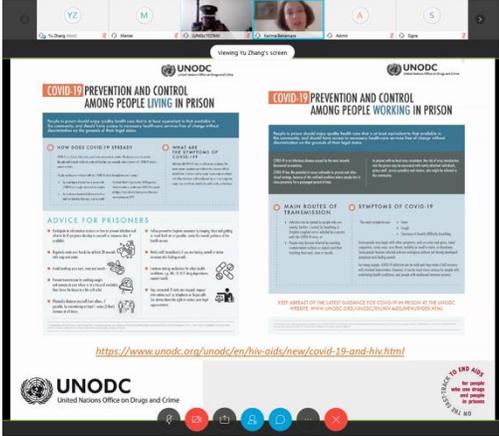


# UNODC ROSAF HOSTS REGIONAL WEBINAR ON RESPONDING TO COVID-19 IN PRISONS

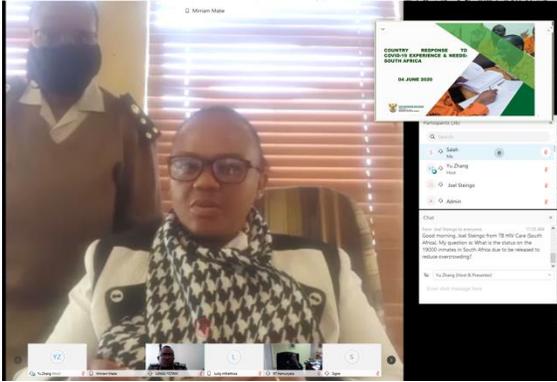
**Seven countries in Southern Africa took part in virtual meeting on addressing the coronavirus pandemic in places of detention**

4 June 2020. People in prisons and other places of detention are vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the confined conditions in which they live and to limited access to health care services. Experience shows that settings in which people are gathered in proximity may act as a source of infection, amplification and spread of infectious diseases, within their walls and beyond. Preventing and managing COVID-19 in prison settings is particularly challenging and requires whole-of-government and whole-of-society involvement.

To respond to the urgent need to protect people living and working in prison in Southern Africa from COVID-19, UNODC, with participation from UNAIDS, WHO and OHCHR, on 4 June 2020, hosted a regional webinar on best practices to prevent and control COVID-19 in prison. The virtual meeting, entitled “Introduction of global policy documents and guidelines on measures to prevent and control COVID-19 in prison settings”, was attended by senior officials from prison services in eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as representatives from the SADC Secretariat and UN agencies.



After colleagues from UNAIDS, WHO, OHCHR and UNODC presented current UN policy documents and technical guides on addressing COVID-19 in prisons, the General Commissioners of eSwatini and Namibia Correctional Services and the Acting Chief Deputy Commissioner of South African Department of Correctional Services shared the measures introduced to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their prison staff and people in their custody and challenges they encountered in prevention and response. The ensuing discussion centered around the need for additional personal protective equipment, development of new standard operating procedures for prison, and improved programmes for integrating people after release.



Subsequent to countries’ presentations, UN officials and senior representatives from national prison authorities had fruitful discussions and exchanged opinions on how to proceed the collaboration between UN agencies and national prison authorities on COVID-19 prevention and control in prisons. Participating

countries feedbacked that officers who had attended the session had benefitted greatly and were enthusiastic about implementing the recommended preventive measures. Countries also reached common understanding and recognition that it is critical to share and learn from each other as we tackle the new normal. After such positive feedback and upon request from other countries in the region, UNODC ROSAF plans to organize further webinars on COVID-19 in prison settings and related topics.

## **RESOURCES**

[UNODC, WHO, UNAIDS AND OHCHR JOINT STATEMENT ON COVID-19 IN PRISONS AND OTHER CLOSED SETTINGS](#)

[UNODC Infographic on COVID-19 Prevention and Control among People Living in Prison](#)

[UNODC Infographic on COVID-19 Prevention and Control among People Working in Prison](#)

[UNODC position paper on COVID-19 preparedness and responses in prisons](#)

[UNODC position paper on COVID-19 preparedness and responses in prisons](#)

[WHO Interim Guidance on Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention \(2020\)](#)