



East African Health Platform

Fostering Stronger Ties For Better Health in East Africa

HEALTH NEWS-CAP EAST AFRICA

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East Africa: EAC Gets \$13m Boost from GIZ

6th December, 2019

By Tanzania Daily News

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

THE East African regional economic and social integration agenda received a major boost on Thursday following the German's Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) 29.8bn/- (\$ 13m) commitment to the East African Community (EAC).

The grant aims to support the community through the East African Market Driven and People Centered Integration East African (SEAMPEC) which focuses on trade and value addition.

Speaking here shortly after sealing the agreement, GIZ Country Director, Dr. Mike Falke noted that the SEAMPEC programme, through its multiple cross-cutting initiatives, takes a holistic approach to regional integration that encompasses civil society as well as public and private sectors among partner states.

The GIZ boss exuded optimism that through targeted work in agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, tourism and Information and communications technology (ICT) SEAMPEC will facilitate the improvement of framework conditions to help create more competitive industries and cross border opportunities.

"GIZ and the secretariat have been developing and managing key projects working with partners across the EAC region with a focus on making the common market, customs union and integration a reality," explained Dr. Falke.

He further revealed that many businesses and civil society organizations had all benefitted from SEAMPEC through collaborating on the ground and high-level networking and coalition activities.

"We are proud to continue to implement programmes which are showing results and tangible benefits EAC residents," he added.

Meanwhile, the EAC Secretariat and GIZ inked a 6.8bn/- (\$ 3m) agreement that will be channeled towards supporting pandemic preparedness among the six member states.

The project which started in March 2017 had entered its second phase in September this year.

It will see the EAC and the German Agency for International Cooperation work closely to implement the regional contingency plan under the interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral One

Health approach to establish the discipline of risk and crisis communication in the region.

The project will also support the EAC Secretariat in its coordinating and advisory role in the prevention and response to cross border outbreaks.

The EAC Secretary General, Ambassador Libérat Mfumukeko assured that no partner state will be excluded in the pact.

"Technical details will be worked out by our health representatives in each of the six parent states," said the EAC boss. The sealing of the pandemic preparedness project comes a day after the lawmakers at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) adopted the Report of the Committee on General Purpose on the oversight activity assessing levels of preparedness of Partner States in management of the epidemics.

During their second meeting of the third session in Arusha, the regional legislatures reiterated the need for the Council of Ministers to develop an EAC Policy on the management of communicable diseases in the region and to strengthen collaborative engagement with key stakeholders.

In effect, the Assembly wants further collaboration with stakeholders such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the GIZ to enhance oversight in the promotion of the health sector in the region.

East Africa: EAC Manifests Zeal against Top Diseases

6th December, 2019

By Tanzania Daily News



THE East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) has adopted a report of the Committee on General Purpose on the oversight activity assessing levels of preparedness of partner states in management of epidemics, particularly Ebola and Dengue.

The House reiterated the need for the East African Community (EAC) Council of Ministers to develop a bloc's policy on management of communicable diseases in the region and to strengthen collaborative engagement with key stakeholders.

It took the action as the region discharges all its arsenal and explores modalities of containing the Ebola and Dengue viruses that are life-threatening.

In effect, the Assembly wants further collaboration with stakeholders such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the German Technical Co-operation (GIZ) to enhance oversight in the

promotion of the health sector in the region.

The assessment took place in Rwanda and Uganda, between September 12-16, 2019.

Tanzania requested for a new date for the exercise, according to a letter tabled in the House and confirmed by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and EAC Cooperation, Dr. Damas Ndumbaro.

Chair of the Committee on General Purpose Committee, Mr. Abdikadir Aden, presented the report to the House, affirming that three other partner states, Burundi, Kenya and South Sudan, are also targeted in the next oversight activity.

The report was tabled on October 3rd this year during the First Meeting of the Third Session held in Arusha.

The principal objective of conducting the oversight activity was to assess the level of preparedness of the EAC partner states in managing and containing Ebola and Dengue fever epidemics and to explore possible sustainable interventions to combat them.

The Committee took the initiative to get briefs on the Ebola and Dengue epidemics/pandemics and the progress made in controlling and managing the same; assessing challenges and ascertaining existence of any specific bilateral or international engagements/interventions to combat the epidemics.

The oversight activity further sought to establish the impact and effects of the said epidemics on the economies and welfare of the citizens of EAC.

Under Article 117 of the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC, partner states give a commitment to co-operate in, among others, health activities within the Community.

The report further cites various interventions undertaken by Rwanda and Uganda to contain the diseases.

The House was informed of interventions made through a multi-sectoral approach and such include development of a contingency plan for Ebola preparedness and response.

It is also made through the National Disaster Management Committee made up of ministers in charge of emergency who advise and co-ordinate relief efforts in Rwanda.

In Uganda, the House heard of enhanced capacity building in surveillance and contact tracing and the effective use of community-based disease surveillance approach.

"Over seven million have been screened at ground points of entry; with the Entebbe Airport recording screening of 225,804 ... each partner state has had at least two notable disease outbreaks in every five-year cycles between 2000 and 2019. Examples of outbreaks include Rift Valley Fever, Ebola, Marburg, Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fevers and Yellow Fever," a section of the report reads.

According to the chairperson, it took Kenya and Tanzania six months to contain the 2006 Rift Valley Fever (RVF) outbreaks.

The region and neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo have also experienced several outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

"In January 2017, a Bird Flu outbreak was reported along the shores of Lutembe bay (Lake Victoria) in Uganda. In October 2017, a Marburg Fever outbreak was reported in Eastern Uganda, Kween district, close to the Kenyan border with one confirmed fatality", the report added.

Rwanda: People With Disability Seek Better Access to HIV Services

6th December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



Omar Siddo of the Federation of People Living with Disabilities in Niger.

In 2007, Rwanda passed a law related to protection of persons with disabilities (PWDs), which grants PWDs the right to protection and other rights like every other citizen.

Despite this, they are still exposed to challenges that make them vulnerable.

On the sideline of the 20th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), a session to discuss the accessibility of services for people living with disability was held.

The main focus was enabling people with disabilities to access HIV/AIDS services.

Presenters were dominantly people with different disabilities who challenged the audience to acknowledge that they can play big role in societies when well empowered.

In Africa, HIV prevalence is 2-4 times higher among people with disabilities.

The trend is higher because PWDs are likely to face sexual violence. In addition, many of them do not know about their HIV status and findings presented during the session indicated that only 30 percent disabled people with HIV/AIDS are aware.

Omar Siddo was one of the speakers and presides over the Federation of People Living with Disabilities in Niger.

Visually impaired, Siddo told the audience that PWDs are as able as others if they are granted equal opportunity and rights. And that includes rights to HIV/AIDS treatment services.

"Just as there are women and men, it's the same way there are people with disability. They are entitled to right to be treated, so it is not a favor, accessing HIV services is a right we deserve," he said.

Siddo added that only when disabled people are discriminated or denied their rights, otherwise they are as important in contributing to the society.

