

Stigma against people with different sexualities

What is sexuality?

The way someone feels and expresses their sexual feelings. For example, some people have sexual or romantic feelings for people of the same gender or a different gender.

People with sexualities other than what is normally seen are targeted in Namibia. They face constant **harassment** and **violence**. They are vulnerable to getting HIV yet face barriers when accessing HIV testing and care; it is hard to remain anonymous.

Examples of stigma

- two men holding hands are beat up by other men
- Someone sees a woman speaking with a deeper voice and dressing like a man and calls her hateful slurs.

Stigma against sex workers

Female-headed houses tend to be the poorest as women must care for their children and seek an income. Women are forced into sex work for survival. **They lack choices.**

Stigma and discrimination play an important role in putting women who are sex workers at an unfair risk of violence, abuse, sexual exploitation, and STIs.

- 94% of sex workers in Namibia experienced violence in the past year

This stigma causes social isolation, taking away their agency and ability to seek help.

Examples of stigma

- sex workers are shamed and turned away when they seek protection (like PrEP) at their clinics
 - puts them at increased risk of getting HIV
- fear of stigma prevents sex workers from speaking of abuse and violence, leaving them in an unsafe situation
- someone is refused a job when employer hears of their sex work

How can we break this stigma and discrimination?

It all starts with being an ally...

An ally is someone who is not a member of an underrepresented group but who takes **action to support** that group.

It's up to those of us who hold positions of power to be **active allies** to those with less power. We must take responsibility for making changes that will **empower** others!

- listen to other views
- learn from people who experience stigma and discrimination
- speak up when we hear people saying things that are stigmatizing and see them acting in a way that is discriminatory
- educate others
- create spaces to talk about these issues
- **INCLUDE** people facing stigma in the development and creation of destigmatizing efforts
- empower them with projects to make money

It is important that we do not judge people for aspects of their identity, like sexuality. Even if we may not agree with their identity, it is important that we respect them.

Spread the message that we should not shame, blame, or guilt people.

Examples of being an ally

As a adolescent boy, if you hear people saying a girl can't run for a leadership position or play sports, stand up for her and support her.



When talking about people with disabilities, avoid using disempowering and negative words, like "tragedy" or "suffering."



BREAK THE STIGMA TOGETHER



Let's Talk Social Groups

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What is stigma and discrimination?



Stigma is when someone sees another in a negative way because of a particular characteristic or attribute (skin, cultural background, disability, HIV status, etc.).

Discrimination is when someone treats another in a negative way because of that attribute.

Power Dynamics describe how power affects a relationship between people and when one side is more powerful than the other.



Marginalization is the act of treating a person or group as though they are insignificant by isolating or disempowering them.

It is important to recognize how **certain social groups** are particularly **vulnerable to stigma and discrimination**. They are marginalized by those with more power.



People with disabilities



Adolescents



Adolescent Girls & Young Women (AGYW)



People with different sexualities



Sex workers

Stigma against people with disabilities

Since Namibia's independence, people with disabilities have been **excluded from programs**. They have been left behind, their needs not met, and face **high levels of stigma and discrimination**.

- people with disabilities lack the information to identify and understand their disabilities
 - struggle to accept their status
- they lack privacy and confidentiality
 - for example, results are not available in brail for people who are visually impaired
- lack of proper training for caretakers leading to poor care
 - don't give medication at the right times
 - don't give food with medication
- medical services are not properly modified
 - for example, condoms are verbally explained to people who are visually impaired
 - they need to be able to touch them to better understand

Intersection with HIV

Common stigmatizing belief that people with disabilities cannot or should not have sexual intercourse, nor have children.

Effects:

- they are not allowed to be tested for HIV without caretaker
 - disempowering; not able to make decisions for themselves
- caretakers are ashamed to take their person with a disability to get tested and end up bringing them to the furthest hospital
 - leads to delays in testing/treatment and financial burden
- they are forced to be sterilized, or have an abortion when pregnant, because of HIV status and disability
- they are harassed by nurses about their status due to stigma

Stigma against adolescents and AGYW living with HIV

There are high levels of **stigma and discrimination** at health centers and clinics.



This makes adolescents and AGYW shy away from seeking health services, such as testing.

- AGYW are falling pregnant
 - adolescent girls and boys are failing to adhere to their HIV treatment
 - levels of HIV are increasing in these social groups
 - young women are choosing not to access antenatal care for fear of being tested and exposed
- A fear of stigma prevents adolescents and AGYW from disclosing their status, putting their partners at risk.
- **self-stigma** causes denial about their status, leading them to engage in reckless behaviors

Examples of stigma

- an adolescent girl goes to the clinic seeking condoms and the nurse shames her and tells her she should not be having sex
 - the adolescent is now at risk for HIV, other STIs, and pregnancy
- there is a room at the clinic designated **ONLY** for those living with HIV. This creates fear and anxiety in adolescents and AGYW about being seen walking to this room and being treated differently after

