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Tuesday, 17 November 2026

Media Release: NUST Supports Community Cancer Screening Initiative in Lüderitz

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), through its Department of Clinical Health Sciences, participated in a community cancer screening initiative in Lüderitz on 23 and 24 October 2026, contributing laboratory expertise towards improving access to early cancer detection services.

The initiative, known as Together in Detection and Education (TIDE), was spearheaded by the Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Hon Hambelela Suzan Ndjaleka. It brought together Government, academia, healthcare professionals and the private sector to provide free cervical, breast and prostate cancer screening services, alongside blood pressure and blood sugar checks.

During the two-day outreach, 148 women underwent screening, with 109 Pap smears conducted and seven breast tissue samples collected for further laboratory investigation. All Pap smear results were reported to the local health authority within one week of the screening. Additionally, 32 men underwent prostate-specific antigen (PSA) rapid testing, with one referred for further blood testing. NUST's contribution centred on providing on-site laboratory support, enabling the timely processing of cervical screening samples and facilitating access to diagnostic results.

Under the supervision of senior Medical Laboratory Sciences staff members, Ms Edwig Shingenge and Dr Oiva Kamati, three NUST students – Nedison Duarte, Justina Shiimbi and Christophine Nanhapo – performed Pap smear staining at the NUST Lüderitz Campus. This enabled Dr Albertina Iitana, a pathologist from Northern Pathology Services, to assess samples and report results while the outreach was still underway.

Speaking at the official opening of the initiative, Deputy Minister Ndjaleka emphasised the importance of working together to strengthen healthcare delivery. “The word ‘together’ matters. Health is not the responsibility of the Ministry alone; it is our collective responsibility,” she said.

Dr Taime Sylvester, Senior Lecturer in Medical Laboratory Sciences and NUST's TIDE Coordinator, highlighted the University's commitment to supporting national healthcare priorities through practical training and community engagement. “Behind every cancer statistic is a person. At NUST, we asked ourselves how we could stand behind the Ministry’s vision of ensuring

equitable and comprehensive health screening services. Our answer is to be the support that makes it work through our Medical Laboratory Sciences staff and students. TIDE shows what our students can do when the laboratory moves into the community," she said.

Dr Iitana further underscored the need to strengthen Namibia's diagnostic capacity, particularly in underserved communities. "Our onsite cytology lab in Lüderitz screened 121 cases this October with some results released during the campaign; but breast, cervical and prostate cancers are only the tip of the iceberg. We urgently need to train more pathologists, oncology staff and cytology technologists so these services reach every corner of Namibia," she said.

The initiative was implemented in partnership with NUST, Northern Pathology Services, the Cancer Association of Namibia, the Lüderitz Cancer Aid Foundation and local nursing professionals. Financial support was provided by Nautilus Fishing Industries, Lamda Energy Namibia, the Breakwater Group and the Lüderitz Waterfront Development Company.

Lüderitz served as the pilot location for TIDE, with plans to extend the initiative to other underserved communities, including Okongo, Talismanus, Onjuva and Ncamagoro. The partners also intend to introduce human papillomavirus (HPV) testing during future outreach activities.

For NUST, initiatives such as TIDE reinforce the importance of taking science beyond the laboratory and applying knowledge and expertise to address real-world challenges. By bringing staff, students and laboratory expertise closer to those who need them, the University demonstrates how applied science, education and meaningful partnerships can help expand access to essential healthcare services and make a tangible difference in communities.

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