

MISTER SISTER

MOBILE HEALTH SERVICE



CLINIC ON THE MOVE



PharmAccess FOUNDATION

The Mister Sister mobile primary health care clinics are managed by PharmAccess Foundation Namibia, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the strengthening of the Namibian health system. PharmAccess Namibia is a subsidiary of the Amsterdam based PharmAccess Foundation. PharmAccess supports programmes and offers services in the areas of medical and administrative capacity building, health insurance, HIV/AIDS and healthcare workplace programs, health investments and health intelligence.

Background to the Mister Sister Programme

PharmAccess Foundation Namibia, the Namibia Business Coalition on AIDS (NABCOA), the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP) and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) have been partners in the Bophelo! programme since 2009, in the provision of wellness screening services to private sector companies as part of the national HIV response.

In 2008 PharmAccess commissioned the first mobile wellness screening clinic with funding provided by the Dutch Postcode Loterij, through the Stop Aids Now!, the Dutch Aids Fonds and HIVOS as part of project Okambilimbili.

In 2009 the Namibia Global Fund Programme through NABCOA commissioned a second mobile clinic. With these two mobile clinics the Bophelo! wellness screening initiative conducted wellness screening (blood pressure, BMI, rapid blood testing for glucose, cholesterol, HIV, haemoglobin, Hepatitis B and syphilis) at workplaces, with referrals being made to both public and private health facilities.

From the provision of Bophelo! wellness screening at rural and remote workplaces, the need for the provision of regular preventative and curative health services to rural populations was identified. The experience gained, and local capacity built, by PharmAccess Foundation Namibia in managing the mobile wellness screening programme supported the initiative to expand mobile health service provision to include primary health care.



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THE NEED



In 2007, a national study conducted by PharmAccess in partnership with the Agricultural Employers Association in Namibia, highlighted that rural employees and their dependents have limited access to health services. One of the greatest challenges for rural communities to access health services is the large distance which has to be covered. The study found that the average one-way distance of travel to healthcare facilities was 42 km to reach a mobile clinic, 64 km for clinics, 99 km for doctors, 107 km for hospitals and 133 km for dentists.

The study also highlighted that 80% of employers would be willing to co-pay for their employees and 41% would be willing to co-pay for dependents to receive health care if primary health facilities would be available within a 20km radius from their farm. This study was supported by project Okambilimbili funded by the Dutch Postcode Loterij, Stop Aids Now!, the Dutch Aids Fonds and HIVOS.

PharmAccess has been working closely with rural employers, especially through the Agricultural Employers Association and the surrounding communities over the past years and has gained a solid understanding of the challenge that long distances to health facilities pose. In early 2010 the Ohlthaver & List Group and Namibia Breweries Limited, supported by the Bophelo! partnership was awarded a grant by Heineken Africa Foundation to commission three mobile clinics over a period of three years, to provide primary health care services to rural and remote populations in three regions in Namibia.

In the second half of 2010, PharmAccess piloted the provision of mobile primary health services in the Otjozondjupa region and the target populations were people living and working on farms as well as communities in the Okahandja, Hochfeld and Otjosondo areas. The pilot was conducted with the support from the MOHSS, both on a national and regional level.

Although dependent on donor funding, provided by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, through the PharmAccess MFS programme, part of the cost of the pilot was covered by commercial farmers and the MOHSS provided free vaccines (through the Okahandja district hospital).

In this context, various avenues were investigated to increase access to primary health care for rural communities and decrease the burden on public health facilities and rural employers.

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MISTER SISTER MOBILE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CLINIC

With the financial support of the Heineken Africa Foundation, through the O&L Group of Companies and Namibia Breweries Ltd, a brand new mobile clinic was commissioned for service in 2011.

The mobile clinic is supported through an innovative partnership structure comprised of public and private contributions. The sustainability of the system lies in the contributions of rural employers to the scheme, corporate sponsorships, provision of medication in kind by the Ministry of Health and Social Services and donor contributions for most at risk/poor populations.

The clinic is a 4-ton Mitsubishi Canter (4X4 model) with two consultation rooms, a toilet and a small pharmacy. Each consultation room is equipped with running water, air conditioning and a fridge. If a site has no electricity supply, the clinic has a generator and a battery for this purpose.

