

Press Statement:

8th October, 2014

Ref: NEPHAK Call for Urgent action on the looming Shortage of First line TB drugs

TB remains a public health disaster in Kenya. The resurgence of TB has been attributed to the high and rising cases of HIV among Kenyan adults and children. TB is the leading cause of sickness and death among PLHIV. Children infected with HIV are particularly more vulnerable to TB.

Currently Kenya offers free treatment to all patients diagnosed with tuberculosis in line with the countries efforts to increase access of TB care to the vulnerable and in line with the stop TB strategy. This has been sustained due to the unwavering commitment from the government as well as partners in ensuring consistent and efficient supply of quality TB medicines.

The National Leprosy TB and Lung Disease Unit of the Ministry of Health has confirmed to CSO's that during the financial year 2013/14, the annual allocation of funds for the procurement of first line TB medicines was devolved to the county governments. This move has affected the procurement process at the national level and threatens to reverse the achievements made on TB control in Kenya if not addressed URGENTLY...

In the usual quarterly TB-ICC meetings, the TB commodity committee presented their drug situation for the remaining part this year and the ICC felt that there are urgent and exceptional measures that need to be put in place to avert a looming shortage or lack of anti-TB drugs in the country this year and beyond. There were several issues noted including:-

- Funds anticipated for drug procurement for TB were allocated to counties and up to now there are no clear steps being taken by the counties to procure the anti-TB commodities
- At current rate of consumption existing stocks will run out before the next financial year unless remedial measures are taken to cover the anticipated gaps and
- There are no clear policies at the national level defining the allocation of funds for anti TB drugs and the processes for the procurement of these drugs.

In our quest to engage all levels of authority to address this issue in time to averse a national crisis, NEPHAK wrote a letter to the Council of Governors to initiate dialogue with the National Government to initiate a process of TB procurement. The Letter sent to CoG two weeks ago has not been formally responded to.

Despite devolution of health services to the county governments, the need for a central procurement for specialized medicines is necessary because of a number of reasons; - a) Quality of drugs can only be guaranteed at a national level procurement. b) The National Government is obligated under the Kenya constitution (Article 190) to facilitate county governments and can use this provision to support county governments with procurement issues c) Procurement of TB medicines is largely donor dependent and the public procurement and disposal Act of 2005 section 7 provides for compliance with donor requirements d) Stock-outs of TB medicines will result in increased transmission of TB beyond county borders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On behalf of all TB patients, their families and their communities and especially populations at increased risk of TB disease (such as people living with HIV), we recommend the below to stem this crisis:

1) To the National Government

Immediate allocation of funds and initiation of emergency procurement of first line adult anti- TB medicines. And in the long term, increased allocation for domestic funding for to TB and health.

2) County Governments

County Governments through the transitional authority to consider transfer of the procurement function for TB, HIV and malaria specialized medicines to national government in accordance with Article 187 of the Constitution and section 24 to and including section 29 of the Intergovernmental Relations Act that allows transfer of functions from one level of government to another.

3) Parliament

Provide Legislation for procurement of specialized medicines for TB, HIV and Malaria in accordance with Article 190(3) in support of counties.

4) TB patients and their families

Continue to demand for commodities needed to diagnose, treat and manage TB free of charge in Public health facilities as provided for under the national TB program goals and the Kenya Constitution.

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