



SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ACTION ON HIV & AIDS AND TB

# News Bulletin

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## Government put on task to ensure no child is born with HIV by 2015



*Dr. Nduku Kilonzo, Executive Director of Liverpool VCT speaking during the media conference. Photo/Internews Kenya*

**BY EDNA ONCHIRI**

Civil society organizations working in the field of HIV have called on the government to walk the talk on their recent pledge on ensuring no child is born with HIV by 2015.

The group was attending a week long training workshop run by Internews Kenya from 15 – 19 August. They observed that if efforts are not stepped up to reduce transmission of the virus from mothers to children, the ambitious commitment made at the United Nations (UN) high level meeting will remain a mirage.

The UN pledge, dubbed global plan towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive was signed in June this year.

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# Government put on task to ensure no child is born with HIV by 2015

The plan provides the foundation for country-led movement towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children and keeping their mothers alive.

Speaking during a media conference on the last day of the workshop, Dr. Nduku Kilonzo, Executive Director of Liverpool VCT, Care and Treatment observed that “the country will never end paediatric HIV if it cannot prevent new infections among women.”

Dr. Kilonzo said that “it is highly unlikely to prevent paediatric HIV if the country is unable to prevent unintended pregnancies among women living with HIV”. The civil societies also called on the government to ensure that maternal,

newborn and child health as well as HIV and family planning programmes work together to deliver quality results.

Dr. Nduku called on the government to integrate reproductive health and HIV services as this will curb paediatric HIV.

The group of CSOs observed that the government needs to allocate 15 per cent of the annual budget to health; of which 4 per cent should go to mother and child health services, the group also observed that the government ought to remove barriers that hinder uptake of antenatal and childbirth services as well as improve access to early infant HIV testing.

Despite having taken steps to reduce

the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Kenya, maternal care is still limited in its provision. Statistics indicate that 88% of the 2.2 million children living with HIV/AIDS grow up in Africa and the vast majority are beyond the reach of health services. Records further confirm that in more than nine times out of ten, children become infected with the HIV virus through mother-to-child transmission. This infection can occur during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

The Global Plan was developed through a consultative process by a high level Global Task Team convened by UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe and United States Global AIDS Coordinator Ambassador Erick Goosby.

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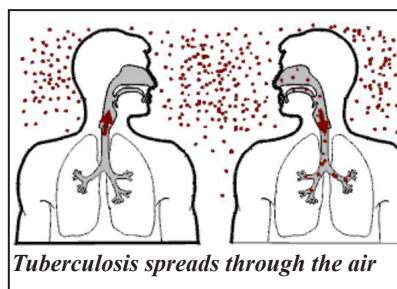
## Tuberculosis (TB) testing drive planned for Korogocho residents

BY JACKLINE AWINO

Hundreds of Nairobi residents in Korogocho area will be tested for tuberculosis in the first week of September. Korogocho is one of the largest slum neighbourhoods of Nairobi and is home to close to 200,000 people.

The testing initiative has been organized by Pambazuko Mashinani, a non-profit making organization operating in the area.

The purpose of the testing is to establish cases of active TB among residents given that a recent report from the area observed that over one hundred Korogocho residents are already



infected with the TB virus, in addition, 3 MDR-TB patients have already been identified.

Pambazuko Mashinani is currently performing TB awareness among residents as well as providing social support to TB patients some of who are HIV positive.

The organization recently carried out

a research entitled “Analysis of Korogocho residents knowledge, attitude and practices towards tuberculosis: implications for health communication” The findings will be launched on 4th September 2011 at St. John Catholic Church in Korogocho.

The launch will be preceded with a ‘kick TB out of Korogocho’ soccer tournament where the winning team will take home a trophy and a goat.

Key personalities from the government, religious organizations and civil societies will also be present during the launch. Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium representatives will also attend the launch.

# Kenya's most at risk population empowered to speak their world on HIV and TB

BY KANCO NEWSDESK

A training workshop aimed at empowering Kenya's most at risk population (MARPS) to speak their world on HIV and TB was held from 9th -10th August at a Nairobi hotel.

