



**The Official Message of the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) President;  
Mr.Pintile Davids at the World AIDS Day 2008 Commemorations on the 1<sup>st</sup> of  
December 2008 in the Karas, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions;**

**Directors of Ceremonies;**

**Distinguished managers, beneficiaries, stakeholders and human resource capital in the entire communal farming industry and agrarian sector; ladies and gentlemen;**

The Namibian National Farmers Union has been denied for quiet a very long time, the opportunity to openly demonstrate and declare its genuine concerns with regard to the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS scourge on the communal farming sector in general and on its labour human capital in particular.

Driven by a deep and passionate desire to elevate itself from the bondage of silence, the NNFU embarked upon tireless scouting and negotiations to materialize its ideal to effectively respond to HIV/AIDS diligently, in the 12 regions mandated to the NNFU jurisdiction. The much appreciated positive sponsorship reply from the GTZ/DED development partners, sufficiently enabled us to join the national fight; aimed at reducing human suffering, economic sabotage and social destabilization, accelerated by the HIV/AIDS phenomenon.

It is now my singular privilege to announce the commitment of the Namibia National Farmers Union towards addressing HIV and AIDS and its diverse impact on numerous dimensions of the communal farming sector and my obligatory duty; to call upon every farming role-player, associate and beneficiary from every farming activity in the communal areas, to remind yourselves about the existence of HIV/AIDS amongst us, consider the disadvantages it contains and reconsider your individual and communal attitudes and behavior towards HIV/AIDS in general, especially towards those infected and affected.

The World AIDS Day Commemorations of 2008 marks the first event whereby the NNFU physically features on public platforms in the Karas, Oshana and Oshikoto regions of the Republic of Namibia, meant to proudly declare our willingness to participate and our genuine presence, for those in the communal farming industry, intimidated, threatened and confused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We further intend to demonstrate our sympathy to those who lost their loved ones due to HIV/AIDS related deaths, encourage positive and productive living to those infected with the virus and discourage those driving stigma, rejection and discrimination within the communal settings.

It should be known by now, that HIV and AIDS manifest itself through immense stress on agricultural production, labour and the socio economic livelihood of the communal farming sector which caters for both subsistence farming and employment creation. It eats on the income segments of farming, drains the farming performance capacities already subject to drought, pests, floods and poverty and accelerates the harboring of counterproductive attitudes and behavior.

My core plea, dear farming associates, will remain that we refrain from worsening the fight against HIV/AIDS, which is already challenging and a general burden on individual and household levels, not excluding its burden on agricultural performance and production.

I intend to seriously call for the immediate seizure of discrimination and stigmatization from farmer to farmer, stakeholder to stakeholder and partner to partner, and would appeal for supportive community attitude as the presence and availability of the ARV treatment makes HIV/AIDS a manageable, controllable and less self - stigmatization intervention. The promotion of ARV treatment, Prevention of Mother To Child Treatment (PMTCT) accessibility and availability, should ignite hope for a productive life, reassuring significance and meaningful contributions to society, by those infected with the HI – Virus.

Allow me to categorically denounce the tendencies, whereby the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS is turned into golden opportunities through which the fundamental basic rights of individuals are deliberately trembled upon. I am referring to incidents where children are subject to farm labour due to death of parents or guardians, I am talking about the seizure, grabbing and disowning of valuable belongings such as land and property, from women and children left vulnerable by the death of their spouses and parents, I am warning against the unlawful dismissal and dumping of farm workers and laborers on the basis of their HIV statuses, and I am alluding to instances where HIV/AIDS related illness or death, maximizes exploitation of a already worst case scenario through pretentious actions driven by greed, aimed at self benefit and self enrichment, at the cost of the vulnerable. The NNFU will not and will never sing praise to any practice of such nature.

The World AIDS Day theme 2008, loudly calls for leadership, the repentance of the youth from irresponsible sexual behavior and an atmosphere of tolerance to all those infected and affected. We are further required to jealously guard against new infections. The Namibia National Farmers Union translates the broad theme as a call to responsibility and duty for all. A duty to prevent further HIV infection or re-infection by those infected, a call to stay clear from any new infection, if currently not infected - and a responsibility to exercise tolerance and support to those infected and affected. The formula for knowing one's HIV status only lies in the taking of a test, whilst not taking an HIV Test, keeps one in the annals of uncertainty and often without a plan for future life, with or without HIV. The NNFU therefore will encourage all communal farmers to take a well thought decision, and I repeat, a well thought decision and preparedness to go for an HIV test. I am informed that the Sero – Sentinel Survey Reports of 2008, records a decrease in the HIV prevalence rate; from 22% in 2002 to 19,9 % in 2006 to 17,8 % in 2008. Indeed a welcome piece of information; however we should not relent in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We should rather accelerate our forces and efforts on all fronts.

As much as I am excited to study the document, I would appeal to you all to familiarize yourselves with the inroads made by HIV/AIDS on the Namibian society, this time around since 2006.

Finally, we at the NNFU are sufficiently equipped with a competent HIV/AIDS Desk, courtesy of GTZ/DED, headed by a Program Officer and a Technical Advisor, tasked to represent the NNFU HIV/AIDS response through its affiliated Regional Farmers Unions in 12 regions of the Republic of Namibia, except the Khomas Region, where our headquarters is based.

We, the NNFU, intend to represent and serve our farmers under our mandate, to the best of our abilities with diligence, of course within the boundaries of our financial and human resource capabilities. Therefore, I appeal to you, the entire leadership and members of the farming communities on communal land; ensure consistent participation in HIV/AIDS interventions, observe caution when dealing with HIV/AIDS, exercise tolerance towards those infected and affected, practice safer sexual behavior and apply consideration towards HIV/AIDS at all times, and by so doing, enhance farming production and continued labour and skill contribution and transference to the benefit of self and the one of the biggest employment creation and economic contributing sectors in our beloved country.

As I wish all people and every farmer in every corner of the communal dwellings of the Republic of Namibia, a prosperously blessed new year and a Merry Christ birth, keep the commemoration alive and digest these humble messages, intending to highlight the seriousness of the course we fight.

**I thank you.**