

Social protection systems evaluated at national workshop

16-17 April, Namibia: The Government of Republic of Namibia (GRN) and UNAIDS held the Namibian HIV and Social Protection Assessment National Consultative Workshop from 16-17 April. It was aimed at documenting HIV-sensitivity, barriers, and solutions to accessing existing social protection programmes. The workshop implemented a globally standardised tool to document HIV sensitivity within the social protection landscape in the country.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, I-Ben Nashandi, the Director of Social Welfare Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), Liza Van Rhyn, and the UNAIDS Country Director, Dr. Tharcisse Barihuta opened the workshop.

The event provided an overview of findings from a desk review, which outlined the existing landscape of HIV and social protection in Namibia. It highlighted the linkage between HIV and social protection to strengthen efforts towards anti-retroviral therapy (ART) adherence and reduce the risk of HIV transmissions.

Discussions centred around the barriers and solutions for vulnerable populations to access available social protection schemes. Vulnerable populations include adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating women living with HIV, people living with HIV (PLHIV), key populations, cross border populations, and marginalised communities.

Common barriers identified by the participants included: lack of information about the available programmes/ schemes, not having the correct documentation to access services, complicated procedures to receive services, and stigma and discrimination. Solutions to addressing these barriers included developing innovative ideas about communicating these schemes to vulnerable populations, providing documentation, sensitising workers, and promoting inclusion.

The information gathered from the national consultation was presented at the International Conference on Fast-Tracking Social Protection to end AIDS on April 25 – 26, in Geneva Switzerland. It will also be used to provide additional information towards the development of the Namibian Social Protection Policy which is currently ongoing. **SDG 3 'Good Health & Well-Being'**