A long journey to go

Antonio Pedro is a PWD from Cape Verde and one of the participants at the session.

Although he sees some changes, there is still a long way to go, not just access to services but even encouraging disability-friendly environment.

"Laws are there but in reality it is different. I usually have hard time accessing public places. So apart from HIV services, there are a lot of things that have to be done," he told The New Times.

Besides, although PWDs are entitled to accessing HIV and other services, this need financing and political will, so it might take longer, he added.

According to UNAIDS, people with disability are 2.21 times more likely to get infected than ordinary people. 300 million people in Africa live with disabilities with a quarter of them being school-aged children.

Suspected reasons for the increasing trend is that health facilities are often physically inaccessible or unaffordable for impoverished disabled.

South Sudan Reviews the National Integrated Diseases Surveillance and Response

2nd December, 2019

By World Health Organization (Geneva)



The Ministry of Health in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) reviews the integrated diseases surveillance and response.

In a two-day consultative meeting from 25 - 26 November 2019 in Juba, stakeholders reviewed the performance of the Integrated Diseases Surveillance and Response (IDSR) program.

The IDSR strategy aims to enhance surveillance and response capacities at all levels thus contributing to reduced morbidity, mortality and disability from outbreaks and other public health events. Consequently, the consultative meeting reviewed the effectiveness of the IDSR program in 2019 and developed an action plan for 2020.

The review is aligned to the national strategy for strengthening IDSR implementation to attain the International Health Regulations (2005)

core capacity requirements for surveillance and response.

During the opening ceremony, Dr Samson Paul Baba, Special Advisor to the Minister of Health, underscored the need for all stakeholders to embrace IDSR to facilitate real time detection and response to suspected outbreaks.

The Ministry of Health with support from health partners continues to strengthen the implementation of the IDSR strategy at all levels through training of surveillance officers and IDSR focal points on the use of the guidelines and tools.

In October 2019, South Sudan validated and adopted the third edition of the IDSR technical guidelines and training materials and trained master trainers to facilitate the cascade rollout to all levels.

Over 70 stakeholders including officials from the national and state Ministries of Health, partners and donors assessed the achievements, and challenges faced in 2019 and developed an action plan for 2020.

"Reviewing the IDSR is vital to improve reporting performance and capacity to detect outbreaks for timely response to disease outbreaks and public health risks," said Dr. Olushayo Olu, the WHO Country Representative. He also reiterated the commitment of WHO to support Government and partners to implement the strategy for a robust national disease surveillance system.

The IDSR strategy is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and EU Humanitarian Aid (ECHO).

Notes to editors:

The IDSR is a strategy adopted by Regional Committee in 1998 for implementation by member states of the WHO African region. South Sudan adopted the strategy in 2006 and is currently being used to strengthen the national disease surveillance system for effective prevention and control of outbreaks and public health risks.

Rwanda: World Aids Day - HIV+ Men Tipped on Medication

1st December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



Despite the recent progress made towards achieving HIV epidemic control, medics have pointed out some sticking issues that need to be addressed in order to maintain the gains, as well as advancing the fight against the virus.

Results from the Rwanda Population-based HIV Impact Assessment, a nation-

wide survey released in October showed that among other things the country exceeded some of the 2020 targets set by the United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The survey showed that 76 percent of all HIV-positive adults have achieved viral load suppression, a figure that slightly beats UNAIDS' target of 73 percent by 2020.

Such figures show that the country is on a positive trajectory in the fight against the disease; however, medics say there are still things to be addressed.

One of the sticking issues is the reluctance of HIV positive men towards taking medication, respecting prescriptions and maintaining a healthy lifestyle; a vice that is blamed for lower levels of viral load suppression among them than their female counterparts.

The RPHIA results showed that men's viral load suppression stands at 65.7 per cent compared with 79.1 per cent among women.

This makes infected men to be more menaced by HIV/AIDS-related illnesses than women, despite the fact that the HIV prevalence rate is higher among women (3.7%), and lower among men (2.2).

"We have observed that females have a higher prevalence of HIV, but for all other indicators, men are doing poorly. They (men) are the ones who don't want to go for testing, don't take treatment correctly, don't suppress the virus, and they are the ones who even die more," said Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, the Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre.

"It is a serious concern that men don't take medicine correctly," he said.

Asked what could be the reason for men's reluctance to take medicine, Nsanzimana speculated that some men might have a mentality that they are strong enough to resist the virus, among other things like unhealthy habits for example alcoholism.

"Even if they feel sick, they (men) push hard, don't rest. Finally they get tuberculosis which is the main killer of people living with HIV," he said.

A female patient living with HIV told Sunday Times that women respect prescriptions treatment because they look at factors like their children whom they don't want to grow up without mothers.

She said that sensitization is something that should be done to help men to respect treatment.

Among other issues raised is that people are taking HIV for granted.

Alfodis Kagaba, the Executive Director HDI-Rwanda said people are taking the epidemic for granted since "it is talked about many times, but they should remember that it is still there."

Among other things, Kagaba spoke about the high infection threat among young women in Rwanda.

RPHIA figures showed that HIV prevalence among young women aged 20-24 years was 1.8 percent, a figure that showcases that the epidemic is three times higher in young women than men in the same age group (0.6 percent).

He said that some of the issues that make women more exposed to the virus include economic factors, where some go for sex for money, among other issues like the nature of the sexual organs which makes women to be more easily exposed to STIs.

Here, he called for more measures to educate women concerning the epidemic.

Hopefully, those are some of the issues that will be raised today as Rwanda joins the world to mark the World AIDS Day, an event held on December 1st to commemorate people who lost their lives to HIV, reflect on progress made in responding to the epidemic, and recommit to ending it.

Tanzania: HIV/Aids Development Partners Hail State On 'Focus'

1st December, 2019

By Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)

DEVELOPMENT partners supporting the Tanzania crusade against HIV/AIDS scourge have commended the government's recent effort to make the disease eliminated by 2030.

Giving remarks during the Youth symposium organised by the Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS) here yesterday, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Dr Hetrude Temba said the country's initiatives on the fight were encouraging.

Expounding, Dr Temba cited the recent legislation legalizing self-testing as one of

such initiatives, saying if well implemented would play big part in reducing the HIV burden.

She said PEPFAR and other partners were readily available and willing to support all the initiatives the country sets as different targets to win the battle against the AIDS.

"There is an urgent need to increase more efforts to rescue the youth generation aged between 15 to 24, and work hard to support them, wherever they are, hence strategies like self-testing are important and highly commendable," she said.

The Youth symposium was part of the activities of TACAIDS, it had arranged ahead of the nation to join the rest of the world to mark International AIDS Day today.

A number of development partners and stakeholders have camped here since last week to showcase different activities and programmes, including public education to the youths who are the main target this year.

TACAIDS Director General Dr Leonard Maboko said his office decided to commemorate the day this year by working on directives issued by top government leaders, who asked for more awareness in the public especially to the youth groups across the country.

According to Dr Maboko, the Commission implemented the directives and has effectively engaged them and will compile all their views and recommendations for action.

