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Investment in Health Sector critical to the development of EAC region
By EAC - Health

...as region looks to mobilize USD$3.5 billion for Nine (9) Health Sector Priorities

East African Community Headquarters, Arusha, Tanzania, 31st October 2019: The Chairperson of EAC the Sectoral Council on Health and Minister of State In charge of Public Health and Primary Health in Rwanda, Dr. Patrick Ndimubanzi has said investment in health is critical for ensuring human and socio-economic development in East Africa.

“As we invest in health, it’s my conviction that our investments are made in strategic areas, that offer maximum value for money and benefit to the people of East Africa,” said Dr. Ndimubanzi.

The Minister called for stronger partnerships that leverage the unique skills and resources of governments, civil society, and the private sector to improve the delivery of health services in the region.

The Minister was addressing delegates during the official opening session of the 2nd EAC Ministerial, Development Partners and Investors Roundtable in Health Sector today in Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Ndimubanzi underscored the private sector’s involvement in health systems as significant in scale and scope, adding that it includes the provision of health-related services, medicines and medical products, financial products, training for the health workforce, information technology, infrastructure as well as support services.

He informed the delegates that as donor funding declines and health care costs rise, domestic resource mobilization is a must.

“The private sector is encouraged to invest more in health service delivery and fill a significant part of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) financing gap through sustainable business models,” said the Minister.

Dr. Ndimubanzi called for the delegates attending the Roundtable discussion to see how the region can mobilize adequate resources to support implementation of the EAC Health Sector Investment Priorities.

On his part, the EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors, Hon. Christophe Bazivamo informed delegates that the roundtable discussion provides an opportunity for all Parties, Governments and Development
Partners to re-affirm their commitments to the EAC Health Sector Integration Agenda, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Number 3 on Good Health and Well Being with its 13 targets.

The 13 targets include: reducing maternal mortality; ending preventable deaths under five (5) years of age; fighting communicable diseases; reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases and promoting mental health; preventing and treating substance abuse; reducing road injuries and deaths; universal access to sexual and reproductive care; family planning and education, and;

Other targets are: achieving universal health coverage; reducing illness and death from hazardous chemicals and pollution; implementing the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; supporting research, development and universal access to affordable vaccines and medicines; increasing health financing and support the health workforce in developing countries and improve early warning systems for global health risks.

Hon Bazivamo said that investing in healthcare systems not only saves lives but is also a crucial investment in the wider economy. This is because ill health impairs productivity, hinders job prospects and adversely affects human capital development. He said Good Health was not only an outcome of, but also a foundation for, development.

“I am pleased to inform you that since the Summit of Heads of State adopted the Health sector investments Priorities Framework, we so far have been able to mobilise investments and secure commitments of 83 million Euros. It is my sincere prayer and hope that these two days will provide more impetus in securing more commitments and investments into the EAC region,” said Hon. Bazivamo.

In her remarks, Dr. Anastasia Nyalita, the Chief Executive Officer of the Africa Healthcare Federation representing the private sector, disclosed that more than 40% of health services delivery in the EAC region are provided by Non State Actors (NSAs) as documented in periodic Country Health Sector reviews since 2012.

She said the disparity between EAC Partner States on policies and laws regulating manufacturing and importation of medicines and medical devices prevent the region from benefiting from the economies of scale.

She called for a harmonized framework for medicines and medical devices regulation that will accelerate the move towards realizing the Common Markets vision while assuring the citizens of access to affordable, safe and quality products.

The 2nd roundtable event brings together EAC Ministers of Health, Ministers responsible for EAC Affairs, Permanent/Principal/Under Secretaries, Heads of the HIV Commissions/Councils and other Senior Officials from relevant Ministries including Finance, Education, Science and Technology; bilateral and multilateral development partners including banks.
(KfW, African Development Bank and World Bank), diplomatic missions, private business and innovators, UN Agencies, civil society organizations, and faith based organizations, cultural institutions, research and academic institutions.

The two-day roundtable discussion is expected to come up with a roadmap on the Implementation arrangements of the nine (9) Health Sector Investment Priorities and resource mobilization for the same.

**Kenya Rolls Out Key Vaccination to Prevent Cervical Cancer**

19th October, 2019
By Capital FM (Nairobi)

Mombasa — Kenya has rolled out a key vaccine Human Papillomavirus (HPV) to help protect young women against cervical cancer.