The 2-day workshop was organized by the National Partnership Platform (NPP) Kenya.

Participants of the workshop were drawn from various career fields including representatives from the sex workers industry, gay community, university students, and legal officers.

Also trained during the workshop were peer educators and programme officers.

The workshop aimed at reinforcing the vital role of KCs within the NPP initiative and also advancing the understanding of the key correspondent (KC) team concept and vision.

Participants got the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on advocacy, understanding the media as well as identifying local issues to report on.

The participants also got to understand the concept of interviewing in order to gather information for news writing.

In order to advocate for a more effective response to HIV and TB and influence policy and decision making processes, participants were trained on how to collect, consolidate and disseminate high quality articles featuring local perspectives.

The team was also trained on how to serve as a unique and extensive HIV and TB watchdog mechanism.

## NPP Initiative

The NPP initiative has for the past decade offered an effective long term mechanism for the exchange of information and experience on HIV/Aids and TB among all stakeholders.

This has increased unity and solidarity among civil society actors by providing a hub for critical advocacy activities.

The participants actively contributed to the process of the

training course with their experiences and knowledge of working as or with MARPS, they enriched the atmosphere of the training greatly with engaging discussions on approaches they intend to take in speaking their world on HIV/Aids and TB.

The newly trained participants will join a global network of country-based writers who capture and document the local realities of people most affected by HIV and TB.

## About MARPS

According to National AIDS & STI control programme

(NASCOP) MARPs are groups of people who are disproportionately at higher risk for acquiring or transmitting HIV.

This is because they engage in behaviors that predispose them to acquiring HIV.

The primary MARPs in Kenya include Sex workers and their clients, Men who have sex with men (MSM), Prisoners, People who Inject drugs (IDUs).

Others include truckers, fishing and beach communities.

MARPs have the highest risk of transmitting and acquiring HIV/STI due to increased frequency of high risk sex (unprotected anal and vaginal sex, multiple partners, frequency of partners) and drug-related HIV risk behaviors (e.g. sharing of needles, flashblooding , vipointing etc).

MARPs experience barriers to accessing services because their behaviors are criminalized and stigmatized making them marginalized and hard to reach.

MARPs account for one third of new HIV infections in Kenya which is estimated to be about 100,000 per year (KAIS 2008).



*Participants pose for a photo at the end of the two day training workshop* Photo/KANCO



# Free sex is back... via ARVs

**T**rendy youths believe that they have discovered the secret of protecting themselves against unwanted pregnancy and HIV.

With two scientific studies showing that antiretrovirals (ARVs) can prevent the risk of HIV transmission, the youth, particularly the working class population, now think they have a trick or two up their sleeves.

Combine this with the use of morning-after pills and there you have it — a dual protection from pregnancy and HIV.

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (Preps) is a form of treatment involving use of ARVs to prevent HIV infection. Preps is administered following accidental exposure to rape, contact with foreign blood in, for instance, road accidents, bomb blasts and earthquakes, or occupational hazards like a health worker being pricked by an infected needle.

Despite ARVs being amongst the list of drugs sold by prescription, some chemists are dispensing them without it.

In some cases, people get unscrupulous doctors to write them prescriptions for the Preps at a fee.

Dr Lilian Otiso, the HIV services director at Liverpool Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centre (LVCT) says they have increasingly noted that some youth are coming to them with fictional rape stories in order to access Preps.

Currently, discussions are going on globally on whether to use the ARV medication tenofovir (TDF), either alone or in combination (Prep) for the prevention of HIV.

Scientific evidence has found Prep to be an important tool for HIV prevention. If a HIV — positive person adhere

to an effective antiretroviral therapy regimen, the risk of transmitting the virus to an uninfected sexual partner can be reduced by 96 per cent.

For the HIV — negative, research has found a reduced HIV infection risk by 73 per cent. It is this knowledge that the youth are using to their advantage as a free ticket to having promiscuous sex without worrying about contracting HIV.

