



# UN Cares in Action

The Case of Namibia  
2014

**Implementing wellness activities for UN employees and families**

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## Introduction

This document is part of a compendium of thematic case studies documenting the experience of several countries in implementing UN Cares, the UN system-wide workplace programme on HIV. The case studies highlight the successes and challenges of the UN Cares teams and their partners, and cover countries that have succeeded to varying degrees in implementing the UN Cares' 10 Minimum Standards.

When HIV prevalence is 1% or more in a country's general adult population, it is considered to be experiencing a generalized HIV epidemic by international health standards. A 2012 estimate of HIV prevalence among UN system personnel is 1.4%.

Officially launched in 2008, UN Cares is designed to reduce the impact of HIV on the UN workplace by supporting universal access to a comprehensive range of benefits for all UN personnel and their families. These benefits – known as the *UN Cares 10 Minimum Standards* – include information and education, voluntary counseling and testing, access to male and female condoms, and emergency prevention measures in case of accidental exposure, among others. The *Standards* also call for increased measures to stop stigma and discrimination. UN Teams in all countries are required to meet the 10 Minimum Standards.

The compendium of case studies, of which this document forms part, outlines the actions of teams that have been recognized with a UN Cares award on a particular theme. The case studies begin by explaining the national HIV context, and providing information on UN presence in the country. All case studies outline the policies of UN Cares groups by addressing the aspects related to funding, senior leadership support, key barriers to implementation and how the issue of stigma and discrimination is addressed.

The case studies cover countries from all regions of the world with diverse HIV epidemics and different levels of UN presence.

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## MINIMUM STANDARD

## NOTES

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<b>1</b> Information about UN Policies and Benefits	All personnel and their dependents in all locations have access to information about UN system policy, programmes, personnel rights, entitlements and benefits, and their own responsibilities regarding HIV and AIDS in the UN workplace and their associations are consulted about these measures.
<b>2</b> Information about Preventing Transmission of HIV and about Accessing Treatment and Care Service	All personnel and their dependents in all locations have sufficient and appropriate knowledge to make informed decisions to protect themselves from HIV and, those infected or affected by HIV, know where in their duty stations <sup>3</sup> to access good quality care, medical treatment, <sup>4</sup> and support services.
<b>3</b> Learning and training activities on stigma and discrimination	Measures are in place to combat stigma and discrimination, and to increase gender awareness, including learning activities for personnel and their families in all locations.
<b>4</b> Access to male and female condoms	All personnel and their families have access to male and female condoms. When high-quality condoms are not reliably and consistently available from the private sector, access should be simple and discreet at the UN workplace, either free or at low cost.
<b>5</b> Voluntary counseling and testing	All personnel and their families should have access to Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT).
<b>6</b> Insurance covering HIV-related expenses	All staff and recognized dependents, regardless of contract status or agency, have access to insurance coverage, allowing them to access the necessary services required for HIV prevention, treatment and care.
<b>7</b> Confidential handling of personal information	All UN system personnel with access to personal information about personnel maintain confidentiality in the management of personal information (such as HIV status or any other medical condition), including processing of a) all health insurance claims, b) agreements on accommodation in working arrangements, and any other circumstances in which personnel choose to disclose their status.
<b>8</b> First aid using standard precautions	All personnel have access to first aid assistance using standard precautions in UN system workplaces.
<b>9</b> Rapid access to PEP starter kits	All personnel and their family members have access within 72 hours to HIV emergency Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) starter kits and related medical care, counseling, and follow-up treatment in case of potential exposure to HIV because of sexual assault, or occupational accident.
<b>10</b> Managerial commitment	All managers assume leadership on the implementation of UN Cares, in consultation with staff representatives or Associations.

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## Background and Context:

In Namibia, HIV data is available at National level through the Ministry of Health Social services. Every two years, the Ministry conducts a National HIV Sentinel survey which generates HIV related data. In addition, the National Demographic and Health Survey also compile HIV data.

With an adult HIV prevalence of approximately 16.0% in 2014, Namibia is ranked among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence levels in the world. An estimated 260,000 people are living with HIV in Namibia, which includes approximately 16,000 children below the age of 15. (UNAIDS, 2014). The incidence rate among adults is 0.91 (UNAIDS, 2014).

HIV prevalence in Namibia has stabilized at a high level and continues to fuel new infections and to pose serious developmental challenges. Given these facts, it can be assumed that a significant number of UN personnel in the country would be living with HIV. Living a longer, healthier and more productive life with HIV requires healthcare beyond managing the virus, and includes an approach of general health and wellness. Access to information and medication, proper diet and nutrition, exercise and fitness, prevention of opportunistic infections, and slowing down progression to AIDS are all key to an improved quality of life for people living with HIV.

However, Namibia has been one of the success stories in the global AIDS response. In the past three years, Namibia has increased domestic funding for health to more than 14% of its annual budget—it is now close to reaching the 15% target agreed by African governments in the 2001 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (UNAIDS, 2014).