"We have paid more attention to the youths and we managed to reach them through their different social gatherings.

We will give the statistics during the climax of the commemorations tomorrow (today)," he said.

However, giving his remarks, the Regional Commissioner (RC), for Simiyu, Anthony Mtaka challenged development partners to stop dishing out funds to local Non-Governmental Organisations haphazardly, because they mismanage them.

Mr Mtaka was of the view that all local organisations seeking funds for AIDS activities should submit detailed data to the donors, explaining how they to spend the funds.

"There must be call for proposals that must be submitted first, before the funds are released and all proposed areas should be technically checked and all projects thoroughly verified," he said.

Equally, he said the proposals should be exhausted with tangible programmes and technologies, which have positive to the beneficiaries.

However, the RC Mtaka warned TACAIDS to be aware of some mainstream media and social outlets, which publish some fake news on AIDS cures and finding.

The AIDS Day commemorations will climax today with the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa gracing it as the guest of honor.

Tanzania: 500 Fresh Entries to Boost Healthcare Services

2nd December, 2019

By Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)



TANZANIA'S healthcare sector is set to benefit from the fresh entry of 500 health experts who have successfully graduated from the Hubert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU).

It is an important addition to the understaffed health sector, with the new professionals expected to bridge the health worker gap.

The Hubert Kairuki Memorial University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Charles Mgone commended the government support and initiatives in producing new health experts.

Speaking during the 17th graduation ceremony held in Dar es Salaam over the weekend, Prof Mgone said the new graduates have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to

effectively play their role in the country's health sector.

They will be dispatched to different parts of the country with high demand to improve services and Prof Mgone urged the health experts to observe professional ethics.

He said the country requires competent health professionals who abide by the rules and regulations and prioritise public safety.

HKMU Acting Chancellor, John Ulanga underlined the value of qualified and committed health workers in improving healthcare delivery.

"Health challenges will be solved by efficient, committed and qualified health workers, so HKMU is committed to even improve its curricula to cope with the ever-changing needs in the health sector," she said.

The chancellor also said the graduands should be ready to cope with changing perspectives of many Tanzanians, largely influenced by social networks thrust.

"We are happy that each year we produce graduates who are joining the workforce to serve Tanzanians. We encourage them to be ethical and professional when delivering services," he noted.

Of the new graduates, 211 were men and 298 women, which represented a 55 per cent rise from last year's 230 output.

32 were conferred with certificate of nursing, 210 leavers received Diploma in Nursing, and 56 graduated in Bachelor of Science in nursing while 201 were

conferred with a degree in Human Medicine.

Meanwhile, 10 graduates were conferred with a Master's of Science in Public Health, Medicine and Social work.

The HKMU Vice-Chancellor said the college has been taking measures to improve the quality of training offered at the university.

He revealed that over the past one year, nine academic staff were employed with a view to address the existing shortage.

The college also plans to expand its Boko campus, with the budget already allocated for the construction work, which is set to commence next year, noted Prof Mgone.

Rwanda: First Lady Commends New Cervical Cancer Prevention Programme for Middle-Aged Women

3rd December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



First Lady Jeannette Kagame has commended a new programme that will provide cervical cancer prevention to women aged between 30-49.

The First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeannette Kagame, has commended a new programme that will provide cervical cancer prevention options to women aged between 30-49, that have not had a chance to get vaccinated against the Human Papilloma Virus, when they were younger.

Set to commence in January next year, the new programme will complement the existing efforts that have mainly been focusing on getting young girls (mainly 12-year-old) vaccinated against cervical cancer as well as screening services and treatment for older women.

The new project is set to give mass preventive treatment to women, in the targeted age group, mainly in the form of treatment of precancerous lesions (early cancer signs) to prevent them from developing into invasive cancer.

According to Dr François Uwinkindi, the Director of Cancer Programme at Rwanda Biomedical Centre, this kind of treatment is one of the two ways used in cervical cancer prevention.

"In cervical cancer prevention there are two ways: there is primary prevention which is avoiding contact with the Human Papilloma Virus. Vaccination is one of the things done in primary prevention, as well as avoiding sexual activity especially for young girls who are under 18 years," he said.

The other preventive way, he said, is treating precancerous lesions.

"This is when you are screened for cervical cancer and you are found with precancerous lesions, and you are given treatment so that it will not develop into invasive cancer," he explained.

The new project is a two and a half year partnership between the Ministry of Health, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID).

It will use new technologies to improve access to screening of cervical cancer.

It will be rolled out in five districts of the country for the beginning - as a pilot project.

Under the project, medical facilities will receive mobile testing and treatment equipment as well as training for local care providers.

Up to 72,000 women are expected to be screened for cervical cancer across the five districts including Gatsibo, Nyamasheke, Musanze, Huye and Nyarugenge, with plans to scale it up to other parts of the country.

Rwanda is among high burden cervical cancer countries with an incident rate of 31.9 per 100,000 women and a mortality rate of 24.1 for every 100,000 last year.

1,304 new cases of cervical cancer were registered in 2018, and 921 deaths were registered.

Speaking at an event yesterday, that brought together the Ministry of Health,

UNITAID, Clinton Health Access Initiative, among other partners, the First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeannette Kagame, commended the program as she reminded her audience that cervical cancer is preventable and called for more efforts to fight it.

"This highly preventable disease, which touches on a sensitive aspect of women's health, is one that deserves more attention, as it has been the subject of misguided views that turned out to be detrimental to the early detection, and prevention," she said.

Angeline Usanase, a cervical cancer survivor, weighed in on the importance of testing and early treatment.

Usanase, 67, was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2017, but was treated and now tells her survival story, encouraging other women to test regularly.

"If I had been going for regular tests, say every month, the medics would have perhaps seen the symptoms of cancer and dealt with them," she said.

"It is good that we have a Government that has shown us light about this cancer. Back in the day, people could think that such a disease is as a result of witchcraft but now many people are getting to know what it is."

Last year, there were an estimated 18.1 million new cancer cases and 9.5 million cancer deaths were estimated worldwide.

The number increased from 14.1 million new cases and 8.2 million deaths in 2012.

Cervical cancer is the top fourth affecting women globally, contributing to 6.6 per cent of all cancers in women. As it is the case with many other diseases, cervical cancer disproportionately affects the poorest populations.

Rwanda: How Community-Based Innovations Are Leading the HIV/Aids Fight

4th December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



Community Health Workers during a presentation of a report on the fight against HIV/AIDS at Mayange Health Centre yesterday.

The global health community needs to scale-up innovative interventions and collaborations with product development partnerships to bring life-saving solutions in the battle to end HIV/AIDS.

That is a case that many health activists have been making.

Yet few parts of the world, especially in Africa still have limited access to the new innovations, despite having high levels of HIV infections.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that there were an estimated 1.7 million new HIV infections around the world last year, and nearly 65 per cent of those were in Africa.

Moreover, experts point out that there are tens of potentially transformative innovations in the pipeline that need to be taken to the next level.