Dr Otiso pointed out that a majority of people misusing Preps are aged 30 and below.

“They are engaging in risky sexual encounters and taking ARVS to keep them safe,” Se reveals, adding that “Most of these young people are going by the word spreading on the streets that the Preps meant for rape survivors can be used to reduce the risk of HIV infection.”

Studies among discordant couples have shown that if the HIV — positive partner takes ARVs, chances of transmitting the virus are reduced by 96 per cent. But, if the positive partner is not on ARVS, the negative one can take the drugs and reduce the risk of contracting the virus by 73 per cent.

Otiso warns that once the youth begin taking Preps, they experience negative side effects and discontinue treatment. Preps are a 28-day treatment therapy where two or three ARV drugs are prescribed. Dr Otiso says the full dose is split in two in order to follow up and encourage patients to complete treatment when they go for the next refill.



## Side Effects

The side effects of Preps include nausea, vomiting, headaches, disturbed dreams and skin eruptions.

“The body requires time to adjust to the drugs and patients on treatment should be counselled to be patient,” says Dr Otiso.

Before a patient is put on Preps, they are first tested for HIV in order to determine their status. To increase HIV test uptake, LVCT and Regional Aids Training Network (RATN) have been educating counsellors to improve their ability to encourage people to test and patients to adhere to treatment.

The RATN trainings are also equipping counsellors with skills to respond to the emerging challenges in HIV management in order to combat the spread.

Dr Otiso says the message going out to the youth is that ARVs are not a means of HIV prevention.

The National Aids and Sexually Transmitted Disease Programme (Nascop) director Dr Nicholas Muraguri is warning individuals selling Preps without prescription that this is criminal.

Muraguri says Preps are meant for rape survivors and to safeguard health

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# About Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

PrEP is short for PreExposure Prophylaxis and may be part of comprehensive HIV prevention services in which HIV negative people who are at high risk, take antiretroviral medication daily to try to lower their chances of becoming infected with HIV if they are exposed to it.

To date, PrEP has only been shown to be effective in men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgendered women who have sex with men. Studies are underway to evaluate whether it is safe and effective in reducing HIV infection among heterosexual men and women as well as injection drug users, but those results are not yet available.

In November 2010, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the results of the iPrEx clinical trial, a large, multi-country research study examining whether a pill used to treat HIV can also help prevent HIV infection. The study found that daily oral use of tenofovir plus emtricitabine (brand name Truvada) provided an average of 44% additional protection to men who have sex with men (MSM) who also received a comprehensive package of prevention services that included monthly HIV testing, condom provision, and management of other sexually transmitted infections.

CDC is leading national efforts to develop formal Public Health Service guidelines for PrEP. Until those more detailed guidelines are available, CDC has developed interim guidance for physicians electing to provide PrEP for HIV prevention among high risk MSM (see graphic and other materials below). In addition, CDC provides the following initial cautions to MSM who may be interested in PrEP before Public Health Service guidelines are available:

To date, PrEP has only been shown to reduce HIV infection

among gay and bisexual men, and transgendered women who have sex with men, and there are no data regarding its benefit among heterosexuals or injection drug users.

PrEP should only be used among individuals who have been confirmed to be HIV-negative. Initial and regular HIV testing is critical for anyone considering using PrEP. All individuals considering PrEP must also be evaluated for other health conditions that may impact PrEP use.

**P**rEP should never be seen as the first line of defense against HIV. It was only shown to be partially effective when used in combination with regular HIV testing, condoms, and other proven prevention methods. Men who have sex with men should still:

Use condoms correctly and consistently

Get tested to know their status and that of their partner(s) for certain

Get tested – and treated if needed – for other sexually transmitted infections that can facilitate HIV transmission, such as syphilis and gonorrhea

Get information and support to reduce drug use and sexual risk behavior

Reduce their number of sexual partners

PrEP must be obtained and used in close collaboration with healthcare providers to ensure regular HIV testing, risk reduction and adherence counseling, and careful safety monitoring.