## Wellness Approach

The UN Cares team in Namibia has adopted the wellness approach in the services it offers employees and their families. The innovative approach has facilitated the integration of prevention and care of other diseases, stress management in HIV/AIDS program.

The projected outcome is to offer the entire United Nations Country Office staff with 169 people and their families improved physical and psychological support to enhance their wellbeing through participation in workplace initiatives that promote a healthy and balanced lifestyle whilst ensuring prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

A survey conducted in 2013-2014 revealed the activity preferences of staff members, and the Namibia UN Cares team has worked to implement these very activities whilst adhering to the 10 UN Cares Minimum Standards. Although the emphasis is on learning sessions about HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, UN Cares Namibia has implemented workplace initiatives to improve the health and psychological well-being of employees and families. Wellness activities offered by UN Cares Namibia include neck and back massages and Zumba dance in the physical support category, in partnership with an external service provider.

These activities are designed to reduce the fatigue and stress levels of all UN staff members and to help them feel more relaxed in the workplace. They help staff work more comfortably and efficiently by allowing them to break their daily routines and to partake in activities that stimulate blood flow and relaxation. Staff can return to their work with a sense of revitalization and renewed focus and energy. This has contributed to increased staff morale and increased participation in planned activities.

In the psychosocial support category, psychotherapy/counseling in a confidential setting, and stress management workshops in group setting are both offered. Stress management workshops provide a platform for staff to identify different stressors and learn how best to manage them, while psychotherapy supports the emotional and mental wellbeing of staff. Through these activities, UN staff and their families are better equipped to deal with emotional difficulties relating to bereavement and relationship difficulties at home and within the workplace.

The physical as well as psycho-social activities enjoy popularity among employees, and UN Cares Namibia has seen active participation with high employee turnout. As a result of these efforts, the UN Cares team in Namibia was awarded the UN Cares Award in 2014 in the category “Implementing Wellness Activities for UN Employees and Families”.

## UN Cares Structure and Advocacy:

UN Cares activities started in Namibia in 2008. Initially not all UN agencies were fully engaged in the activities of UN Cares. At present however, all agencies are represented by focal persons and each agency contributes to the UN Cares budget. The support by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for UN Cares activities has increased, and UN staff and their families participate in various activities conducted by UN Cares. The linkage with the UN Joint Program support on HIV/AIDS has been strengthened by integrating UN Cares Action plan in the entire UN Joint program for 2014-2018.

The following UN agencies are present in Namibia: UNFPA (Chair), UNODC (Co Chair), UNAIDS, UNDP (UN Cares Programme Officer), UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNAIDS, FAO, WFP, UNIC, and IOM.

Currently, the only UN Cares site in Namibia is in the capital city, Windhoek.

## Funding

Funding is mainly mobilised through agency contributions. Each agency is allocated a percentage to contribute towards the UN Cares budget. This is calculated as a percentage based on the total number of staff in an agency.

## Strategies and Implementation

A joint planning retreat is organized for UN Cares focal persons to plan activities to be implemented by UN Cares. Activities and strategies for implementation are identified. The retreat is an opportunity to refresh old members, and acquaint new members with existing protocols, such as the PEP kits protocol.

Trend analysis of the previous year's expenditure is performed to help plan an appropriate dividend rate. The agencies contribute to UN CARES based on the number of staff in each agency.

UN Cares sessions have been integrated in UN agencies staff retreats and meetings to increase the participation of staff and to use time and budget efficiently. With the inclusion of a UN Cares session in every staff retreat, the UN Cares Team ensures that information on the minimum standards of UN Cares is made available to all.

Namibia-UN Cares has implemented not only HIV related workshops, but also sessions that provide information on non-communicable diseases and staff wellness activities. The activities enhance the staff's fundamental and basic human rights for a work place that promotes their physical health and well-being. Participation of both women and men is equally encouraged, and there is no discrimination based on race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, or UN position. All staff members are treated with equal courtesy, regardless of their work position. By having men and women participate equally in these activities, the UN Cares team hopes to dispel any lingering notions that certain activities are gender-specific.

Planning UN Cares activities with input from staff has resulted in a sense of increased ownership over the activities by all UN staff members, and has ultimately driven participation.

Strong advocacy conducted through UN Cares focal points and secretaries by UN Cares Programme Officer, and the heads of agencies through the UNCT by the UNAIDS Country Director has improved the financial contribution of UN agencies. Rotating chairmanship among different agencies leads to increased sense of ownership and generates wider participation of other UN agencies in leading UN Cares activities. Rotating the venue of the monthly meeting to take place in each UN agency boardroom also helps to secure involvement and support from each agency in the country. The incorporation of opening and closing remarks from the heads of agencies provides top-level managerial support to the UN Cares activities, and further encourages staff participation.

The UN Cares Namibia team promotes these activities through the use of attractive flyers, announcements sent via email through the Resident Coordinator's office, and UN Cares monthly meetings which facilitate the planning of activities. In some instances, UN Cares staff also pay visits to the offices of their colleagues from different agencies to encourage their involvement. Placing the flyers in high-traffic areas also helps improve participation.

