

**NATIONAL POLICY ON HIV and AIDS
FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

JANUARY 2003

Foreword

Namibia has been independent for more than ten years, and the nature of the struggle facing our country has changed. The fight is no longer for freedom from political domination, but against HIV and AIDS.

HIV and AIDS is a continuing, critical public health issue. It is now the leading cause of death in Namibia, Africa and the fourth common cause of death worldwide. The HIV and AIDS crisis continues to expand in numbers and extent, without immediate medical solutions in view. HIV and AIDS is not only a health issue, it has socio-economic implications too. Namibia's development depends, to a large extent, on the development of its human capital. Namibia's human resources are being eroded by HIV and AIDS. As a consequence, both Ministries of Education have recognised the centrality of the prevention of HIV and AIDS, the support of people infected and affected with HIV and AIDS and the mitigation of the effects of HIV and AIDS. Interventions in education should provide the knowledge, and encourage the development of attitudes and skills, with which the spread and impact of the epidemic could be alleviated.

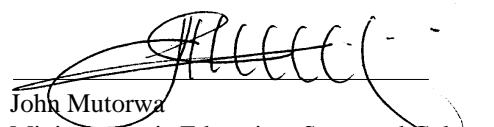
The development of this policy was a collaborative effort. The education sector, through the Policy Working Group of the Joint HIV and AIDS Committee for Education, and under the leadership of the Legal Assistance Centre, conducted focus group discussions at all levels of the education sector, regional consultations, forum meetings and a national conference. In May this year the Cabinet approved the policy. The HIV and AIDS policy provides the foundation for the National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS-Medium Term Plan II 1999-2004. The policy reflects the human rights provisions contained in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, the Namibian HIV and AIDS Charter of Rights and the international conventions ratified by Namibia.

This policy formalises the rights and responsibilities of every person involved, directly or indirectly, in the education sector with regard to HIV and AIDS: the learners, their parents and caretakers, teachers, administrators, ancillary staff, planners, in fact the whole of civil society. It underscores the dignity of all affected and infected by the disease and the respect that is their due. The policy provides guidelines to ensure that all in the education sector are fully informed about the disease, the way it is transmitted, the consequences and living positively with it.

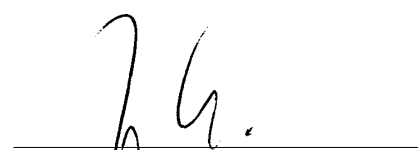
Policies should not remain on bookshelves. We should all read and internalise this policy, and most importantly implement it in its entirety. We call on a concerted effort within the education sector to implement the HIV and AIDS policy.

On behalf of both Ministries of Education, we convey our sincere appreciation to Advocate Michaela Figuera from the Legal Assistance Centre and the members of the HIV and AIDS Policy Working Group for their active involvement in the entire policy development process.

Last, but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to UNESCO and UNAIDS for the invaluable support, which enabled us to develop and print the HIV and AIDS Policy.



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