

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL
E-HEALTH STRATEGY 2021 - 2025**

3 DECEMBER 2021

WINDHOEK

**Check against delivery*

Director of Programme, Mr Jeremia Nghipundjwa, Acting Executive Director
Dr Charles Sagoe-Moses
Senior Officials
Esteemed Invited Guests
Members of the media
Ladies and gentleman!

1. We gather here this morning for a pleasant occasion to launch the National eHealth system. The Ministry of Health and Social Services has a constitutional mandate to promote and protect the health of the people of Namibia and to provide quality health and social services.
2. The National eHealth system that we are launching today, is one of the key responses to a national vision of a healthy nation, enjoying a high standard of living and quality health and social services.
3. The ehealth system is also in line with other global aspirations and priorities including the 2018 World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution WHA 71.7 that promotes Digital Health or Health Digitization to improve health and well-being for people of all ages, everywhere, towards achieving the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). The Fifth National Development Plan highlights eHealth as one of the strategies to achieve the desired outcomes that “All Namibians will have access to quality health care by 2022”.
4. Furthermore, the Harambee Prosperity Plan places emphasis on eHealth as one of the means to achieve Social Progression Pillar targets. The HPP provides for the electrification of all health care facilities as well as the rolling out of broadband internet connection to at least 70 percent of our health facilities. This will enable the implementation of the eHealth system.
5. The provision of quality health and social welfare is underpinned by timely, accessible and accurate data to inform decision making for strategic interventions. Currently, Namibia’s patient medical records are largely paper-based, making verification process lengthy and cumbersome.
6. The rapid advancement in ICT has made it possible for us to keep a finger on the pulse using real-time data to enable, among others, proper planning, resource allocation and ensure health security by strengthening disease monitoring and surveillance. The implementation of eHealth strategy is, therefore, a transformation initiative that will not merely change the existing manual medical records system to an electronic one, but also seeks to change the way health-related information is collected, shared, communicated, and analyzed to improve decision-making and patient care. It will allow healthcare workers to capture, access, and share patient information promptly across geographical and health

sector boundaries using information and communication technologies that are fit for purpose securely and reliably. In this way, the eHealth strategy will inform the coordinated implementation of various initiatives to support the adoption of ICT in enhancing health care delivery. A successful eHealth strategy delivers positive benefits to its stakeholders throughout the Strategy, enabled by ICTs.

7. The eHealth system should therefore, be viewed as a transformational tool to change healthcare delivery and service provision, and should be championed by all. The system should be developed with its users and should be patient-centric, worker-centric, and citizen-centric. A well-defined eHealth architecture should contain protocols on data standards, interoperability, security, privacy, confidentiality, the necessary laws, and policies. Infrastructure should include high-speed internet connectivity between facilities, computing devices, and equipment fit for purpose.
8. Adequate funding for an eHealth ecosystem and cross-sectoral championing and support is critical if the system is to be successful. I would therefore like to express our appreciation to our development partners for their support both financially and technically. Special gratitude goes to WHO for their continued support and commitment to assist the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and indeed the Namibian government, in our course to ensure the delivery of accessible and quality health care to our people.
9. E-health solution assumed great importance during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected every facet of our lives and has compelled us to change our way of life and the way we conduct our business. We discovered that it is not always necessary to travel to Geneva every year for the World Health Assembly. Despite the limitations imposed by Covid-19 that does not allow for a face-to-face meetings, the World Health Assembly never failed to hold its meetings albeit in a virtual mode that became only possible through communication technology.
10. Perhaps one of the revolutionary innovations enabled by communication technology is the management of patients remotely via ehealth solution. It is now possible to consult a patient via a virtual mode. It is now possible for a doctor to prescribe medication to the patient and the patients to collect the medicine from the pharmacy without having first to come to the doctor and collect the prescription physically.
11. The ehealth strategy will make it possible for us to do many things. We will apply ehealth solution to consult and manage patients remotely. We shall apply ehealth solution to manage patient records and make them available wherever they will be required to the convenience of the patients.

12. Allow me to thank the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) in Namibia, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the University of Namibia, and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), for their immense contribution to the development and finalization of this significant document.
13. It is my singular honour and pleasure to invite you to join me in officially launching the National eHealth Strategy 2021-2025. We strive to a healthy nation enjoying a high standard of living and quality health and social welfare services enabled by eHealth.

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