



SPECIAL REMARKS

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FIRST GENTLEMAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MALE ENGAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

THEME

***Coordinating Namibia's Work with Men and Boys for Gender
Equality and Wellbeing in Namibia***

7 October 2026

Avani Hotel, Windhoek

Programme Director,

Honourable Dr. Emma Kantema, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare,

Mrs Monica Geingos, Third First Lady of Namibia and Executive Chairperson of One Economy Foundation,

H.E. Ana Beatriz, the European Union Ambassador to Namibia,

Ms. Diene Keita, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

Distinguished Guests

Boys and Men

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely delighted to stand here today at this significant symposium, a gathering which is devoted to the boys, men, fathers of our nation, and to the families and communities they belong to.

Allow me to commend the UNFPA and other partner organisations who saw this cause as worthy and chose to drive it with me. Your trust and your commitment mean a great deal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to commend the Honourable Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and her team for the Third National Gender Equality and Equity Policy 2025–2035, and the Ministry’s Strategic Plan 2025–2030. This policy sets out a vision of which among others has clearly states that *“A gender-just society where men, women, boys, and girls enjoy equal rights and live freely with dignity”*.

The policy further recognises that in higher education, *“male students are lagging, and there is, therefore, a need to develop affirmative action measures to address this gender imbalance”*. The policy therefore, calls on us to empower boys to share responsibility for the protection and upliftment of girls.

Honourable Minister, you said it well in August when you declared that the development, protection and empowerment of the boy child is not being ignored, and it is receiving attention. Today we are here to turn that attention into coordinated action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I want to talk about the “Power of Coordination and Collaboration” and how best we can get it right to achieve lasting results. The power of coordination in male engagement

programmes lies in its ability to transform uncoordinated, isolated efforts into unified, gender-transformative interventions. Historically, engaging men and boys has suffered from systemic duplication, fragmented messaging, and structural inefficiencies. It must be underscored that effective cross-sectoral coordination will unlock scalable, sustainable, and culturally resonant behavioral change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the foregoing, I must inform that I have launched the DEN Impact Foundation on 18 August 2026. The launch of the Foundation was prompted by the realization of the “Boy Child Crisis” in Namibia and globally. The realization that the growing social, educational, and psychological neglect of boys and young men for more than 3 decades, if left unaddressed, shall weaken the very fabric of our society, boys and girls alike.

Another worrisome trend worth noting is the crisis of male mental health and a deep-seated culture of silence that drives disproportionately high rates of suicide among boys and men.

These observations shaped the aspirations of the DEN Impact Foundation: the deliberate, intentional empowerment of the boy child through sport, agriculture, technical training, skills

development, and character building pursued in a way that strengthens, rather than competes with, the important gains our nation has made for the girl child.

The good news is that Namibia is not starting from zero. Our non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, community groups and traditional leaders are doing remarkable work with boys and men. To each of you, you deserve a big thank you. You kept this flame alive long before it became a national conversation. Notably, Government, too, has moved this agenda forward, hence we are talking of a Policy and Strategic Plan. The excellent work at play are aiming to bear national tangible fruits that deserves recognition.

We are just at a starting point as long journey is yet to begin. To achieve our ultimate goal, we must be bold and aggressive in reaching the boys who are hardest to reach. Make sure that no child is left behind on this empowerment journey.

My strongest plea today is to all boys and men in this room, and those online, is that we stand together to turn the plight facing our boys and men into opportunities for change. Let it become a tangible success story felt in every family, every school, every church and every community in Namibia. Through coordinated, structured efforts, Namibia did it with the HIV

pandemic; we can do the same when we coordinate and work together in the boy child's drive.

To all implementers,

Boys and girls are equal in dignity, but not the same in their needs. A programme designed for girls cannot simply be renamed and handed to boys. Let us therefore create programs that respond to the Unique Needs of boys.

As boys and men, the success of this dream must be squarely into your hands. You must be the own drivers of the agenda. Let us all leave this symposium not only with good ideas, but with commitments that will lead to action. Let us leave as one movement, with one voice and one coordinated national effort for the boys and men of Namibia.

I thank you.