees, and counseling support. We strive for the same results: to

give these girls the tools they need to succeed in school, so that they will be eligible to move on to the next level of education.

The Girls' Scholarship Program is part of a key U.S. program called the Africa Education Initiative which currently supports 950 girls. The new Plus component of this program is funded through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The Emergency Plan supports Namibia's HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care program, including care and support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. In 2007, US assistance to Namibia under the PEPFAR programs will equal \$637 million Namibian dollars.

Since its Independence, Namibia has recognized the critical importance of education. Committed leaders, such as Honorable Becky Ndjoze-Ojo, have worked hard to obtain greater investment and implement necessary reform in the Namibian education system. Through these government programs, the American people are pleased to partner with Namibians to help this nation realize the dream of educational opportunity for its children.

I have a short message for the girls who will receive scholarships that are with us today. For many Americans, myself included, hard work and the opportunity to receive more education, made a positive difference in our lives. Education holds the same promise for you. I recently had the privilege to speak at a conference for San girls who are supported by the AGSP program. It was wonderful to see so many poised, articulate and talented young women. During the conference, one girl named Martha told us that one day she was going to be President of Namibia. At the end of the event, she was being interviewed by NBC. I urge you to take this opportunity, work hard, stay in school, and make your dreams come true. Who knows, maybe you will become an Ambassador one day!

I would like to thank the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia for implementing the AGSP PLUS in addition to their work with the AGSP primary program. I would also like to acknowledge our other AGSP implementing partners - the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia AIDS Program, and the National Federation of People with Disabilities in Namibia for their work to implement this program in different regions of Namibia.

I would also like to recognize Principal Tjizoo and his staff, and the girls, parents and guardians from the Rakutuka Primary school for hosting me this morning. The visit was very informative and I thank you for your letters and words of appreciation.