Dr Ade Fakoya, a Senior Disease Coordinator at the Global Fund, says innovations driving the war against HIV are not necessarily complex science innovations, but small community-driven services.

"There are a lot of innovations in science but often people forget about those innovations in services delivery, like engaging key population groups. Those differentiated services are making real impact," he says.

The Global Fund recently concluded its second round of mobilising funds in which \$14 billion was raised from donors.

Fakoya says such funds will be directed towards innovative community solutions, highlighting an example of supporting efforts aimed at rolling out HIV self-testing kits to rural communities and marginalised groups.

Here are some innovations different players and countries have adopted to fight against HIV/AIDS.

Government-led innovations

In Rwanda, the Government has taken the lead to work with different partners to distribute health services to different people.

Jules Mugabo, the WHO National Professional Officer in Rwanda, says his organisation works with the Ministry of Health to ensure that HIV testing services are rolled out at different levels.

"Currently, HIV testing services are available in all public and private health facilities and we do provide services in the community outreach programmes," he notes, adding that Rwanda also adopted 'Index Testing' as one of the strategies to create awareness about the epidemic.

Perhaps that is why the country has been able to achieve significant progress in fighting HIV/AIDS.

Today, over 90 per cent of all people living with HIV in Rwanda know their status and almost all of them are on life-saving treatment. Of those, 90 per cent have achieved viral suppression.

The country has also adopted other strategic interventions that have enabled 91 per cent of the citizens get covered by health insurance, while 99 per cent of pregnant women are tested for HIV.

On the other hand, 95 per cent of the kids in the country are fully vaccinated.

Index case testing is when an HIV positive person (index case) is asked to contact family members (children, spouse, sexual partners, siblings, and parents) to establish their HIV status.

It is becoming one of the common approaches countries are adopting to help people know their status.

Dr Aliyu Gambo, the Director General at the National Agency for the Control of AIDS in Nigeria highlights index testing as one of the approaches his country is taking to increase the level of awareness among citizens.

That is in addition to the political leadership his country has taken to support different population groups championing the HIV fight efforts and putting in place various prevention initiatives.

"Recently, 10,000 primary healthcare centres were renovated, equipped and provided with human resources to provide basic healthcare for all including HIV testing for pregnant women," he reveals.

His government is also supporting annual treatment of people living with HIV, strengthening data reporting of prevention activities, and integrated nutrition services into HIV services.

Indeed, Winnie Byanyima, the Executive Director at UNAIDS, argues that governments have every reason to invest in HIV fight, saying that there is a prevention crisis and the world is not doing enough.

"We are not doing enough, we are losing the battle and this can't be right. Governments must put resources, donors must put resources to the people in need. There is a crisis of resourcing," she notes.

To put her argument in context, the world had set out to achieve 500,000 new HIV infections a year by next year, but today there are 1.7 million infections.

Countries had also targeted to achieve less than 500,000 HIV deaths per year, but the number is currently at more than 700,000 deaths annually.

Byanyima's call to action to governments and donors is quite the same message that civil society organisations (CSO) and other foundations are spreading to halt the AIDS epidemic.

The role of Foundations

Christine Stegling, the Executive Director at Frontline Aids - largest global CSO working on AIDS - insists that "We should remind the world that we are in a crisis mode."

The organisation unveiled its global plan of action 2020-2025, highlighting 10 actions to prioritise to help the world secure a future free of AIDS.

The plan, which was launched on Tuesday at the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), sets out the charity's commitment to focusing resources and expertise towards the most marginalised people.

Stegling says her organization already works with marginalized communities in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, providing HIV prevention services.

"We are doing education and outreach in communities. We have learnt that those

that are hardest to reach are best reached by their own communities," she notes.

The organisation is currently bringing testing services and information around HIV and vulnerability issues of infections to communities using local that the masses understand.

"We are also providing condoms and lubricants to marginalized communities. Communities really have to be an integral part of a bigger health system," she says.

Marginalized communities like gay people, sex workers or women who are in abusive relationships, Stegling argues that they are often not reached by government services.

"We are providing those services that are bridging those bridges between communities and government services."

The UNAIDS indicates that the majority of global infections in 2018 were among key populations and their sexual partners, with 54 per cent of newly infections coming from marginalized societies.

Reverend Johannes Petrus insists that if nothing is done to have engagements with those people, the world is going nowhere, a role which he says religion, in some parts, has taken upon themselves.

"We should preach that all human beings have equal value. That's a religious statement," he notes.

Kali Lindsey at John AIDS Foundation also shares similar sentiments, indicating that there is a need to drive resources to the people.

"We provide (financial) resources to sex workers organisations and other communities that are disproportionately affected with HIV. It is something we believe other foundations can replicate," he notes.

East Africa: Regional Lawmaker Roots for Access to Essential Medicines

4th December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



A pharmacist goes through rows of drugs in a pharmacy in Kigali.

One of Rwanda's representatives in the East African Legislative Assembly is pushing for a bill entitled the 'East African Community Pharmaceuticals Bill' to promote access to essential medicines and facilitate the promotion and development of the local pharmaceutical industry.

The rationale, MP Francine Rutazana told The New Times on Tuesday, is "to help the EAC have a regional body and

legislation which will guide the coordination and harmonisation of national legislation for more results in terms of local production."

Before tabling a motion seeking leave to introduce the Bill she explained that, among others, "the concern" is that the bloc has not established favourable policies for local producers or adequately promoted them to be able to meet the pharmaceutical needs of the region and compete with imported drugs.

She also noted that there are still discrepancies in the registration procedures for essential medicines provided for by the national health policies and regulations of the partner states.

Rutazana is concerned that reliable access to affordable and quality-assured medicines in East Africa remains a huge challenge since most medicines in the Community are still paid for directly by citizens through out-of-pocket payments.

She is convinced that it is necessary for the six EAC countries to improve the management of pharmaceuticals in the bloc to ensure access to affordable, quality essential medicines, including those for the treatment of various priority communicable and non-communicable diseases.

"All Partner States heavily rely on pharmaceutical imports, especially for branded and innovator products and the inability of local pharmaceutical industry to sufficiently meet local demands for low-cost generic production and pharmaceutical innovation has allowed foreign companies to strongly dominate

the pharmaceuticals market," Rutazana said.

According to her, domestically produced medicines have less than 20 per cent of the value of the pharmaceutical market in the six-member bloc.

"One of the ways by which the Community can improve both the availability of essential medicines and their quality is to promote and support local production of essential medicines required by the Community," she said.

The EAC, now home to more than 170 million citizens, produces less than 30 per cent of the medicines it needs.

In April last year, a 10-year strategic plan for pharmaceutical manufacturing was launched.

At the time, Kenya was reported to have the largest pharmaceutical market in the bloc, with some \$740 million, followed by Uganda, at \$450 million, then Tanzania \$400 million, Rwanda \$ 100 million and Burundi \$75 million.

The market share of imports in Africa is estimated to be over 70 per cent, with a market share of generics estimated at 62 per cent in Kenya and other partner states.

In EAC, more than 50 per cent of pharmaceuticals imported into the region come from Asia, particularly from India and China.

