

# Why Kenya won't get zero Aids deaths

Kenya may fail to achieve zero Aids deaths if it fails to integrate HIV/ TB programmess

By KIUNDU WAWERU

Ms Lucy Chesire, who has lived with HIV for 19 years, is worried that even as Kenya is winning the war on HIV, it has ignored the connection between HIV and TB.

In 2000, Lucy was diagnosed with a TB/ HIV co-infection. She developed complications from both treatments that saw her hospitalised for seven months.

But Lucy was lucky as she underwent both ART and TB treatment under the same roof at the only TB-integrated clinic in Kenya at the Moi Referral Hospital, Eldoret.

But there has been little TB/ HIV integration, even though TB remains the leading killer of people living with HIV.

This sees patients with TB and HIV spend time at a HIV clinic, only to start the process all over again at a TB clinic.

Drugs for both diseases have intense side effects, with defaulting resulting in dire consequences. Defaulting in TB treatment results in multiple drug resistant TB, which is highly infectious, expensive to treat and takes longer to cure.

"It should be a one stop shop," said Lucy Chesire, the director of TB Action Group, which she founded in 2000.

## TB PROGRAMMES

People working in TB programmes feel that the HIV arm has been given more mileage at their expense.

According to WHO, HIV increases the risk of developing active TB, with people living with HIV having between 20-37 times higher risk of contracting the disease.

In 2004, the World Health Organisation came up with an interim policy on collaborative TB/ HIV activities, which stipulate that there should be an establishment of National TB Programme and National Aids Control Programme collaborative mechanisms.

Integrating HIV and Aids, with TB would be one of the ways to meet this year's theme, "Getting to Zero: zero Aids related deaths, zero HIV infections and zero discrimination".

At a workshop held this week at the Sarova Panafric Hotel, regional



Residents march along the streets of Kisumu to mark World Aids Day, yesterday. The event was presided over by Co-operatives Minister Joe Nyaga. (PHOTOS: JAMES KEYI, GOVEDI ASUTSA AND ANDREW KILONZI/STANDARD)



Standard Group Chief Operating Officer Sarvjeet Channa tests for HIV at the Standard Group Centre along Mombasa Road, yesterday.



Reuben Granich: "For Kenya to get to zero it needs to implement the WHO Three I's for HIV/ TB."

players from the TB and HIV programmes discussed how the respective governments are handling the interventions.

Among them was Reuben Granich, Medical Officer for HIV/ TB Department at the World Health Organisation, Geneva. Granich says that for countries like Kenya to get to zero, they need to implement the WHO Three I's for HIV/ TB.

"The Three I's are Intensified TB Case Finding, Isoniazid Preventive

Therapy and Infection Control," he said.

The objective of the conference was enhancing the ownership and implementation of TB/ HIV integration. It was organised by the Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV/Aids, Aids and Rights Alliance for Eastern Africa and WHO.

Infection Control is geared towards reducing the likelihood of exposure to TB in health facilities and in the community while Intensified case finding

is meant to ensure early identification.

Isoniazid Preventive Therapy (IPT) will reduce the risk of TB to people who have inactive TB.

At the conference, it emerged that Kenya has opted out of the IPT therapy.

On this, Granich says, "Adopting the guidelines is ultimately a country's decision. But implementing the same is critical as it has unparalleled success in treating HIV and TB."

## Raila calls for alternative funding to HIV

By MANGO MOSOTA

The Government has admitted that the global financial crisis threatens the country's HIV/Aids budget.

In a speech read by Co-operatives Minister Joe Nyagah during World Aids Day in Kisumu, Prime Minister Raila Odinga said Kenya must seek internal funds because the current global financial crisis was putting pressure on global community who might reduce support for HIV/Aids initiatives.

"We must look back within our own resources to ensure that our people do not suffer, in case the donors withdraw financial support for our programmes," argued the premier.

Special Programmes PS Andrew Mondoh said the financial meltdown has forced the Government to rethink funding for HIV/Aids programmes.

"The emerging reality that external funding for HIV programmes can be erratic has put Government planners back to the drawing board to seek other ways of sustainable HIV funding," said Mr Mondoh.

## TRUST FUND

He said to address the issue, the Government intends to establish an HIV and Aids Trust Fund to leverage domestic resources to sustain HIV programmes.

The PS revealed that donors support 85 per cent of the country's HIV/ Aids budget with the most funds coming from the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief — a US Government initiative that has in the last five years given grants amounting to more than \$40 billion, annually.

Yesterday, Mondoh said due to the weakening shilling, the Government was exploring ways of manufacturing drugs and condoms used in the fight against HIV/Aids.

"As a Government, we are exploring options in the foreseeable future of putting up our own factory for HIV generic drugs," he said.

## Standard employees in voluntary testing

By PETER ORENGO

Staff of The Standard Group joined the rest of the globe in marking World Aids Day by participating in voluntary HIV testing at their offices in Nairobi.

The exercise by Mater Hospital was a culmination of a Radio Maisha campaign urging Kenyans to know their status.

"It's good for staff to know their HIV status in a working environment. Statistics show that only 20 per cent of Kenyans know their status. If tested, one can plan ahead," said the Group Chief Operating Officer, Sarvjeet Channa.

"We are committed to carrying out awareness, not only among our staff, but also to the rest of Kenyans. That way, people who are infected will start living positively," said Channa.

## QuickRead

### NAIROBI: Youth urged to behave responsibly

French Ambassador Etienne de Poncins has asked Kenyan youths to be actively involved in the fight against HIV/Aids. The envoy said HIV was still a major threat despite the strides that have been made in fighting it. He urged the youth to behave responsibly if no new HIV infections and Aids-related deaths were to be realised. "The youth must

make a commitment to stop the spread of the disease," he said. The ambassador was speaking during the inauguration of a public relations and market centre funded by the French Government at Mukuru kwa Ruben slums.

### BUSIA: HIV prevalence rate on the decline

The prevalence rate of HIV and Aids in Western Province has dropped from seven per cent to five per cent, Western PC Samuel Kilele has said. Kilele said he was happy with the downward trend



but noted that the five per cent was still too high and a lot needed to be done to reduce the figure. Speaking in Malaba during the launch of a community policing tournament, Mr Kilele asked the youth to avoid practices that may expose them to risks of contracting the disease, especially during this festive season, as it

### MOMBASA: Man and son circumcised together

A man and his nine-year-old son were circumcised together as the World Aids Day was marked

yesterday. Mr David Jomeli, 35, and his son underwent the cut at Bomu Hospital in Changamwe Mombasa "I wanted to take my son for circumcision but when he asked if I had been circumcised, I said no. I decided to be a good example to my son by being circumcised first," said Jomeli. He said he was aware male circumcision could reduce a man's risk of becoming infected with HIV and Aids. Jomeli, who hails from Nyanza, appealed to other men from the region to get circumcised.