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NAMIBIA

SUCCESS STORY

Schools Spread the Word on Prevention

Principals with HIV/AIDS training encourage their teaching staff to be tested



Photo: Vincent Matakala, AED

After his training, the principal of a school in Katima Mulilo encouraged his staff to seek out HIV/AIDS testing and counseling.

“Upon returning to my school, I encouraged the teachers to go for voluntary pre-counseling and testing, just as I did,” said one principal. “To date, about 20 percent of my staff has gone for testing at the New Start center near the school.”

Namibia suffers from one of the world’s worst HIV/AIDS epidemics. AIDS has become Namibia’s leading cause of mortality, accounting for half the deaths people between the ages of 15 and 49 and for more than three-quarters of all hospital admissions. Teaching is one of many professions hurt by the epidemic; illness and caregiving have contributed to teacher absenteeism.

In an effort to spread information that might stem the tide of the epidemic, USAID trained 1,100 principals from rural schools on HIV/AIDS prevention, counseling, testing and treatment programs as part of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. USAID also supports several New Start centers in Namibia, which provide HIV/AIDS counseling and testing services.

Principals who went through the training are now encouraging others to take advantage of counseling services. “Immediately after the workshop, I went for voluntary pre-counseling and testing at the local New Start center and found other principals standing in line to receive counseling and be tested,” said the principal of a school in Katima Mulilo. “What I appreciated most at the center is that numbers were used to identify us, unlike clinics where real names are recorded. Previously I dreaded going to the clinic in fear of stigmatization, especially in case my results would be positive.”

Another principal said, “Upon returning to my school, I encouraged the teachers to go for voluntary pre-counseling and testing, just as I did. To date, about 20 percent of my staff has gone for testing at the New Start center near the school. I also mention one or two things about HIV/AIDS during my opening remarks at the start of the school day. I hope this will help the teachers and learners to understand the importance of responsible behavior. I now plan to invite school board members and interested community members to discuss prevention of the spread of the pandemic.”

Telling Our Story

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