In 2017, the Council of Ministers adopted the regional pharmaceutical manufacturing plan of action 2017 - 2027.

It has several strategies and priority areas for the region's pharmaceutical sector including establishing a regional roadmap for local manufacturers to upgrade and attain internationally recognized quality standards, as well as introducing and implementing incentive packages and appropriate financing schemes for local pharmaceutical manufacturers.

It also involves establishing a regional framework for mutual recognition of harmonized medicines registration and good manufacturing practices (GMP) inspections.

The GMPs are practices required in order to conform to the guidelines recommended by agencies that control the authorisation and licensing of the manufacture and sale of food and beverages, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products, dietary supplements, and medical devices.

Under Article 118 of the EAC Treaty, EAC countries committed to, among others, develop a common drug policy which would include establishing quality control capacities and good procurement practices; and harmonise drug registration procedures to achieve good control of pharmaceutical standards without obstructing movement of pharmaceutical products within the region.

Kenya: Minet Launches a Maternity Support Program

4th December, 2019

By Capital FM (Nairobi)



The programme will address mental, physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness and create opportunities to learn and build support systems for clients' well-being

Nairobi — Insurance firm, Minet Kenya has launched a first of its kind maternity assistance program dubbed "Blooming moms" aimed at creating awareness on pregnancy and childcare related matters.

Data from the corporate schemes Minet Kenya manages, shows Maternity as being one of the key reasons for hospital visits and therefore underpins the need to put in place interventions that ensure we have healthy, blossoming mums.

Speaking at the launch of the programme, Minet Kenya Head of Clinical Services, Wincate Mukaindo, noted that although information regarding reproductive health can be easily accessed due to the ever-improving state of maternal healthcare in the country, there is an information gap and a lot still needs to be done.

Minet's key objective is to create a platform for parents to interact with experts in the field thus empowering them to be the best they can be as they walk the journey through conception, pregnancy and childbirth. "The Minet maternity assistance programme aims to walk this journey with women and their families as they transition to parenthood," Mukaindo said.

"The transition from pregnancy to motherhood should be a period of joy, however, most women are faced with bouts of disappointment, frustration, fear and worry due to the inadequacy of information about motherhood.

Mukaindo said the programme would aim to address psychological well-being of the expectant mother, childbirth preparation classes and build confidence for a mothers' ability to deliver and nurture their children, adding that Minet would be working in close collaboration with various health experts as it rolls out the programme.

She noted that the programme will not only end at childbirth but will continue post birth to ensure that the transition is fully ingrained and prevent them battling between who they were before motherhood and who they think they should be after delivery.

"Postpartum depression is still a taboo subject in our society and is inadequately addressed though it affects 10 to 15 percent of mothers and leaves most women struggling with the transition to motherhood. We have incorporated health talks around the psychological well-being of mothers to provide health information to women helping them

improve their mental, emotional and physical wellness," Muthui said.

According to Postpartum International, it is estimated that one in seven women suffer postpartum depression (PPD) in their lifetime. In Kenya, approximately 200,000 women are predisposed to PPD.

East Africa: Fight Against Female Circumcision On Course As Kenya Intervenes, Parliamentary Official Says

4th December, 2019

By The Monitor (Kampala)

The fight to end the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is on course after promises by Kenyan government to also fight the vice, a top Parliament official has said.

Mr Musa Wamala Buyungo, the coordinator, Forum on Population and Development- Parliament said three years ago, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta vowed to also fight the practice widespread at the border with Uganda.

Mr Buyungo said the pronouncement by President Uhuru was a very positive signal in the fight against FGM since some adamant girls would cross over to Kenya and get circumcised before returning to Uganda.

The new trend had started defeating the spirited fight against FGM, according to the official who was speaking at a dialogue in Kampala.

"President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, about three years ago, made a commitment in ending FGM in three years. This was a good gesture by the President because as we are fighting the vice from Uganda, some girls would cross to the neighbouring Kenya and get circumcised from," Mr Buyungo said.

He continued: "As Parliament, we shall ride on President Uhuru's commitment and engage our Kenyan counterparts in a fight over cross border FGM to zero."

The dialogue organised by Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) in partnership with National population council (NPC) was a follow up on the Nairobi summit, aimed at localizing the promise for achieving zero unmet need for family planning information and services, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls in the region.

While in Nairobi at the ICPD conference, the President of Uganda joined other world leaders to make commitments which his government will do to achieve the three Zeros. Among his commitments were, operationalization of the National Sexuality Education Framework, reduce unmet need of family planning from 28 percent to 10 percent by 2022, eliminate all forms of sexual gender based violence against women and girls like child marriages and FGM, among others.

FGM is the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Speaking at the same dialogue, Mr Davis Mwenyi, the Assistant Commissioner, Policy Analysis in the office of the President, said since Uganda's population is more than 60 percent youth, the president takes issues of the vulnerable that include the youth seriously.

In Uganda, the practice is common among the Sabin community in Kapchorwa, Bukwo and Kween districts as well as the Pokot, Tepeth and Kadam in Nakapiripirit and Amudat districts.

Although the procedure has no medical benefits, it can leave women with a lifetime of consequences. Women can face infections, lack of sexual desire and difficulties in passing urine and faeces, studies have shown.

In the long term, they often report chronic pain and are significantly more likely to face life-threatening complications during childbirth such as caesarean sections and haemorrhaging after birth, according to a 2006 study conducted in six countries and published in the Lancet medical journal.

Rwanda: African Youth Decry Lack of Inclusion in HIV/Aids Education

2nd December, 2019
By The New Times (Kigali)



The youth are calling on for increased access to information on HIV/Aids as well as reproductive health to reduce the chances of contracting the ailment.

They were speaking ahead of the 2019 International Conference on AIDS and STIs which is set to open in Kigali today convening over 8000 people from across the continent and beyond

The continental summit, in its 20th edition, is expected to receive speakers who include leading professionals from policymakers, scientists, and sector youth champions to share a way to fight these epidemic concerns.

At the youth pre-conference where Musah Lumumba, a Sexual reproductive health activist said called out the older generation for not according the youth and adolescents adequate reproductive information, saying that some parents and teachers continue to hesitate to avail of information.

"There are some communities until now, that do not allow their youths to talk about sexual reproduction. But look, we are experiencing teen pregnancies at lower ages. In some communities, they continue to deny them information about HIV/Aids and sexual health. That's why teens should have information that would rend them aware of unwanted pregnancies and HIV," said Musah Lumumba.

Shannon Hader, The Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS said that though unpopular, countries should also consider lowering the age of consent where it is still high to enable young people to get tested and have access to preventive measures.

"Last year, Namibia and The Republic of South Africa have lowered the age of consent. A few weeks ago, also, Tanzania lowered the age of consent. This allows youths to be responsible of themselves and start having information about AIDS and teen pregnancies at early age.", said the UNAIDS Executive Director.

The World Health Organization reported that 30 per cent of new HIV infections especially among the youth aged between with 15 and 25 years of age. The youths have severally cited lack of information of sexual reproduction at lower age, inadequate sexual education in schools.

