

The Namibia Story

Following a learning visit to Zvandiri in Zimbabwe, members of the MHSS and a youth advocate “were amazed by the work Zvandiri was doing with the Zimbabwe MoHCC. We visited facilities, met CATS — it was amazing. We came back and started implementation. We developed good relations with the Zvandiri Team who came to Namibia to introduce the programme to others, including health care workers.” The Namibian team was particularly attracted to Zvandiri’s ‘nothing about us without us’ principle that placed young people firmly at the centre of all interventions. The Model was rolled out initially in two regions, rapidly expanding to a further three regions in 2020.

Implementing Partner:

Ministry of Health & Social Services (MHSS)

Started implementing Zvandiri: 2019

No of CAYALHIV living in Namibia: 20,284

As of June 2022: 81 trained and mentored CATS are collaborating with health care workers in 40 health facilities to support 1,919 children, adolescents and young adults living with HIV.

Viral suppression:

- 98% of CATS are virally suppressed.

Key highlights of the Zvandiri technical assistance plan

- “There are just so many! The orientation stands out for me because it gave me a clear picture of how the NATS programme works.”
- “The quality of training, especially training of trainers — now we can cascade the training as we roll out to new regions.”
- “Every contact with Zvandiri is very helpful—even when you couldn’t come—although not face-to-face, we did baseline assessments and you were there to guide us along the way.”
- “Ongoing mentorship empowered me in areas I was struggling with.”

Positive change

- “Teen club enrolment increased and staff at NATS implementing facilities reported that children and adolescents were more open to discussing personal information with NATS. Their knowledge around HIV increased and they got more support. It became clear that the programme is well placed to address adolescent health and issues connected to adolescents living with HIV and their SRH—one of the priority areas in the Namibian National Strategic Framework.”
- “NATS are definitely integrated into the health system and are fully involved in planning and monitoring and patient services.”
- There are adolescent-only days and allocated spaces for support groups and CATS in all 10 facilities.
- NATS are helping with stigma and discrimination and conducting home visits together with health care workers.
- The programme is identifying young people with high viral load, communicating with their parents through

caregiver groups, and NATS are following up with support and referrals.

- Information, education and communication materials and videos are now geared specifically towards young people.

Our proudest moment:

Tomas came for follow up and his viral load had changed from less than 40 copies per ml to 4,470 copies per ml. The NATS talked to him and he told them he had moved into a hostel and his mother had told him to give his medication to the school matron. His roommates noticed him going to the matron’s office and started bullying him, which made him feel ashamed and he often missed visits to the matron for his medications.

The NATS and her supervisor talked to Tomas about the importance of medication, and the different opportunistic infections he may get if he doesn’t take it properly. They played the Masas’ game with him to explain these issues and together agreed that Tomas would keep the medication with him and take it in privacy. Tomas’ mother was informed and supported the idea. After a few months, his viral load was repeated and was undetectable. He was happy and learnt not to mind what his peers were saying about him.

His mother thanked the NATS for continuous communication with her son, saying it had become much easier to talk to him about issues surrounding HIV and treatment.

Factors for success:

- Take time to select NATS carefully, including ensuring they are comfortable disclosing their HIV status
- Assess and secure spaces in health facilities from the beginning
- Have a robust system to assess and disperse allowances
- Train programme officers together with NATS so the they have a good understanding of the work of the NATS
- Ensure the NATS — client ratio is realistic.

Hopes for the future:

- Continue to scale up — already scaled from two pilot regions to an additional three. Now MHSS plans for two more regions for COP 22.

Would you recommend Zvandiri?

“I believe the NATS programme can be a great model... I can definitely recommend it for another country.”

Sylvia Ashikoto, MHSS