The vaccine was launched in Mombasa on Friday by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

The vaccine against Human Papillomavirus (HPV) will be administered to girls aged 10 years across the country.

The national launch of the vaccine was held at Ziwani Primary in Mombasa where the President, who was accompanied by Mombasa Governor Ali Hassan Joho, announced that the vaccine will be available in all health centres across the country.

"The vaccine will be available to girls in all Public Health Facilities, as well as Private, Faith-Based and Non-Governmental Organization health facilities," the President announced.

The Head of State said the launch of the vaccination program is a proud moment for Kenya as it marks a major milestones in the fight against cervical cancer.

The President outlined legal reforms, provision of screening and cancer care health services as some of the interventions his administration has put in place to defeat the cancer scourge.

"The screening services covered include cervical cancer screening, and advanced breast cancer screening, including mammography services, in all county referral hospitals," the President said.

In addition, the President said the government has increased investments to bolster cancer research, diagnosis and management.
In recent years, the health ministry set up radiotherapy and chemotherapy facilities in Nyeri, Meru, Embu, Mombasa, Nakuru, Garissa, Bomet, Kakamega, Kisumu and Machakos.

"Further to this, I am glad to note that the newly completed Kenyatta University Hospital will be operational by the end of the month, providing increased access to cancer management through its state-of-the-art cancer services," the President said.

He said Kenyans are now able to access diagnosis and management of cancer through their National Hospital Insurance Fund's oncology package adding that the government was progressing well with the roll out of the Universal Health Coverage programme now in the pilot phase.

"As a Government, we recognize that effective delivery of the interventions I have enumerated above, will depend on the vitality of our health systems and in a strong and responsive primary health care approach," President Kenyatta said.

The President urged political and religious leaders to continue supporting the HPV vaccination programme saying cancer doesn't discriminate victims based religion or color.

He advised Kenyans to adopt healthy lifestyles so as to reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as cancer and hypertension.

"Each and every one of us must ensure that we lead a healthy lifestyle; and routinely and early enough, seek appropriate screening services," the President advised.

The HPV vaccine is most effective when given to girls before they are exposed to the HPV virus. Many countries choose between the ages of 9 and 13 and Kenya's ministry of health has chosen 10 years as the most appropriate age to administer the vaccine.

Kenya: City Hall to Spend Sh400 Million in Upgrading Nairobi Health Facilities

21st October, 2019
By Nairobi News (Nairobi)

City Hall is set to spend at least Sh400 million to upgrade community health centres across the county in a bid to boost access to health services at ward level.

This in addition to strengthening partnership with private health centres by enhancing engagement between the two parties.

SERVICE DELIVERY

The upgrade will see the centres acquire more medical equipment to improve their efficiency in service delivery as well as uplifting their capacity to handle more patients.

Nairobi Governor Mike Sonko said that apart from ongoing upgrading of Nairobi County's top four facilities including Mama Lucy Kibaki, Pumwani, Mbagathi and Mutuini Hospitals, his administration will also channel resources to community health centers across the 17 sub-Counties.
Besides the sub-County health centres, the City Hall boss, stated that the county government has taken stock of other health facilities that have been supplementing provision of health services to residents in informal settlements.

"We have private facilities within these places and because we have no adequate land to put up county hospitals, we must find a way of how we have work together to ensure residents have access to reliable and quality medical care," said Sonko.

In the current financial year, the health sector was allocated Sh7.4 billion, forming the bulk of the more than Sh35 billion budget.

Governor Sonko further pointed out that the county is looking into various options to ensure that at least each of the top health centres in the 17 sub-Counties have ambulances, enough medical personnel as well as incorporating Community Health Volunteers into the sector.

**AMBULANCES**

In light of this, plans are underway to purchase at least 30 ambulances which will be distributed among the health centres with private health facilities and other community-based health centers operating in proximity set to benefit from such services once the partnership is sealed.

Over the past months, county hospitals have recorded an influx of patients, an improvement that the governor attributed to heavy investment in equipping county hospitals geared toward enhancing healthcare services provision.

"More patients are now seeking services from Nairobi County health facilities due to the intensified upgrade and equipping of the hospitals," said Sonko.