"Girls are dropping out of schools because of shame of being pregnant. Guess what? They were not told about this before. Parents are the ones to advise their kids on how to behave in their adolescence and not to kick them out of the house after pregnancy," said Dr. Grihab Pinna President of Youth Peer Education.

These youth further pointed out challenges such as lack of access to contraceptives.

Rosemary Mbabazi urged the youth to continuously express their challenges and concerns in the fight against HIV/Aids.

"It is good to discuss about things that concern our lives. HIV is becoming an epidemic to young people and it increasingly becoming a pressing issue. We should make sure it is prevented from today and future leaders because Africa is more of young people than other times", she said.

In response to the challenges, Rwanda has established Anti HIV/Aids clubs, 28 youth-friendly centres among other programs to raise the level of awareness.

Tanzania: How Red Ribbon Fashion Gala Marked World Aids Day in Style

1st December, 2019

By The Citizen (Dar es Salaam)



Today, December 1, the world commemorates World Aids Day. Across the globe, different activities take place to mark the importance of this day and also recognize efforts being made to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The theme for this year's commemoration is; "Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community". It highlights the role of communities in preventing, treating and supporting people with HIV. "I believe in communities," UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima said in a statement.

In Tanzania, the fashion community played a role in marking the day by organizing a fashion gala dedicated to supporting the theme of World Aids Day.

Through the annual Tanzania Red Ribbon fashion gala, an event was organized at the Dar es Salaam Serena Hotel, with the theme #FashionFightingAIDS and #Fashion4Disability.

Deputy Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Juliana Shonza was the guest of honour at the night fashion gala. She took part in supporting the cause by pledging government's continued helping hand in different initiatives aimed to alleviate some of the perennial problems facing Tanzanians and the global community, such as the AIDS epidemic.

"I'm pleased to take part in this event as a supporting government figure, the fight against HIV/AIDS must go on and it is through different initiatives such as this, that we will eventually win the battle," she said in front of a wide audience. In her role as Deputy Minister, Shonza also

expressed continued support for the fashion industry in Tanzania.

Khadija Mwanamboka, the brains behind the Tanzania Red Ribbon Fashion Gala, an event that has been hosted since 2007, was pleased with the turnout and support she received at this year's event. "I thank everyone who took their time to be here today. I appreciate every cent spent to buy a ticket either for yourself or your friend, all this support shows just how much unity there is in our community," she said.

The fashion night was not short of style and entertainment. A total of 14 fashion designers were lined up to exhibit their designs. From Jamilla Vera Swai, Martin Kadinda with Irada Style, Lucky Creations, to Bijoux Trendy, the list included some of the very best designers in Tanzania's fashion industry.

With red as the overriding theme of the night, almost everyone in attendance was dressed accordingly with pints of red added to their attires.

The models, who strolled down the runway dressed in some of the most unique designs looked every bit stylish as one designer after another showcased what they had prepared for the night.

Iconic names in Tanzania's fashion industry, such as Ally Rehmullah and Mustafa Hassanali, were there to show support on a night that celebrated fashion in a different way by mixing style and community responsibility.

Under Ujuzi initiative - an association that works with the youth, this year's Red Ribbon Fashion Gala also saw the

involvement of different youth initiatives, such as Youth of United Nations Association Tanzania (YUNA), Ndoto Hub, Msichana Initiative and Girl Power.

"Involving such associations, was our gesture of recognizing and appreciating the role played by youth initiatives in bringing positive change to our community. This blends well with the theme of this year, which is bringing change 'community by community'," said Mwanamboka.

The fashion event was a vibrant night which featured the perfect mix of fashion and social affairs. With a backdrop of a noble cause, the 2019 Red Ribbon Fashion Gala managed to show that fashion as an industry, can be used to highlight the different apparel trends in the fashion world, whilst also contributing to the development of the community in different ways.

Uganda: Over 1,000 HIV/Aids Patients Shun Medication - Medics

5th December, 2019

By The Monitor (Kampala)

A total of 1,094 HIV/Aids patients enrolled on anti-retroviral treatment in Apac and Lira districts have reportedly shunned medication.

Health workers and local leaders say the group only return to health facilities after their health deteriorates.

Ms Dorcus Arao, the spokesperson of RHITES, N-Lango project, an organisation sponsored by United States Agency for

International Development (Usaid), said more than 5,000 HIV patients had dropped out in the previous years.

However, she said RHITES, N-Lango has convinced many patients to resume treatment.

"We did an analysis to find out why some patients were not going back for treatment and found that most of the reasons were associated with nutrition issues, which our project is now addressing," she said yesterday.

Ms Arao added: "We are able to call and follow up our patients to remind them on their appointment date, and at every health centre, we have facilitators who follow them up to their villages."

The Apac acting District Health Officer (DHO), Mr Leone Oceng, warned that skipping medication is dangerous.

He explained that those who dropped out of ARVs are at a high risk of acquiring infections such as tuberculosis, malaria and diarrhoea, among others.

"During the time a person is on anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs, the virus in blood reduces because it hides in the bone marrow, making the body to develop a strong immunity, and when a person drops out of drugs, the virus multiplies quickly," he explained.

"The virus then comes back strongly and weakens the immunity of the body," he added.

Mr Augustine Okello, the Apac acting HIV focal point person, said the district is using

community strategies to follow up HIV patients.

"We are using some HIV patients who have volunteered to go out there and talk to their colleagues to come back for treatment," he said.

However, he noted that when a person is tested positive for the first time, he or she gets psychologically tortured.

Mr Emmanuel Nengo, an interpersonal communication agent working with RHITES, N-Lango, however, blamed the problem on inadequate counselling services.

"During community outreach programmes, some people are enrolled on ARVs without being sensitised about the side effects," he said.

Mr Tonny Jasper Odongo, the Apac secretary of health and education, advised HIV patients to value their lives and continue with treatment.

"Those with tuberculosis are also endangering the community. We shall look for them if they keep hiding," Mr Odongo said.

Need for sensitisation

He appealed to local leaders to continue sensitising the community. "At every gathering, we should talk about HIV/Aids and encourage people to test their blood," he said.

Mr Richard Epenu, an enrolled nurse, said in Lira District, some HIV patients had defaulted on taking antiretroviral treatment.

He said at least 20 out of 520 people who are enrolled on medication at Agali Health Centre have since defaulted on anti-retroviral treatment.

"Because of lack of transport, we are failing to follow up on HIV patients who have defaulted on treatment," he said.

HIV Prevalence IN APAC

At least 80,690 people living with HIV/Aids in Apac District are enrolled on medication but of these, a total of 1,094 no longer visit the health facilities to pick their monthly dosage, according to Usaid's RHITES, N-Lango project.

RHITES, N-Lango project is being implemented in all the nine districts in Lango Sub-region.

Kenya: Safaricom, Partners, Unveil Free Disease Surveillance Mobile Service

6th December, 2019

By Capital FM (Nairobi)



The service, dubbed Safiri Smart, allows Safaricom subscribers receive information about any epidemic that has broken out at their travel destination including prevention, measures and symptom.

