

Namibia Gearing Up to Effectively Tackle Public Health Emergencies of International Concern

The World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services hosted International Health Regulation (IHR) Stakeholders' Meeting on 6 July 2017. This was a follow-up to a Joint External Evaluation which was undertaken by a team of 11 experts held in December 2016. The December Evaluation was to determine Namibia's readiness to prevent, detect, and rapidly respond to public health threats, whether they are naturally occurring, deliberate, or accidental.



Dr Desta Tiruneh: Diseases Prevention and Control Officer, WHO Namibia facilitating the IHR Stakeholders' Forum

The Evaluation further aimed to determine a baseline and develop an action plan which will help the Country develop its core capacities in compliance with IHR (2005). During a one day meeting, the findings of the Joint External Evaluation were presented to IHR Stakeholders composed of various Ministries, Agencies and Institutions.

Dr Desta Tiruneh, WHO Namibia Disease Prevention and Control Officer, reiterated the importance of building the countries core capacities in line with IHR(2005) and stated envisaged implementation plan is not only confined to the Ministry of Health and Social Services but the country as a whole. He further explained that "IHR is not limited to specific diseases but apply to new and ever-emerging public health risks". He added that National Action Plan for Health Security is intended to ensure adequate capacity to prevent, detect and mount rapid response to any Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This can only be achieved with the concerted and coordinated efforts of all key stakeholders.



Relocation camp in the Northern Part of Namibia during an emergency

Strengthening the IHR core capacities will enable Namibia to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to any public health emergency such as disease outbreaks, chemical and radiological hazards. These imply strengthening surveillance and border crossing points, establishing proper isolation facilities, antimicrobial resistance monitoring, and response capacity. To realize this, a team of experts from World Health Organization will visit Namibia in September 2017 to assist in the development of the National Action Plan for Health Security.