

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Namibia's Supreme Court upholds the dignity of women living with HIV**

**GENEVA, 6 November 2014**—UNAIDS welcomes Namibia's Supreme Court decision to uphold the Namibian High Court finding that three women living with HIV were subjected to coercive sterilization in public hospitals without their informed consent.

"This is a great victory for all women in Namibia and the world. This decision reinforces the right to sexual and reproductive health for all women, irrespective of their HIV status," said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

The Supreme Court's dismissal of the appeal follows the 30 July 2012 ruling of the High Court of Namibia—in the first formal court case of its kind in Africa—that medical practitioners have a "legal duty to obtain informed consent from a patient" and that the health service provider could not obtain consent during labour.

UNAIDS worked closely with civil society and other key partners in the AIDS response in Namibia to ensure that the voices of the women affected were heard. UNAIDS calls on countries to investigate and address all reported cases of forced sterilization as well as other legal and social practices violating the basic rights of all people in health-care systems.

Women and girls, irrespective of their HIV status, should have access to information and be empowered to exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights. UNAIDS will continue to mobilize governments and communities to ensure that everyone has access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

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#### **UNAIDS**

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.