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Count down to the 1st East Africa Harm Reduction Conference: Weeks: Days:

Venue: Kenya school of Monetary Studies

Dates: 26th January-1st March 2017

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Our Vision: Healthy People, Empowered Communities

Our Mission: To improve the Health and Well Being of Communities through Capacity Building and Promotion of Innovative Leadership

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♦ *Reflecting on EA Harm Reduction Project Journey: KANCO, Global Fund Update Meeting*



KANCO and Global Fund team during the Update meeting

KANCO hosted the Global Fund team at the KANCO offices on the 7th of February 2018, to discuss the HIV and Harm reduction project updates. The discussion touched on the project key pillars progress namely policy, community systems strengthening, and health systems strengthening.

The regional HIV and harm reduction project came on board against a background of a punitive legal environment characterized by a criminal justice approach to drugs and drug use in Africa. Consequently this has led most drug users going into 'hiding' at their social, economic and health detriment. The project set out to address the policy, health service delivery and information gap that existed across the eight countries to enhance the effectiveness of harm reduction.

Under policy advocacy or removing legal barriers to access, the projects reports having reached out to 152 opinion leaders across the 8 implementing countries and 24 of these becoming champions or publicly sup-

porting harm reduction advocacy efforts. There are also about 6 harm reduction policy documents in place including the Policy Guideline for Harm Reduction for East Africa, as well as letters of authorization to set up demonstration sites by the Ministries of Health in Uganda and Burundi.

Under community systems strengthening, four new networks of PWUIDs have been created and institutional documents including advocacy action plans developed and being utilized. Towards Health systems strengthening, 4 surveys have been completed in Uganda, Burundi, Zanzibar and Ethiopia and three qualitative studies done in Kenya, Tanzania and Mauritius. The team was also updated on the mathematical modelling studies being undertaken by KANCO and Bristol university in Kenya and Tanzania which the project Monitoring and Evaluation Manager Bernard Mundia says "will go a long way in building a case for investment in Harm reduction". The research team further highlighted the next steps for research including identifying journals in which to publish as well as highlighting the planned country validation plans.

Highlighting the challenges that the project has come across, KANCO executive Director, Allan Ragi said that "Among the biggest challenges we're facing with the project is meeting and sustaining the demand that has been created in the cause of implementing the regional project",

The Global Fund Portfolio Manager for Kenya, John Ocharo, reiterated on the need for sustainability saying "It is critical that we sustain harm reduction with the appreciation that people who use drugs are uniquely challenged, this is important as we exit"

Outlining the next steps, the Programs Director Onesmus Mlewa observed 'As we move along our plan is to make the networks more visible, profile partner organizations positioning them better for funding including the in county Global Funding towards sustaining the gains made. Along the implementation journey we deliberate to create partnerships with likeminded organizations, encouraged documentation and carrying out policy engagements, all geared towards sustainability.'

He further reposted that it was under this grant that for the first time all the over 1800 estimated drugs users' needs were fully catered for which he attributed to the strong linkage with partners.

Global Health Advocacy Partnership

KANCO is a member of ACTION, a partnership of 13 locally rooted organizations around the world that advocate together to build political will and increase investments for global health, presently chaired by the KANCO Executive Director, Allan Ragi.

These thirteen members are united by a vision of putting an end to infectious disease and diseases of poverty. To realize their objectives, they have been carrying out a three prong advocacy focusing on health resources, policies and accountability. Under resources they seek to ensure enough funding for prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment as well as funding for Research and Development, to develop tools to end tuberculosis (TB) and other infectious diseases threats. On policies, the ask to the governments is to adopt ambitious evidence-based TB policies and recommended TB-HIV program integration strategies, ensuring TB is central to the antimicrobial resistance agenda, and reducing policy barriers to TB R&D. On accountability, the call is to accelerate the impact of diseases of poverty as the ultimate measure of accountability for government spending, policy, and implementation.

During an annual leadership meeting held in Lisbon Portugal, between 28th January and 2nd February 2018, where KANCO was represented by the Executive Director, Allan Ragi, the leaders reiterated their commitment Global health leadership, laying out the ACTION Africa priority frame anchored on enhancing universal health coverage. The outlined focus areas are. nutrition, child health, TB and infectious diseases, Maternal Newborn and Child Health and Sexual Reproductive Health achieved through accountability, transition and sustainability.

ACTION partners include: Aequitas (India), CITAMplus (Zambia), Global Health Advocates France, Global Health Advocates India, Health Promotion Tanzania, KANCO (Kenya), Princess of Africa Foundation (South Africa), RESULTS International Australia, RESULTS Canada, RESULTS Educational Fund (U.S.), RESULTS Japan, RESULTS UK, and WACI Health (Kenya and South Africa).

In another global frontier, KANCO is also a linking organization of the International HIV /AIDS Alliance, an organization working through communities to end AIDS.

Government engagement ahead of the 1st East Africa Harm Reduction Conference



Planning committee delegation in a meeting with the Director of medical services

A delegation from KANCO and planning committee for the 1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference held a high level meeting with the Director of Medical Services Dr. Jackson Kioko, to share and discuss on the upcoming conference.

This first conference of its kind, to be hosted at the Kenya School of Monetary Studies, themed *Leadership and innovation in Harm reduction for Africa*, is towards concerted efforts to stir and promote the harm reduction dialogue in the region and together come up with sustainable solutions. It also seeks to discuss the health and policy environment, where the criminal justice approach to drug use and drug users has often been a barrier to accessing health services. The conference also presents an opportunity to reflect on the strides made in Harm reduction in the region and plan for the future.

Research has shown that PWUDs are emerging as an important bridging population for HIV transmission and other blood borne infections and to get to zero infections, these pockets of highly vulnerable populations have to be addressed.

The delegation got to share on the opportunities for working with government and as a key stakeholder among other partners in to cementing harm reduction in Kenya and the region.

Dr. Kioko commended the team stating that the government is looking forwards to a successful conference that will set the bar for the region adding that Harm reduction programmes need to add on alcohol and substance abuse in line with the governments priority for Universal Health coverage.