Figures released by the county’s Health Sector revealed that the number of deliveries in Pumwani Maternity Hospital had nearly doubled from 11,169 to 19,267 annually. The facility was the first to be upgraded under Sonko’s administration.

At Mbagathi Hospital, the number of patients recorded in the outpatient department had risen from 98,471 in June 2017 to 113,916 at the time while at Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital, the number of patients had increased to 314,000 from 214,150 in 2017.

A similar increase in the number of patients seeking services at the county health facilities was also recorded in Level 2 and 3 facilities including Kayole I, Kayole II, Lunga Lunga, Eastleigh and Westlands Health Centres, among others.

**Tanzania: EALA Speaker Calls for Enhanced International Collaboration**

22nd October, 2019
By Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)
EAST African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Speaker Martin Ngoga has called for renewed focus to strengthen mechanisms for enhanced international collaboration amid increased violations of international treaties and covenants.

Addressing over 1,750 delegates of the 141st Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Belgrade, Serbia, the speaker called on parliaments to strive to pass relevant national and regional laws that anchor to the international laws and treaties to find lasting solutions to emerging threats from violations to global treaties.

A communiqué released by EALA Senior Public Relations Officer Bobi Odiko said the speaker decried before the global legislators numerous challenges that include inward looking issues and pride as impacting on the desire to adhere to international treaties.

He called for enhanced collaboration among stakeholders.

He argued that it was no longer tenable for nations to avoid co-operation between themselves but rather collaborate more in the globalised world.

"As a matter of fact, nations that stand and walk together face the future with more certainty, deliver economic prosperity for their citizens. International laws are meant to serve the purpose of keeping community of nations together as a glue of our mutual co-existence," said Mr. Ngoga.

He called for inclusion of approaches to enhance collaboration in realising adherence systems to international laws and treaties, noting that recent approaches and reforms emphasise more interaction between national and regional parliaments as well as multilateral institutions.

"Parliaments must provide leadership towards policy positions that break barriers and ensure compliance with international laws," he said.

Mr. Ngoga called on legislatures to bridge gaps that often results in non-co-operation of states, necessitated by national pride, political tensions, high coordination costs or the asymmetric distribution of costs and benefits among others.

Mr. Ngoga further rallied for adherence to the treaties, saying any violation to international law tends to curtail attainment of sustainable development goal (SDG) 16 that calls for achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies.
With regards to the East African Community (EAC) region, Mr. Ngoga was emphatic that EALA will continually ensure adherence to the treaties and covenants.

"Through EALA's legislative, oversight and representative role, we ensure citizens' concerns are fully addressed, resulting in collective responsibility in strengthening international law. I wish to reiterate my support and the assembly's towards promotion of peace and development and to attainment of sustainable development of our people," he added.

The week-long assembly is being attended by over 1,700 MPs, United Nations (UN) representatives and civil society representatives.

Besides discussing international collaboration and adherence to the tenets of international law, delegates are further reviewing latest developments to improve gender equality, empower youth, defend MPs' human rights and achieve universal health coverage.

The global parliamentary body is celebrating 130 years of its existence. The IPU used the opportunity to reflect on the past achievements and challenges as it charts its future.

The EALA delegation is further comprised of Mr Abdikadir Aden, Mr Kim Ruot Duop, Ms Sophie Nsavyimana, Mr Paul Musamali and senior EALA Secretariat staff.

Other EAC partner states' speakers in attendance include Rebecca Kadaga (Uganda), Pascal Nyabenda (Burundi), Kenneth Lusaka (Kenya) and Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies in Rwanda Donatile Mukabalisa. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić officiated the meeting.

Meanwhile, Rwanda is set to host the 143rd IPU in Kigali in October 2020. Ms Mukabalisa invited all delegates to Kigali for the event.

The Speaker met IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong on the sidelines of the global congress to pen down the hosting agreement.

**East Africa: African Health Ministers Move to Halt Ebola Threat**

22nd October, 2019
By The Citizen (Dar es Salaam)

The Minister of Health Jane Ruth Aceng in Goma, DRC with a delegation from Ministry of Health Uganda and World Health Organisation attend a ministerial meeting on cross border collaboration to
prepare for and respond to the Ebola Virus Disease.