The mobile clinic adheres to all requirements as set forth by the Ministry of Health & Social Services and is in possession of a registration certificate to operate as a mobile primary health care clinic.

The mobile clinic will stop at central sites on a given route once a month. The route is serviced by the clinic on a full time basis and the staff makes use of accommodation and meal facilities provided by farmers/lodges on route.



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PERSONNEL



The mobile clinic personnel is comprised of a registered nurse, an enrolled nurse and a driver, who is also trained to assist with administrative duties and health education. In addition to the preventative and curative health services provided, the personnel take pride in providing health education to individuals, groups and communities.

The nursing staff of the Mister Sister programme is carefully recruited by PharmAccess Foundation to ensure the highest standards of service provision both in terms of technical competence and inter-personal skills. The team providing the services on the mobile clinic have many years of multi-disciplinary health service experience.

The staff on the mobile clinic are provided with regular training through existing Namibian institutions, PharmAccess Foundation, as well as regular service training presented by the MoHSS and NIP, to ensure excellent service standards.

An efficient computerised clinic management information system ensures that optimal administration is maintained without taking valuable time from patient management, ensuring that our staff always put the patient first!



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TARGET GROUP

Rural and remote populations in the Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Khomas regions are the target group for the Mister Sister programme.

The mobile clinics will provide mobile health services to rural and remote populations on a fixed route schedule.

The core target group for this programme are rural employees, and their dependents (adults, children and babies) whose employers contribute towards the cost of the healthcare through annual subscription and premium contributions.

The volumes of participating rural employers contributing towards the costs of providing these services to their employees and dependents will determine the long term sustainability of the programme. Initially while the programme is being introduced to an area, employees and dependents of non-subscribing employers can use the mobile clinic service for a fee, however only for a limited duration where after the employer will be required to subscribe to the service.

Rural work places in Namibia are remote and geographically dispersed thus the mobile clinic route passes rural communities and settlements.

Poor communities, pensioners and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's) on the mobile clinic route will receive the same service paid for by the contributions of medication from the Ministry of Health, donors and corporate sponsorships.





Primary Health Care:

Patients visiting the mobile clinic will be provided with all services which can be offered by a registered nurse. These services are provided in accordance to MoHSS protocols and directives. The services include but are not limited to:

- Confirmation of pregnancy and routine ante- and post-natal care.
- Family planning advice and supplies (including oral and injectable contraception)
- Routine immunizations which are part of the MOHSS vaccination program
- “Well Child” care and monitoring
- Screening for TB symptoms
- Voluntary counseling and testing for HIV
- Diagnosis and treatment of routine communicable disease, including:
 - Respiratory infections
 - Malaria
 - Sexually transmitted infections
 - Diarrhoea and vomiting
 - Worms and parasites
 - Skin infections
- Testing, referral and follow up on chronic diseases, such as
 - Hypertension
 - Asthma
 - Diabetes
 - Arthritis
- Treatment (including suturing) for minor trauma
- Information, Education and Communication on all relevant health matters
- Chronic medication defaulter tracing and referral

The Ministry of Health & Social Services provides medication free of charge as per a public private partnership operational agreement between the Ministry and PharmAccess. This partnership ensures that a regular high quality service can be provided to rural and remote populations.



Referrals:

Patients who require the services of a doctor / hospital and cannot be treated within the scope of practice of the nurse in the mobile clinic will be referred to the nearest public health facility for care. An agreement for referral is in place between PharmAccess and the Ministry of Health and Social Services. In the near future it is planned to pilot placing a medical doctor on the mobile clinics on a quarterly basis to provide treatment to chronic patients.

Other:

Although the main purpose of the clinic is to provide primary health care, the clinic is equipped, and the nurses are competent, to deal with emergency situations within their scope of training.

Delivering certain chronic medication and monitoring patients will be done for the period in between a patient's visits to the relevant doctor.





OUR PARTNERS



The Mister Sister mobile clinic is proudly sponsored by the Heineken Africa Foundation through the Ohlthaver and List Group of Companies and Namibia Breweries Limited, who have committed to purchasing three mobile clinics between 2010 - 2012.



The Mister Sister PHC programme is supported by the Ministry of Health & Social Services. Technical assistance to the programme is provided through PharmAccess Foundation funded by the Health Insurance Fund and further support is provided by NABCOA & Namibia Institute of Pathology.





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