Nairobi — Safaricom PLC has partnered with the Ministry of Health and Korea Telecom to launch a disease surveillance and awareness service that notifies users, especially travelers, of disease outbreaks locally and internationally for free.

Speaking during the launch, Safaricom's Chief Corporate Affairs Steve Chege says, the service, dubbed Safiri Smart, and allows Safaricom subscribers receive information about any epidemic that has broken out at their travel destination including prevention, measures and symptoms.

"Safaricom and Korea Telcom have no expertise when it comes to epidemics, but we do have the technology and the innovation; and when you bring in the know-how through the Ministry of Health, what you get is a partnership that can truly have an impact," Chege said.

"Such partnerships that help keep our communities safe are crucial in our quest to fulfilling our vision of transforming lives," he added.

Korea Telecom's Sustainability Management Vice President Myung Gon Chung says global Telcom have a unique opportunity to help prevent contagious diseases from spreading by sharing crucial information with their subscribers at the right time.

"We are dedicated to championing these efforts as part of our commitment to the

UN Sustainable Development Goals," Chung added.

Currently, the service is accessible on Unstructure Supplementary Service Data, USSD, which Chege says is the easiest way to reach people.

Safaricom subscribers can access Safiri Smart by dialing *256# from their mobile phones.

Tanzania: Health Experts Trumpet Use of New Arv Drug

6th December, 2019

By Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)



TREATMENT to HIV patients has recorded a tremendous milestone, with the new Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drug proving to be able to suppress viral load within six months, with fewer or no side effects at all.

The generic fixed-dose combination of tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, lamivudine, and dolutegravir (TLD),

which is now available in many public hospitals in the country, has been supplied at the Lake Zone based health facilities for the last six to seven months.

Clinical studies have demonstrated that treatment regimens with TLD result in more rapid suppression of viral load, fewer side effects, and greater potency against drug resistance than current regimens in use by patients.

"Timely suppression of viral loads is one of the surest ways of preventing opportunistic diseases, and the drug has proven highly efficient compared to others in use," said Dr. Mohamed Mnyau.

Dr Mnyau was heading a panel of experts who conducted a workshop of about 150 health staff from Mwanza and Shinyanga regions that deliberated on the best practices to be observed while administering the drug to patients, among other technicalities.

He said with proper dosage, administration, and other precautions, patients have been reporting good development, adding that training health experts on how to take the drug was extremely important.

Similar trainings are conducted throughout the country, with those in the Lake Zone being provided by the National Aids Control Programme (NICP) and facilitated by the Ariel Glaser Pediatrics AIDS Healthcare Initiatives (AGPAHI).

One of the participants, a Clinical Officer from Kitungulu Health Center in Sengerema District, Shaban Malengwa said his center started giving out the new

drug in September this year, and so far patients are very happy with it.

He said many patients have been reporting a positive trend compared to other ARVs that used to cause them different forms of discomfort, with other patients complaining of experiencing nightmares during the night when they took them.

Mr Malengwa thanked the government for making TLD available, suggesting for logistic arrangements for the drug to be supplied to dispensaries as well.

On his side, Mr Emillian Ng'wandu, a Program Officer and Pharmacist from AGPAHI, said supply of the drug has been maintained, and that by end of this year, over 100 health centers across the Lake Zone will start getting them as well.

Basically, he said the supply of the drug started at referral, followed by regional and district hospitals and some selected health centers, thanks to the timely supply by Medical Stores Department (MSD).

According to experts, patients with less than 50 viral loads cannot transmit HIV to another sex partner while other patients can carry up to 10,000 to 100,000 viral loads, making it extremely difficult to recover from the opportunistic diseases.

Uganda: Disregard Cultural Practices That Spread HIV - Museveni

2nd December, 2019
By The Monitor (Kampala)



The Vice President, Mr Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, greets Mr Richard Lutaaya (left), the son of late Philly Lutaaya during the commemoration of World Aids Day in Busaana, Kayunga District, yesterday. Right is the Minister of Health, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng.

President Museveni has advised Ugandans to do away with cultural practices that have contributed to the spread of HIV/Aids.

He said some cultural traditions such as widow inheritance and polygamy have influenced the spread of Aids.

"As a priority, our prevention efforts should focus on eliminating traditions and practices that promote HIV transmission such as widow inheritance, polygamy, wife- sharing and others which are high risk factors in HIV transmission," the President said.

His message was contained in a statement delivered by the Vice President, Mr Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, yesterday in commemoration of the World Aids Day

at Busaana Sub-county headquarters in Kayunga District.

The event was marked under the theme, "Encouraging young people to champion the end of new HIV infections".

The President disclosed that one of the key underlying drivers of HIV is poverty, which he said has led to gender-based violence and HIV infections.

He, however, noted that government is emphasising access to universal education, and vocational and technical education.

"Once poverty is reduced, vulnerability to HIV would be reduced. We need to also emphasise behavioural change," the President said.

He observed that ending Aids requires personal commitment as he called on Ugandans to be role models. He also called on all people to disseminate the right information on HIV/Aids on radios, TVs, and newspapers in a bid to end the scourge.

The Minister of Health, Ms Jane Ruth Aceng, said the vulnerability of young people is driven by engaging in high risk sexual behaviours and cross-generational sex, noting that championing young people in fighting HIV infection is important in ending new infections.

She said a total of 1.2 million people are on ART treatment out of 1.4 million people who are HIV positive in the country.

The chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on HIV/Aids, Ms Florence

Namboozo, advised Ugandans to live responsible lives.

"It is from the tax payers' money that development partners extend donor funds to us to provide treatment to HIV/Aids patients. They give us their money and for us we continue to misbehave sexually. Imagine what would happen one day if they pull out and stop giving us this money," she said.

Sensitisation drive

Ms Namboozo the Sironko District Woman MP, asked parents to sensitise their children, especially during this holiday about HIV prevention.

The Minister for the Presidency, Ms Esther Mbayo, said emphasis in HIV prevention is being directed to young people who constitute a big percentage of the population.

The function was also attended by Mr Richard Lutaaya, the son of late Philly Lutaaya, a musician who was the first to publically declare that he had HIV/Aids in the county.

Prevalence rate

Infection. HIV/Aids prevalence stands at 8 per cent, with Kampala and south western Uganda having the highest rates at 7.9 per cent.

Lango and Acholi sub-regions have 7.2 per cent prevalence.

Bunyoro, Tooro and Rwenzori are at 5.7 per cent, Busoga and Bukedi at 4.7 per cent, while Bugisu and Sebei sub-regions have a prevalence of 5.1 per cent.

West Nile and Karamoja sub-regions are at 3.1 and 3.7 per cent prevalence rates, respectively.

Other Buganda districts such as Luweero and Nakasongola have an HIV/Aids prevalence of 7.6 per cent.