In Summary

Health officials who gathered in Goma DRC Congo to discuss the threat of Ebola have resolved to step up measures to minimize the spread of deadly disease.

Health Ministers and senior immigration officials of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the nine neighboring countries to DRC have resolved and committed their governments to establish the African Ebola Coordination Task Force (AfECT) to undertake cooperation and collaboration for Ebola preparedness and response.

During a ministerial meeting on cross boarder collaboration to prepare for and respond to the Ebola Virus disease in DRC on Monday, different health officials resolved that there is need for the force to support cross boarder joint planning and implementation of Ebola preparedness and response activities.

"Establish the AfECT hosted at the African Union secretariat in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the leadership of the nine member states with support from Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), WHO and other relevant partners to support the cooperation and collaboration," Communique reads in part.

Dr Ruth Jane Aceng the Health Minister said this task force will bring on board coordinated support to countries suffering outbreaks.

"Another resolution is to establish the AfECT. Now this task force will have political oversight over outbreaks like Ebola while WHO maintains technical capacity and advice that it gives to the countries," Dr Aceng said.

She added, "we embrace this aspect of avenue in African Ebola coordination task force so that all partners that are supporting the country that has an outbreak are well coordinated and it will help us avoid waste of resources."

Health officials who gathered in Goma DRC Congo to discuss the threat of Ebola have resolved to step up measures to minimize the spread of deadly disease.

Some of the other issues the health ministers resolved and committed their governments to do include cross boarder Ebola case and laboratory surveillance, cross border tracing and monitoring contacts among others.

Some of the nine countries neighboring DRC include, Angola, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia, among tohers.

Ebola broke out in eastern DRC last August and has killed more than 1,800, according to the World Health Organisation.

Uganda has had episodes of Ebola outbreaks in the past, which were all relatively controlled. In June, Ebola patients from DRC crossed into Kasese District, where three died.

Ugandan officials subsequently discharged and repatriated the other recovering patients back to Congo. Health ministry officials say they have
received 760 Ebola alerts this year, which all turned out negative.

South Sudan: WFP Aid Revives Sudan-South Sudan River Shipping
22nd October, 2019
By Radio Dabanga (Amsterdam)

Kosti — River shipping between Sudan and South Sudan resumed on Monday after more than eight years as goods left Kosti in White Nile state under the auspices of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) River Relief Bridge for the people of South Sudan.

Gen Haidar El Tereifi, acting Governor of the White Nile state, and WFP Executive Director David Beasley witnessed the start of the first river trips. The first five rafts carried 170 tons of food. A total of 120,000 tons of humanitarian aid is to be transferred by river transport.

El Tereifi confirmed the readiness of White Nile state to secure river navigation and provide all assistance for the resumption of commercial traffic between Sudan and South Sudan.

Rwanda: HIV Prevalence Has Reduced - New Survey
22nd October, 2019
By The New Times (Kigali)

HIV testing

The Prime Minister Dr. Edouard Ngirente has called for sustained efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS in order to keep the gains Rwanda registered in the fight as showcased by a recent national survey.

He was speaking in Kigali at the official launch of data from the Rwanda Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (RPHIA), a recently concluded country wide survey that showcased great improvement Rwanda’s HIV fight.

Among the major figures presented by the survey, the prevalence of HIV among adult Rwandans (15-49 years old) now stands at 2.6% from the 3.3 percent in
the last survey done in 2015; as that of those between 15-64 years also reduced from 3.7 to 3.0 percent.

The results of the survey also showed 76 per cent of all HIV-positive adults achieved viral load suppression, a widely used measure of effective HIV treatment in a population, a figure that surpasses the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) target of 73 per cent by 2020.

Rwanda also edged closer to the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 as the survey revealed that 83.8% of adults living with HIV were aware of their status, and of these, 97.5% were on Antiretroviral Treatment, and 90.1% had Viral Load Suppression.

Addressing the guests who had attended the launch of the new findings, Ngirente said that data indicates that Rwanda is making good progress in controlling the HIV epidemic.

"And we are confident that if we continue in this way, we will keep achieving good results," he said.

"We are performing well in the fight against HIV. However, we need to maintain our efforts, improve on our approaches and become even more innovative in looking for better solutions."

He zeroed in on the progress made in regard to people living with HIV increasingly getting to know their status, referring to it as "a good step in controlling HIV transmission."

