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PRESS RELEASE

Polytechnic of Namibia Opens Learning Resource Center

PEPFAR-supported Partnership with University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Will Foster Greater Access to Evidence-based Resources, Strengthen Training Capacity

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA June 24, 2011 — The American International Health Alliance (AIHA) celebrated today the opening of a Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the Polytechnic of Namibia, which has been engaged in an HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partnership with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences since late 2007.

Namibia's Minister of Health, the Honorable Dr. Richard Kamwi, spoke at the gala opening ceremony, telling attendees, "The facility being launched here today is yet another manifestation of the Polytechnic's commitment to enhancing teaching and learning with up-to-date innovation." Noting that the Ministry of Health expects the new LRC will play an important role in ensuring that graduates from the School of Health and Applied Sciences are equipped with the most current knowledge and technical expertise, Kamwi stressed that the resulting improved access to evidence-based resources will surely make the task of "adequately preparing our students for battle at the frontier of public health ... controlling established and emerging diseases much easier."

With support from the American people through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Namibia, partners established the country's first bachelor's degree program in medical technology. This program is now playing a crucial role in training laboratory professionals who will help improve HIV care by informing decisions related to the provision of antiretroviral therapy, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of opportunistic infections. This LRC will support the work of the partnership and the Polytechnic's ongoing efforts to train health and allied professionals by improving access to evidence-based knowledge resources available online, on CD-ROM, or hard copy. It will also help users to better assess existing practices and policies, which can have a significant impact of quality of care and rational use of scarce resources.

Other honored speakers included Ms. Sue Gerber, Deputy Director of CDC/Namibia and Dr. Gert Gunzel, Vice Rector of Administration and Finance at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Professor Sylvester Moyo, Dean of the Polytechnic's School of Health and Applied Sciences served as the Master of Ceremonies.

Following the opening ceremony and ribbon cutting that officially marked the launch of the new LRC, noted Ethiopian epidemiologist Dr. Omar A. Abdulwadud presented a public lecture on the benefits of evidence-based clinical practices. Drs. Taryn Young and Tamara Kredo of the South African Cochrane Centre then conducted a training session on evidence-based research.

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