



PRESS RELEASE

PRESIDENT KIKWETE'S HIV/AIDS CAMPAIGN – HANDLE WITH CARE

Youth Action Volunteers congratulates the president of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete on his bold move to lead a campaign against HIV and AIDS in Tanzania. It is, we believe, a unique strategy and commitment by the highest political leader in Tanzania. Significant poverty reduction in Tanzania can be achieved if we manage to effectively combat HIV and AIDS and all its forms of negative impact on our socio-economic life. While we express our unconditional support to the president on this move, we wish to broaden and invite all citizens to discuss the following:

Testing for HIV is one big step towards one's improvement of health status and for the country to acquire accurate data for accurate planning purposes. In order for HIV testing campaign to be effective there must be sound preparations and adequate mobilization of health systems, resources and citizens to test. The government needs to assure citizens that shortfalls reported in the media in the past few months have all been adequately addressed. With this request goes the need to make available adequate testing kits, testing centers, and qualified health workers without crowding out other health care services. Since this is a campaign by the president himself, the president should also encourage health workers not to manipulated data to appease him or for other political competition purposes.

Care for people living with HIV/AIDS is paramount for their health status and welfare. As we strive to achieve the enrolment target of 440,000 people living with HIV/AIDS qualifying for ARVs by 2008, we can ask recipients what programmes work best for them. Recently around the world, recipients have come in public several times asserting their claims against increasing counterfeit drugs in the distribution lines, effectiveness, efficacy, and sustainability of enrolling on ARVs. Tanzanians need to be assured that nutrition is going to be given priority over drugs and that propensity for drugs will be sought more in the traditional medicine than in expensive and doubted western medicine. That availability of qualified and adequately trained and motivated health workers will be adequate and sustained in remote rural areas as well. Domestic financing for HIV and AIDS need to be increased and donors to honor their commitment. And that these services will adequately reach the rural and poor people.

We, therefore, request that every decision taken in this endeavour involve Tanzanian recipients and stakeholders in all aspects of decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Much as political support is imperative, we should strive not to succumb to politicizing this agenda as it involves a question of life and death of citizens. Nutrition and traditional medicine should be emphasized for sustainability, effectiveness and equitable access. To increase local confidence on policy priorities such as more focus on nutrition and locally available and effective traditional medicine, the government should increase its share of budget for HIV/AIDS as opposed to the current 90 per cent donor funding to match this political commitment. Finally, resources should be effectively decentralized to the communities in more efficient, transparent and accountable mechanisms and discourage spending on employment and sitting allowances.

Signed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irenei Kiria', is written over a light green circular stamp.

Mr. Irenei Kiria,
Executive Director of YAV

10 June 2007