The RPHIA ran from October 2018-March 2019.

It covered over 11,000 households across the country, sampling more than 30,000 adults aged 15-64 years, and over 9,000 young adolescents aged 10-14 years.

It aimed at finding information on the percentage of people living with HIV (prevalence), the number of new HIV infections occurring each year (incidence), and the percentage of people with low levels of virus in their blood (viral load suppression), described by age, sex, and geographic variation.

The Minister of Health Dr. Diane Gashumba echoed similar sentiments as she rallied donors and partners to continue supporting the country’s efforts in fighting HIV/AIDS.

"We still have a long way to go. Sustaining gains is not easy. It is not the right time to cut the budget in supporting this."

Kenya: First Ever Mountain Race in Africa to Boost War Against Cancer

23rd October, 2019
By The Nation (Nairobi)
EAHP Health News - Cap East Africa 19th – 25th October 2019

From left: Meru Deputy Governor Titus Ntuchiu, Governor Kiraitu Murungi, and the governor's wife Priscilla Murungi warm up before flagging off a mock mountain running during a visit to the route to be used for the race slated for February 8, 2020 at Kenya School of Adventure at the foot of Mt Kenya on October 8, 2019.

Meru County is set to host a mountain race at the foot of the scenic Mt Kenya Forest to help raise funds to support the fight against cancer.

The inaugural race dubbed 'Challenging the heights' will be held on February 8 next year. It will seek to mobilise funds for the establishment of the Meru Cancer Institute as well as promote tourism and environmental conservation.

Meru Governor Kiraitu Murungi, who flagged off a mock race yesterday, said the county also wants to exploit the potential of Mt Kenya as a sports destination and nurture talents.

Mr Murungi also sampled the racecourse accompanied by former Athletics Kenya Treasurer Joseph Kinyua, who is currently the Meru Sports Council chairman, former world marathon champion Douglas Wakihuri and three Kenyans who have participated in world mountain running events.

Kenya Museums of Kenya Director Mzalendo Kibunjia, top athletics promoters and Athletics Kenya officials also attended the event.

CHAMPIONS

Purity Gitonga and Caroline Gitonga, twin sisters from Kienini village in Meru, participated in the 34th world mountain running championship held in Canillo, Andorra, last year. Lucy Murigi, a Kenyan, won the race and helped the women team scoop gold. The runners are under Run2gether team that will participate in this year's world mountain running championship in Argentina.

"The race is not new, only that it has not been held here. Kenya has taken teams to world events and some have won those races," said Mr Murungi.

He noted that they intend to make the race international, taking advantage of the fact that it is the first ever mountain race in Kenya and Africa.

Mr Kinyua said the event will include races for both the young and the old, with the elite race being 12,000 metres at 2,800 metres above sea level.

Other races are a junior category of six and eight kilometres, a fun race dubbed "keep the doctor away", corporate, masters and institutions of higher learning runs. Winners will pocket Sh500,000, first
runners-up Sh250,000 while second runners-up will walk away with Sh100,000.

**Rwandans Positive on Malaria Fight - Study**

24th October, 2019
By The New Times (Kigali)

A majority of Rwandans are positive on outcomes of the ongoing efforts to fight malaria, a new study, Malaria Futures for Africa (MalaFA), has shown.

The study released on Wednesday in Abuja, Nigeria, was commissioned by Novartis, a Swiss pharmaceutical firm.

The report, among other things, showed that Rwandans are positive about the country's fight against the disease, citing high levels of political support and funding.

Statistics by the World Health Organisation showed that there has been estimated reduction in the country's malaria burden with 430,000 fewer cases recorded in 2017 than in 2016.

The public's and stakeholders' confidence in the fight against the ailment is, among other things, facilitated by increased funding, closer surveillance of targets, community healthcare, and interventions such as bed nets.

"Political support is described as strong. Malaria control is championed by the President, with the Minister of Health reporting directly to him.

Respondents pointed to increased national funding and closer surveillance of targets, listing numerous strategies that have been in place - training for community healthcare workers, home-based malaria management for adults, and good utilisation of insecticide treated bednets (ITNs), indoor residual spraying (IRS), outdoor spraying, and environmental management," the report reads in part.