To ensure quality of service provided to staff, professional service providers with extensive experience were brought in. This has helped engage the staff and keep them motivated, and has improved participation rates.

## Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring of the UN Cares activities is done through regular analysis of data collected through all UN Cares activities. Participation rates of staff members and families are analyzed to show the breakdown of the data by overall participation numbers, gender and representation by agency. The data informs planning of future activities based on the interests of staff members. The assessment also helps the UN Cares team with continuous improvement of services for staff members.

Upon completion of an activity, a satisfaction survey is sent to staff, for evaluation of their rating of the activity. The surveys provide constant feedback to the UN Cares team for improvements to future workshops and better planning. A summary of this information is also shared at the monthly UN Cares meeting, quarterly newsletter and report to the UNCT by UNAIDS Country Director.

Through feedback provided to the Joint Team on HIV in Namibia, members make suggestions on how UN Cares activities can be provided. The UN Cares activities also form part of the Joint HIV programme which usually undertakes regular reviews.

## Challenges faced by UN Cares in Namibia

- Raising levels of participation of UNCT members and UN staff members and their families in UN Cares activities remains an ongoing challenge.
- Delay in budget contribution by some UN agencies which causes delay in implementation of planned activities.
- Limited budget lines for activities with high demand such as psychotherapy and massage.
- Low rates for male participation in the Zumba dance lessons, a recreational activity enjoyed by most staff who participate.
- Coordinating UN Cares activities such that they do not conflict with other professional engagements, which detract from participation.

## Strengths and Accomplishments

- UN Cares sessions for all UN agencies have been implemented through retreats and training sessions between 2014 and 2015.
- Number of UN Staff members taking part in UN Cares activities has increased significantly.
- All UN Cares activities planned for 2014 and 2015 have been implemented following the requirement of the 10 Minimum Standards of UN Cares programme.

- Namibia team received the UN Cares award in 2014 in the category “Implementing Wellness Activities for UN Employees and Families”
- Activities have included learning sessions for staff and UN cares focal persons; provision of psycho social support; accessibility and availability of male and female condoms, and stress management activities.
- A Namibia UN Cares newsletter is shared quarterly to inform all staff on the achievements of UN Cares. Namibia UN Cares activities are shared through global UN Cares newsletters.
- UN Cares newsletters have significantly increased the interest and participation of UN staff members compared to previous years. It serves to keep staff informed and engaged with UN Cares, ensuring that the programme is self-sustained and that it continuously caters to the needs of staff.
- 11 out of 13 UN agencies contributed to the 2014 and 2015 UN Cares Budget.
- The continuous provision of activities ensures ongoing engagement in the workplace. Additionally, these interventions have contributed to a coherent way for staff from different agencies to interact in a non-discriminatory environment.
- Successful lobbying for increased financial resources through UNCT members who are briefed on UN Cares activities monthly via the UNAIDS Country Director.
- Providing feedback on the activities and their impact on staff to the Joint United Nations Team on AIDS and to the United Nations Country Team has been critical in drawing support from the highest coordinating committees in the UN House. Sustainability of the UN Cares programme is ensured through continuous lobbying for increased UN Cares budget and designation of a UN Cares coordinator in the country office.

## Advice to other country teams

- Sharing the Namibia UN Cares activities globally serves to impact positively and motivate Namibia UN staff.
- Diversifying activities provided through UN Cares which increase staff wellness by combining HIV/AIDS activities, non-communicable diseases and stress management are well appreciated. This also responds to the different needs of UN staff and strengthens collaboration between UN Cares members and UN staff from different agencies.
- Utilizing agency retreats is one of the successful ways to do outreach and drive participation.
- Leadership and commitment by the UNCT is critical.
- Staff participation and interest is increased when other topics are integrated in HIV/AIDS activities.
- Adequate financial and human resource capacity to manage and implement the programming is key to success. Appointing a staff member dedicated to facilitate the implementation of activities has contributed to the success story in Namibia UN Cares Programme.
- Professional service providers who provide high quality services should be engaged.
- Using technical expertise within the UN agencies to deliver various topics for UN Cares is essential and cost saving.
- Collaborating with other stakeholders outside the UN to implement UN Cares activities not only brings in expertise but also encourages staff participation.

## Future projects

- Separate sessions on Gender and Sexual Diversity, nutrition, HIV testing and high blood pressure.
- Session targeting UN staff family members, especially the adolescents and youth is planned for the future.
- World AIDS Day commemoration will be organized in December for each year.
- In the future, we will have an HIV and UN family day which will include on-site HIV testing for all staff and their families.
- UN Cares Cultural Day and talent day/learning session with an engaging cross-country analysis of practices, responses, and preventative initiatives to issues such as HIV and gender and sexual diversity. In more detail, these sessions will include cross-country comparisons of how to address issues of stigma, discrimination, circumcision for prevention, and communicable diseases. These cultural days will provide information on the cultural backdrop of the country, making it easier for UN staff to place these issues into the appropriate cultural contexts.