



Cancer Association of Namibia

21/81/096 – Incorporated Association not for Gain & Registered Welfare Organization (WO30)

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To All Media /News Editors

MEDIA RELEASE

World Childhood Cancer Awareness Day – 15 February 2026

Strengthening Early Diagnosis and Comprehensive Support for Children with Cancer in Namibia

Windhoek, Sunday, 15 February 2026: Namibia joins the global community in commemorating World Childhood Cancer Awareness Day on 15 February, a day dedicated to raising awareness about paediatric cancer and reflecting on the progress made thus far, and the work still required to ensure that every child diagnosed with cancer receives timely, effective, and compassionate care.

According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) through the latest GLOBOCAN 2022 global estimates (most recent published dataset) approximately 400,000 children and adolescents (0–19 years) are diagnosed with cancer worldwide each year. An estimated over 200,000 cases occur in children under 15 years, with nearly 80,000 deaths annually in this age group.

The most common childhood cancers globally remain leukaemia, brain and central nervous system tumours, and lymphomas.

Across Africa, childhood cancer outcomes remain deeply concerning. While survival rates in high-income countries exceed 80%, survival in many low- and middle-income countries remains below 30%, largely due to delayed diagnosis, treatment interruption, limited specialist services, and inadequate supportive and palliative care infrastructure. These disparities are further highlighted in analyses by the American Cancer Society and the American Cancer Atlas.

The current situation in Namibia, as published by GLOBOCAN modelling in cooperation with the Cancer Registry of the Cancer Association of Namibia, and considering regional incidence patterns, suggest that approximately 60–90 new paediatric cancer cases occur annually among children under the age of 15.

Leukaemia, lymphomas, kidney tumours, and brain tumours remain among the most frequently diagnosed cancers in children. And, while Namibia has made important progress in oncology care, challenges remain in early detection, referral pathways, psychosocial support, and access to specialised paediatric palliative care services.

The Cancer Association of Namibia's National Response: The CHICA Programme

The Cancer Association of Namibia (WO30) continues to strengthen its response through the CHICA (Children Fighting Cancer) Namibia Programme, which provides:

- Financial assistance and transportation support;
- Free accommodation, meals, and transport through the CHICA Interim Home for children and their parent/guardian during treatment and follow-up;
- Support to Ward 8 West Paediatric Oncology Ward of Windhoek Central Hospital;
- Bereavement support to vulnerable families to ensure a dignified final journey (funeral assistance).

Since January 2026, Palliative Care Namibia, through the CHICA Fund, has expanded medical care services to include free specialised paediatric palliative and hospice care for state paediatric patients at the House Zietsman Care Facility. This service provides expert pain management, wound care and end-of-life support to children facing complex final stages of illness on ad-hoc basis subject to funds availability and urgency of the child's needs.

"While our fund is not yet able to support adult cancer patients in this manner, we are making provision to admit children who require specialised palliative care during the final weeks of life, after often gruelling battles fought at a very young age," says Rolf Hansen, Chief Executive of CAN & PCN.

Early Warning Signs of Childhood Cancer

Early detection significantly improves survival outcomes. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to seek medical evaluation if a child presents with:

- Persistent fever without clear infection
- Unexplained weight loss
- Persistent headaches or early-morning vomiting
- Swelling or unusual lumps
- Ongoing bone pain or limping
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Extreme fatigue or pallor
- Vision changes or a white reflection in the eye

While many of these symptoms may relate to common childhood illnesses, persistent or worsening signs require proper medical assessment.

On this World Childhood Cancer Awareness Day, the Cancer Association of Namibia calls for:

1. Strengthened public awareness and early recognition of warning signs
2. Improved referral and diagnostic pathways
3. Continued investment in paediatric oncology and palliative care services
4. A coordinated national commitment to improving childhood cancer survival outcomes

The Cancer Association of Namibia invite families seeking assistance or guidance to contact us: National Helpline: 081 953 7740 or hope@can.org.na or CAN Head Office: 061 237740

No child should face cancer alone. Together, through early detection, compassionate care and sustained national commitment, we can improve survival and safeguard dignity for every Namibian child.

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