From the study, it emerged that the majority of Rwandans believe that the targets to eliminate malaria deaths by 2030 is possible but called for constant upgrading of current practices as well as further preventive measures.

"For the most part, respondents believed that both elimination by 2030 and halving deaths were possible. However, they pointed out that current practices are not sufficient and more will need to be done to achieve those goals," the report further reads.

Among issues of concern for Rwandan stakeholders involved in curbing the
ailment was the lack of an active cross-border collaboration mechanism.

Despite having agreements in place, they were yet to be effected.

"Respondents reported cross-sector collaboration at the ministry level in Rwanda, driven in part by a strong economic development ethos. At a regional level, there was no evidence of active cross-border collaboration, despite agreement on the need for this," it added.

Progress in the fight against malaria has been attributed to many factors, including the outstanding role played by Community Health Workers.

Information from Rwanda Biomedical Centre released early this year showed that more than 50 per cent of malaria cases were being treated by Community Health Workers.

The introduction of Home Based Management of Malaria (HBM) for both adults and children through Community Health Workers has also seen malaria patients being diagnosed and treated early.

The study noted that among the improvements highlighted necessary, going forward, include increasing community education, and to address healthcare staff retention through training and incentives.

In April this year, the Government said that it plans to start the distribution of mosquito repellents to complement existing measures to fight malaria as part of new initiatives designed to ensure a malaria-free society.

CS Johnson, an American company, has partnered with the Ministry of Health to develop a couple of mosquito repellent solutions for Rwandans, according to government officials.

Rwanda: HIV Most Rampant Among Female Youth Than Males

24th October, 2019
By The New Times (Kigali)

A participant in a T-shirt with the message that calls on people to get tested for HIV

Despite the gains made in reducing the HIV burden in the country, the latest national survey shows that young women are more susceptible to be infected compared to their male peers.

Figures showed that HIV prevalence among young women aged 20-24 years was three times higher than it is among men in the same age group, making it the most pronounced disparity by sex.
In the same age group, according to Rwanda Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (RPHIA), HIV prevalence stands at 1.8 per cent among females compared to 0.6 per cent among their male counterparts.

This is opposed to the figures at tender ages where both sexes are almost at the same level of prevalence.

For instance, at age 10-14, the HIV prevalence is 0.5 per cent among girls and 0.3 per cent among boys.

This fact, according to the researchers, should raise questions for policymakers, as well as other stakeholders who are engaged in devising measures for youth related issues.

Speaking at the official launch of the results of the survey, on Tuesday, however, Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, the Director General at Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), had a lot to be grateful for in form of reduced prevalence among the general population.

But he did not hide his discontent with figures among the young women.

"It is a figure that is worrying because, for example, at age 15 you find that the HIV prevalence among boys and girls to be close - both are less than 1 per cent. But as it reaches 20 years, the girls exceed the boys by almost four times," he said.

In that brief time, he said, ask yourself where they got the HIV from.

"When we saw it, it scared us. There might be something that happens in those years with the girls. We may buy into a thought they might be getting infected by older men as it has been suggested before. Or perhaps, the girls themselves might be exposing themselves to acts of prostitution which may make them meet with HIV."

Bringing the high rates of teenage pregnancies into the equation, Nsanzimana challenged policymakers and other partners about the apparent need to rethink what measures they are using to fight HIV, teenage pregnancies and related challenges.

In brief, he suggests, it requires different stakeholders and those who make policies to sit and think about what to change.

"This is because the measures in place have not made much difference in regard to the problem," he said. "This means that what we are doing might not be in line with the way that youths are behaving. Or perhaps, we are not doing enough."

Aimable Mwananawe, the National Coordinator of Ihorere Munyarwanda, a Civil Society Organisation that among other things sensitises youth about sexual reproductive health, said that such discrepancy in the HIV prevalence among the young men and women may be caused by some cross generational relationships where young women "fall in love" with men that are way older than them.

He called for more efforts from families by being closer to the youth, advising them; and for other stakeholders in society and government to also make more efforts to increase awareness concerning the fight against HIV.
On a positive note, the findings showed that the prevalence of HIV among adult Rwandans (15-49 years old) reduced to 2.6 per cent from the long-standing 3.3. That of those between 15-64 years also went down from 3.7 to 3.0 per cent.

