



# THE UPR PROJECT AT BCU

## Statement UPR Pre-session on Namibia Geneva (Online), 25-26 March 2021 Delivered by: The UPR Project at BCU

### 1. Presentation of the Organisation

This statement is delivered on behalf of the UPR Project at BCU, which was established by the Centre for Human Rights within the School of Law at Birmingham City University. The UPR Project is an academic stakeholder to the UPR and we have been engaging with the mechanism since 2016.

### 2. Human Rights Issue to be Addressed

This statement addresses the stigmatisation of women and girls with HIV in Namibia.

### 3. Statement

#### A. Follow up to Namibia's Second Cycle Review

Firstly, the Government of Namibia must be commended for the extremely positive action it has taken regarding HIV across the country.

In the 2016 review, only four recommendations were made on HIV, by **South Africa, Canada, Oman, and Ukraine**. Disappointingly, no States made specific recommendations regarding *women and girls* with HIV. We implore Member States to formulate clear and specific recommendations focused upon eradicating the stigma faced by women and girls with HIV, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 which aims for gender equality.

#### B. Developments Since the Second Cycle Review

Currently, over 60% of those aged over 15 and living with HIV are women, and there is a distinct problem of stigmatisation affecting this community. This is problematic for many reasons, including that it has been found that stigmatisation has led to women being afraid of seeking out HIV testing and treatment.

The government should focus its efforts on tackling stigma and discrimination against women and girls infected with HIV, with two points of priority, namely, community support and education.

- Civil society has put a great deal of effort towards engaging community projects and strategies around inclusivity, for example, Frontline AIDS works in Namibia to end stigma and improve education in communities. Whilst these NGOs carry out invaluable work, they often lack the requisite financial support.
- Community support should also extend to accessing healthcare. HIV-infected pregnant women face stigmatisation both from their general community and healthcare professionals, whilst children are often refused HIV testing and treatment as these professionals are unaware of the legal provisions allowing for testing without parental consent in certain circumstances.

### **C. Recommendations**

The UPR Project at BCU recommends that the Government of Namibia should:

- i. Actively seek out funding opportunities to work with NGOs who are encouraging supportive community environments for women and girls with HIV.
- ii. Ensure that all healthcare professionals are trained comprehensively on the laws and policies surrounding HIV in Namibia, to ensure that all who need it can access testing and treatment.
- iii. Ensure that all people in Namibia are educated about how HIV is transmitted and the dangers of stigmatisation, particularly for women and girls. This should include formal education and training, and other, alternative sources of media.

Many thanks for your attention. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss the issue of women and girls with HIV in Namibia further.

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