

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY DR. ESTHER MUINJANGUE (MP),
DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, DURING
THE PANEL DISCUSSION ON YOUTH RESILIENCE AND MENTAL
HEALTH (OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS)**

10th February 2024

18:00 Hrs

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed panelists, and resilient individuals joining us today, Resilience is not just a personal attribute; it's a collective strength that binds nations together in the face of adversity. For a country like Namibia, still grappling with the scars of past traumas such as genocides, war, and apartheid, resilience is not just a virtue but a necessity. These historical injustices have left deep wounds in our society, impacting generations of Namibians. Yet, despite these challenges, our nation has shown remarkable resilience, rising from oppression to embrace a future grounded in unity, justice, and equality.

Namibia confronts many traumas, from gender-based violence to high youth unemployment. The lack of opportunities for young people, especially graduates who struggle to find meaningful work, casts a shadow over our collective future. Work provides more than just an income; it offers purpose, dignity, and a sense of belonging. Without it, many young Namibians feel adrift, grappling with feelings of disillusionment and despair.

Even as we convene today, we mourn the loss of our esteemed leader, the late President Hage Geingob. In reflecting on President Geingob's legacy, we remember not only his remarkable leadership but also his unwavering resilience in the face of adversity. The late President Geingob exemplified resilience in its truest form, refusing to allow the formidable challenges of his time to deter him from his vision of building a stronger, more prosperous Namibia.

In the midst of adversity, Namibia's resilience shines through in the resilience of its people. It's in the grassroots movements that fight tirelessly for gender equality and social justice. It's in the entrepreneurial spirit of young people who refuse to be defined by unemployment statistics, creating their own opportunities and driving innovation forward. And it's in the unwavering commitment of communities to support one another, to lift each other up in times of need. As we navigate the complexities of our present reality, let us draw strength from the resilience of our past and present, knowing that together, we can overcome any obstacle that stands in our way.

Resilience is intertwined with our mental health. When we face challenges, whether they're personal, professional, or societal, our mental well-being plays an important role in how we respond. However, the link between resilience and mental health is a complex relationship shaped by various factors.

At its core, resilience embodies the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity and adversity. It represents the inner strength to persevere, even when circumstances seem overwhelming. Yet, amidst life's challenges, maintaining a sense of hope and optimism can feel like an impossible task, particularly when our mental health is compromised. Mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or trauma can deeply undermine our self-efficacy and resilience, leaving us ill-equipped to cope with the inevitable stressors and setbacks that life throws our way.

Mental health struggles are compounded by societal factors like stigma and systemic inequalities, perpetuating a culture of silence and shame that discourages help-seeking and makes worse feelings of isolation. Additionally, modern stressors like academic or professional pressures, social media, and societal expectations further complicate maintaining mental health and resilience, as the fast pace of life leaves little room for self-care, requiring intentional effort and support to prioritize well-being.

In the face of these adversities, hope prevails. Resilience is not innate; it is a skill that can be cultivated and strengthened. By fostering a culture of openness, empathy, and support, we can empower individuals to seek help and thrive amidst adversity.

Allow me to echo the wisdom of Martin Luther King Jr., who once said, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." These words encapsulate the essence of resilience—the unwavering determination to persevere, even in the face of impossible challenges.

Today, I call upon every one of you to heed this call to action. Let us forge a path toward a future where resilience and mental well-being are prioritized and nurtured. Let us draw strength from one another and from the resilience that lies within each of us. Let us build a society where everyone has access to the support and resources they need to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. And let us never lose sight of the power we hold.

Thank you for your attention, and may our conversation today inspire positive change and empowerment for all.