New infections per year also reduced by almost a half. The survey showed that every year, about 5400 people get infected by HIV, far less than the more than 10,000 that were reported during the 2014 survey.

Overall, women remain with more burden than men. HIV prevalence stands at 3.7 per cent among women and 2.2 per cent among men.

Rwanda: 15-Year-Olds Could Soon Access Contraceptives

23rd October, 2019
By The New Times (Kigali)

After years of debate, the Government is revising a law that will see the age at which one can legally access family planning methods lowered from 18 to 15 years, The New Times can exclusively reveal.

Article 7 of the law relating to human reproductive health provides that every person having attained the maturity age has the right to decide for oneself in relation to human reproductive health issues.

However, the maturity age is 18 years. Anyone below that age is considered a minor.

It also states that a health professional who intends to provide healthcare services to a minor or an incapable person must endeavour to inform his/her parents or guardians and obtain their prior consent.

But a draft Bill seen by The New Times seeks to modify the law establishing medical professional liability insurance giving teenagers aged 15 and above the right to seek family planning methods without any restrictions.

"Every person having attained the age of fifteen (15) years has the right to decide for oneself in relation to human reproductive health. The consent of the parent or guardian will be only required for incapables persons," it reads in part.

The development comes almost one year after Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente openly admitted to members of the Senate that the Government was cognisant of the limits that the current law
puts on teenagers, some of which he said could be blamed for the surge in the number of teenage pregnancies in the country.

Ngirente was addressing the Senate on what the government is doing in terms of budget, sensitisation, education and service provision with regard to promoting family planning in line with the country’s Vision 2050.

Responding to the issue of prohibitive laws, Ngirente acknowledged that it did not make sense to ask teachers to educate young adults about reproductive health and safe sex methods when the methods are inaccessible.

"Yes young adults below 18 are required to go with their parents to access contraceptives yet these are the most vulnerable when it comes to unwanted pregnancies. I would like to tell you that we are changing that because we found it inconveniencing," he said.

Speaking to The New Times, Aflodis Kagaba, the Executive Director of Health Development Initiative, a health care advocacy organisation, confirmed that discussions had been ongoing within the adolescents’ circles, civil society organisations and on the Government.

He said that the conversation that most stakeholders are having is that the age should be lowered to at least 15 meaning that anyone who is 15 and above should be able to seek these services without requiring parental approval.

"There is a proposal to lower the age to 15. Though as someone working with very young people I would think that lowering it to 12 would be better, I think 15 would still be a very great step in the right direction," he said.

Speaking at the ceremony to release the findings of the Rwanda Population-based HIV Assessment, on Tuesday, the Director-General of Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, said that it was about time to find a new approach to deal with the rising number of teenagers with HIV and teenage pregnancies.

"There is a relationship between HIV and teenage pregnancies. The figures are closely related and when you review them, you can see that one is like a branch of the other. Researchers bring us the data but we need to work with partners to find a sustainable solution," he said.

**The numbers**

In 2016, a survey conducted by CLADHO in the 10 districts of Kicukiro, Gasabo, Nyarugenge, Kamonyi, Huye, Karongi, Nyamasheke, Gicumbi, Rwamagana and Bugesera, discovered that pregnancy among young girls was rampant.

Among the surveyed pregnant girls, the research indicated that coerced sex accounted for 87.7 per cent.

The study also discovered that 49 per cent of the girls are impregnated by colleagues and 20 per cent by family friends. The other 2 per cent are impregnated by their teachers while 1 per cent is by local leaders.

The survey showed that the consequences that follow these pregnancies include;
school dropouts (50 per cent), poverty (19 per cent), depression (11 per cent) while others such as discrimination account for 5 per cent.

The 2016 report revealed that 99 per cent of pregnant teenagers never received any legal support while 88 per cent did not receive support from the fathers of their children.

The study also showed that only 5 per cent of the babies born this way were officially registered.

Tanzania Warned Over High Birth Rate

24th October, 2019
By The East African (Nairobi)

African mother with a baby. Africa in general is the fastest growing continent with a fertility rate of 4.8 births per woman.

In Summary

- Although Tanzania’s poverty rate is coming down, the number of poor people is increasing.
- The country’s fertility rate is currently estimated at 4.9 births per woman, a drop from five births per woman in 2016.
- More than 50 per cent of Africa’s population lives in countries where women on average still have five or more children, according to the World Bank.