Anyone considering using PrEP should speak with their doctor.

**Courtesy: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

From pg 4

## Free sex is back... via ARVs

workers who accidentally expose themselves to the HIV virus in the line of duty.

"It is illegal to sell Preps over the counter without prescription, It is criminal and people who are engaging in such activities need to have their licenses revoked," says Dr Muraguri.

Muraguri says the pharmacists doing that are being unethical and asked Kenyans to be vigilante and to report the culprits to the registrar of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.

### Resistant Strain

Dr Muraguri says an individual is likely to take the wrong drug and dosage.

"Infact when you think you are protecting yourself, you are not. There are better methods to protect your health ,"advises Dr Muraguri.

The Aids expert points out that while there are no guidelines for Preps use, the rule is clear that they can only be administered by prescription.

Muraguri observes that there are very

few ARVs in the pipeline and hence the need to guard the existing drugs from resistance.

He cautions that the country risks developing a Multiple Drug Resistant HIV strain. Globally countries are required to have less than ten per cent of HIV patients requiring second line treatment otherwise it would be too expensive.

**Courtesy: Standard Media**

# HIV education through sports

BY KANCO NEWSDESK

Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) through its central region office recently educated hundreds of people who attended the Kenya Communications Sports Organisation (KECOSO) by providing information, education and communication material on HIV and TB.

The educational materials were provided during the 32nd edition of KECOSO games at Ruring'u stadium in

Nyeri County.

Led by the Central region coordinator, the KANCO team braved the chilly weather, eager crowds and team officials to reach out to over 1000 people including team officials, players and the general public with information on HIV and TB.

KANCO aimed

at providing some basic knowledge on HIV and TB prevention, infection and treatment to the players and also to the crowds.

Since its inception, KANCO has been running special advocacy campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the epidemic and health behaviours, targeting sports activities has been instrumental for the organization given the crowds that sports activities pull.



## Bits and Pieces

### People who were missing out on ARVs are now accessing drugs

The ARV stock level has gone up after Treasury allocated more than 900 million shillings to buy the drug in this year's budget.

Nelson Otwoma from the National Empowerment Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS says those who were missing out on the life prolonging drug are now getting the medication. Otwoma had earlier this year raised the alarm that thousands of people living with HIV were missing out on ARVs due to a shortage.

**SOURCE:** Nairobi Star (Nairobi)

### NACC: Kshs. 9 billion spent on ARVS

The National Aids Control Council spends more than Kshs.9 billion annually to provide HIV positive people with ARVs, NACC Director Prof Alloys Orago has said.

He also said that the amount was used to supply 460,000 people with the drugs

countrywide and plans were underway to increase the number of people under ARVs to 489,000 by the end of the year.

**SOURCE:** The Standard

### A.M.R.E.F. calls On Ministry to invest in healthcare

A leading research expert has called on Kenya to invest in health care in order to ensure sustained efforts towards combating diseases, hunger and environmental pollution.

AMREF Director of Capacity Building Dr. Peter Ngatia said through innovative technologies, research need to be allocated adequate human and financial resources.

The research expert who was addressing a Dundee University Health and Research symposium at the institution in Nairobi said that investment in health research can significantly contribute to broader national development goals; including economic growth and poverty reduction.

Ngatia noted that in Kenya, disease and poor health in general are major barriers

toward economic growth and if, through research, new effective products and interventions are availed, disease burdens in communities will be minimized and this undoubtedly will help unleash community's potential for economic growth and poverty reduction.

Ngatia said that elimination, prevention or slowing down of disease burdens would save millions of mothers and children lives.

According to Ngatia, it is imperative therefore that governments, the private sector, the civil society and all other stakeholders in health incorporate research in their strategic plan to ensure the attainment of global health goals such as Millennium Development Goals number 4, 5 and 6 (which focus on reducing child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases).

He said that evidence-based action is not a novel concept. it only needs to be scaled up and sustained.

**SOURCE:** Medical Kenya.