Kenya: Fight Against HIV/Aids Targets to Achieve a Free Nation By 2030

1st December, 2019

By Capital FM (Nairobi)



First Lady Margaret Kenyatta makes her remarks during the Commemoration of World AIDS day at Gusii Stadium, Kisii County

Nairobi — First lady Margret Kenyatta today lead the nation in marking the 31st World Aids Day in a colourful function at Gusii stadium in Kisii County.

Speaking during the event the First Lady said the community and families need to sacrifice in the fight against the global menace noting that everybody needs to

contribute towards the country's challenge of achieving a HIV/AIDS free nation by 2030.

"HIV remains a pressing issue to areas where there is no access to quality health care services and antenatal care and where there is no counseling for pregnant mothers who have no knowledge on HIV therefore putting their babies at risk," she said.

She said efforts to eliminate HIV are central to the government's health promise for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and strengthening health systems and increasing access is essential to the government's program.

Cabinet Secretary for Health, Cecily Kariuki said that they recognize how the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kenyan counties has been managed with great milestones recorded by the government.

She noted that according to the statistics there is a marked decrease from 13% in the early 90s to the current of 4.9% in national rates.

Kisii governor James Ongwae said the county has given 50% towards health sector in the county adding that the county is working hard to ensure there is quality health service delivery to Kisii residents.

He noted with the Sh2.5 billion funds they are soon launching the construction a cancer center facility to help residents cut on travel expenses to Kenyatta National Hospital or the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital.

"In Kisii county we have dropped HIV/AIDS prevalence rate from 9% to 4.4 %, increased the number of patients on medication from 10,000 to 31,500 while reducing the annual infection number from 4900 to 1000 new cases.

Women's Representative for Murang'a, Sabina Chege noted that parents should take care of young girls as early pregnancies are on the rise in the country.

Dr Nduku Kilonzo, The Chief Executive Officer, National Aids Control Council (NACC) said that Kenya had taken bold steps towards tackling the HIV/AIDS.

Rwanda: Gicumbi - I&M Bank Rwanda PLC Joins Citizens for Umuganda-Community Work and Pays Health Insurance Premiums to Vulnerable People

3rd December, 2019

By The New Times (Kigali)



I&M Bank Rwanda Plc joined citizens of Nyamiyaga Sector in Gicumbi District on Saturday to do the monthly Umuganda-Community work and paid Community Based Health Insurance- Mutuelle de Santé premiums to about 1,000 vulnerable people.

The beneficiaries are from three sectors of the district.

The support worth Rwf3 million was offered to vulnerable citizens from Nyamiyaga, Rutare and Bukure sectors.

Robin Bairstow, the I&M Bank Chief Executive Officer said that doing Umuganda Community work as well as participating in other public activities are in line with the Bank's vision to support Government homegrown solutions initiatives.

"I&M Bank stands committed to improving the quality of life in the community we operate in and it is in that spirit that we have donated health insurance (Mutuelle de Sante) subscription to 1000 vulnerable people of this district." he said.

Established in 1963, I&M Bank (Rwanda) Plc is a leading Financial Services Provider with a regional presence in Africa.

In Rwanda, the company's product offering includes Retail Banking, Business Banking, Corporate and Institutional Banking. The Bank has a proven track record in pioneering innovative financial services and supporting the Republic of Rwanda's strategy for financial inclusion.

Robin said that I&M Bank will continue to support government's initiatives and collaborate with citizens.

Epimaque Mpayimana, the Executive Secretary of Gicumbi District thanked I&M Bank for the support that will help people who were not affording health insurance.

"We currently have partnership with the bank in various activities, and especially this year, they helped us to pay health insurance for 1,000 people. It is a good initiative and we appreciate it as the district. The given facilities will help vulnerable citizens who could not afford the subscription premiums." Mpayimana said.

After umuganda. Discussions were held.

Mpayimana discussed with the citizens on various programmes including the role of Abunzi-mediators.

He urged citizens to approach them so as to get their problems solved via mediation approach.

He also urged them to cater for people with disabilities and also strive for ending family conflicts.

He said there is need for joint collaboration to advocate for teen girls who get impregnated and reminded citizens to save for their future via Ejo Heza, the long-term saving Scheme set up by the Government of Rwanda.

Kenya: Expert Calls for Integration of HIV, Reproductive Health Services

1st December, 2019

By The Nation (Nairobi)



KEMRI researcher Dr Maricianah Onono during a Kenya Science Congress meeting in Mombasa on November 20, 2019.

In Summary

- Clinical trials comparing HIV incidence and contraceptives benefits in women began in 2015 and concluded in October last year.

There is need to integrate reproductive health services for women in public and private clinics, a reproductive health expert has said.

Dr. Maricianah Onono said the integration of services such as family planning, HIV/ Aids and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing will

reduce the burden on women as tests will be done in a one stop shop.

Dr Onono said a study found that at least one in every five women seeking family planning services had an STI, raising concerns of high number of HIV cases.

PROPER DIAGNOSIS

"There is need to integrate services to enable women seeking family planning services to get proper diagnosis for other diseases," said Dr Onono who is a researcher at the Kenya Medical Research Institute.

"Safe and effective contraception empowers women besides enhancing their economic and social development," she added.

Some of the available family planning choices for women include IUD, implants, female sterilisation, oral and injectable methods.

Clinical trials comparing HIV incidence and contraceptives benefits in women began in 2015 and concluded in October last year. The trial was undertaken in Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Eswatini (Swaziland).

At least 7,829 women of ages between 16-35 were involved in the trials dubbed ECHO using one of the three highly effective contraceptive methods like- Depot medroxyprogesterone (DMPA-IM), copper intrauterine device (IUD)

The trials revealed 397 out of the 7,829 women acquired HIV during the study.

HIV INFECTIONS

"The overall rate of new HIV infections was 3.81 per cent per year," revealed Dr Onono.

She said that the HIV prevalence among women is high.

"Women participating in ECHO were seeking effective contraception. The trial found no substantial difference in HIV risk among the three different contraceptive methods evaluated," added Dr Onono during last month's Kenya Science Journalists congress in Mombasa.

The results underscored the importance of continued access to these three contraceptive methods, as well as expanded contraceptive choices. According to Dr Onono ECHO results are reassuring and distressing.

"In spite of HIV treatment and prevention programmes and an individualised HIV prevention package, HIV incidence is high," said Dr Onono.

She suggested that more aggressive HIV prevention efforts for women including PreP are needed.

On the positive side, ECHO has brought together family planning and HIV worlds of research, policy and programme together. However, STIs prevalence were high. World Health Organisation recommends moving away from syndromic approach.

REPRODUCTIVE CANCERS

"New screening, treatment, and prevention strategies for STIs are needed," said Dr Onono.

She observed that this strategy is critical to address foetal and neonatal deaths, cervical cancer, infertility, increased HIV risks, physical, psychological and social impacts that compromise quality of life.

Prevention and treatment of HIV and other STIs, safe abortion services, detecting and preventing sexual and

gender-based violence, managing reproductive cancers, counselling and services for modern contraceptives will be readily available to women.

Other benefits include availing antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care and counselling and services for women.

Compiled by:



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