Tanzania has been cautioned about its rising fertility rate which at best is keeping wealth per capita sluggish according to the World Bank.

While launching the 20th edition of Africa Pulse in Dar es Salaam recently, World Bank’s Lead Economist Elizabeth Ann Talbert said that although Tanzania’s poverty rate is coming down, the number of poor people is increasing.

"A high population growth can make it harder for many countries to increase wealth per capita," she said.

The country’s fertility rate is currently estimated at 4.9 births per woman, a drop from five births per woman in 2016, but is still among the fastest-growing rates behind Ethiopia's 4.4, Malawi’s 5.05, Nigeria's 5.4, Niger's 6.62, and Burundi’s 6.04 births per woman.

In the section of the report titled the 12th Tanzania Economic Update co-authored by Ms. Talbert, the World Bank notes that although Tanzania’s wealth increased by 45 per cent in two decades, the high population growth kept wealth per capita stagnant.
"One of the factors limiting Tanzania's ability to increase wealth per capita and thus raise standards of living is persistently high fertility and population growth. High population growth makes it harder to raise per capita wealth," she added.

Latest official data shows the proportion of the country's population who are living below the poverty line dropped to 26.4 per cent in 2018 from 28.2 per cent the previous year.

But, economists say a high population growth rate is only a threat to the country's development if a large number of people are a liability rather than an asset to the country.

"People are the most important asset for a country and Tanzania's population has more young people who can contribute to its development," said Haji Semboja, a researcher and senior economics lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam.

The World Bank also recommends that, "Tanzania should now move much more deliberately to direct investments to high-impact programmes for both the demand and supply sides, increase investments and target resources to priority regions in order to greatly improve the standards of all Tanzanians."

More than 50 per cent of Africa's population lives in countries where women on average still have five or more children, according to the World Bank, with Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo together with Tanzania and Madagascar being home to 50 per cent of Africa's poor.

"A large population is only a problem if the country has failed to mobilise its resources and has inadequate social services. Then there will be a problem in achieving meaningful development," said Prof Semboja.

Tanzania's GDP grew at 5.2 per cent annually in 2018, while Ethiopia's hit 6.81 per cent; Malawi 3.5 per cent; Nigeria 1.93 and Burundi's at 1.6 per cent.

Africa in general is the fastest growing continent with a fertility rate of 4.8 births per woman.

**Uganda Scores Highly in the Measles-Rubella-Polio Vaccination Campaign**

25th October, 2019
By World Health Organization (Geneva)

In the recently concluded Measles-Rubella-Polio campaign conducted by Uganda's Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance and the World Health Organization (WHO), partial results reveal that 18 770 706 (105%) children have so far been vaccinated against Measles and Rubella. This is higher than the nationwide target which was 18 100 000 children. The Measles-Rubella vaccination campaign targeted children above nine months but below fifteen years.

In the same vein, Polio vaccination reached 7 329 635 children (85%) against a target of 8 200 000 children.
These results were revealed to the public by the Minister of Health, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng at a press conference held at the Ministry of Health headquarters in Kampala.

Dr Jane further informed the public that the results came in from 35 754 (95%) vaccination posts out of the 37 398 posts set up countrywide. "We will continue to update the public of the statistics as more results keep trickling in especially regions where the exercise was extended," she said.

The WHO Representative in Uganda, Dr. Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam was also present at the press conference and congratulated the Ministry of Health for a successful vaccination campaign noting that vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent diseases.

"We cannot afford to be complacent in public health, every life is important, and I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Uganda for taking immunization seriously," he said.

The vaccination campaign was implemented in order to interrupt the Measles-Rubella outbreaks where over 300 000 cases, 46 000 patients and 587 deaths were reported. 95% of the cases were between 1 and 15 years. The exercise was conducted in all schools and communities countrywide targeting all children under 15 years, whether previously immunized or not.

The campaign was also a launching pad for the combined measles-rubella vaccine into the routine immunization schedule replacing the single measles vaccine. Moving forward, a combined measles-rubella vaccine will be given to children during the routine immunization.

The Minister of Health recognized the support from partners- "I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Lions Club, Uganda Medical Association and Uganda Pediatric Association for their guidance and support."

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