

Men encouraged to be agents of change in fight against HIV/AIDS

12 March, Windhoek: The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), UNAIDS, and the City of Windhoek held a National Consultation on Male Engagement on HIV and SRH. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss how men can actively be involved in the elimination of AIDS and have better access to HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services as clients, partners and agents of change, especially within the five main localities of Windhoek, Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Katima Mulilo and Gobabis.

Dr. Tharcisse Barihuta, UNAIDS Country Director, opened the event and encouraged men to make their health a priority by going for regular check-ups and testing with their partners in order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Keynote speaker Dr. Ndapewa Hamunime, Chief Medical Officer of the Directorate of Special Programmes, noted that, “30% of Namibian men are not aware of their HIV status and therefore the MoHSS introduced the male mobile clinic to increase efforts for men to receive more health screening tests, including for HIV.”

Group discussions were held amongst the men and women present, providing a platform for people to voice their opinions on challenges, especially for men, in accessing services and they suggested strategies to address these challenges. Key messages reinforced in the discussions included; increasing men’s engagement in testing and prevention as well as increasing male-friendly infrastructure and programming; reinforcing confidentiality; developing promotional materials depicting positive health seeking behaviour among men; establishing open communication between partners; improving cultural sensitization amongst young men; and addressing stigma around testing, specifically raising awareness on how men are more likely to get tested when other tests are packaged along with the HIV test.

The information gathered in the national consultation will inform the development of a policy paper on male engagement within urban settings. This policy paper will provide strategies and key interventions which partners in the HIV response should consider in order to increase uptake of men in HIV and SRH services and increase their individual as well as their family’s well-being.

SDG 3 ‘Good Health’

