

WHO Namibia supports the development of a National Action Plan on Health Security

The World Health Organization (WHO) supported the recent review and costing meeting for the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) that was held in Walvis Bay on 31 October to 2 November 2017. The purpose of this meeting was to review, finalize and deliberate of costing of the proposed activities for this plan.

Mr Petrus Mhata, WHO Namibia Surveillance Officer, reiterated the importance of building the countries core capacities in line with International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 and stated that the envisaged implementation plan is not only confined to the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), alone, but a collective plan of the country as a whole.

He further explained that, “IHR is not limited to human disease outbreaks of new and ever-emerging public health events, but extends to animal and environmental health risks”.

He added that NAPHS 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.

Namibia, due to its geographical location, high influx of tourists and regional and international trade, is prone to emergencies of international threats and other public health risks. Strengthening the IHR core capacities will enable the country 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.

A team of experts from WHO visited Namibia in August 2017 to assist in the development of a National Action Plan on Health Security, a follow-up to a Joint External Evaluation which was undertaken by a team of 11 experts held in December 2016. The 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.

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. The findings of the Joint



External Evaluation were presented to stakeholders composed of various ministries, agencies and institutions and these were used to develop a NAPHS for Namibia.