

## Creating Systematic Clinic-to-Community Referrals

### LIFT II Stakeholder Meeting Makes Positive Impact in Namibia



Photo credit: Mandy Swann/FHI 360

Participants at the stakeholder meeting used string to make connections to represent working relationships between organizations, such as sharing clients, joint programming, shared funding, and/or ongoing collaboration. This activity demonstrated the current state of the network and the existing connections to build on.

*LIFT has done a remarkable job.... recognizing that we have systems but they are not working, and supporting them to be stronger.*

- Honorable Jason Ndakunda, Councilor of Engela Constituency

The **Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance II (LIFT II)** project was launched in 2013 by USAID as a follow on to the LIFT project (2009-2013). LIFT II's primary goal is to build the continuum of care for people living with HIV and other vulnerable households by increasing their access to high quality, context appropriate, market-led economic strengthening, livelihoods and food security opportunities to improve their economic resilience and lead to better health. LIFT II is implemented by three core partners—[FHI 360](#), [CARE](#) and [World Vision](#).

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Namibia is classified as upper-middle income, yet 49 percent of Namibians live on less than USD \$2 per day and the adult unemployment rate exceeds 50%<sup>1</sup>. Access to food and adequate nutrition is a challenge for 12-14 percent of Namibians, often due to chronic poverty and droughts<sup>2</sup>. In this context, people living with HIV face compounding challenges of diminished productivity and earning power. Through progress in ART coverage and the provision of nutrition counseling, assessment and support (NACS), the government of Namibia is making great strides in improving the health and nutritional status among HIV-affected and other vulnerable individuals. However, challenges of retention in ART and NACS support, and relapse into NACS due to underlying food insecurity, remain persistent barriers to sustained health. The development of functional clinic-to-community referral systems that link clients to complementary care (i.e., food aid and economic strengthening services) is key to addressing these challenges.

Engela is the largest and most populous district in Oshana region in northern Namibia and is home to over 70 percent of the 245,000 people living in the region. In February 2014, the Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance II project (LIFT II) conducted a stakeholder meeting in Engela to support the establishment of a clinic-to-community referral network to provide a strong continuum of care, including livelihoods and food security to address underlying causes of poverty, hunger and disease. The meeting brought together 30 representatives of government, NGOs and the private sector. Through a highly participatory process including discussions and activities, stakeholders realized the importance of clinic-to-community referrals and understood how stronger systematic networks operating as a referral system have clear benefits for both clients and service providers. By the end of the two-day meeting, participants had developed a strong shared identity with potential to transform into a functional referral network that facilitates access for HIV-affected, NACS and other health facility clients to needed community services. To demonstrate their commitment to implementing a referral system, participants created a steering committee to move priorities and actions forward. Since the stakeholder meeting, with LIFT II support, the steering committee has broadened the political support for the network throughout Engela, and made progress on a referral toolkit, which includes all the tools and processes necessary to implement an effective referral system. In collaboration with the steering committee, LIFT II will implement a training in May 2014 for all network members, which will launch the clinic-to-community referral system.



Photo credit: Mandy Swann/FHI 360

*LIFT II Technical Specialist, Samuel Mayinoti working with one of the breakout groups to define specific actions needed to strengthen the network.*

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), Directorate of Labour Market Services. 2008. Namibia Labour Force Survey 2008.

<sup>2</sup> World Food Programme. 2012. Namibia food security overview. <http://www.wfp.org/countries/namibia/food-security>