FRUITFUL COLLABORATION

KANCO HOSTS DISTINGUISHED UK PARLIAMENTARIANS IN FRUITFUL ENGAGEMENT FROM THE 21ST TO THE 24TH OF AUGUST 2023

In a week filled with diplomacy and collaboration, KANCO, had the honor of playing host to a delegation of esteemed UK Parliamentarians. The visit, organised in partnership with RESULTS UK marked a significant milestone in fostering international cooperation and knowledge sharing in the field of healthcare. The visit was a strong indication of unity of purpose.

The events kicked off on a high note with a roundtable meeting between the UK Parliamentarians and members of Civil Society Organisations in Nai-
The UK delegation was made up of Maggie Throup, British Conservative Party politician who has served as the Member of Parliament for Erewash in Derbyshire since the 2015 general election; Baroness Judith Jolly who is a Liberal Democrat life peer; Vinny Wooding who works at RESULTS UK as Senior Parliamentary Advocacy Adviser on tuberculosis; and Camila Consolmagno who works at RESULTS UK as Parliamentary Officer for child health.

**STRENGTHENING BONDS THROUGH DIPLOMACY**

The delegation of UK Parliamentarians, comprising individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, arrived in Nairobi with the primary objective of fostering stronger ties in healthcare diplomacy. Kenya and the United Kingdom have a long history of collaboration in various sectors, including healthcare. This visit provided an opportunity to reaffirm and deepen this partnership.

The roundtable meeting on the first day was marked by candid discussions on healthcare challenges and opportunities in Kenya. Diverse perspectives were shared, ranging from the need for enhanced healthcare infrastructure to the importance of preventive measures and community engagement. The UK Parliamentarians, known for their astute understanding of global health issues, offered valuable insights into effective healthcare governance and legislative interventions.

**A DAY OF IMMERSION IN HEALTHCARE**

Tuesday saw the Parliamentarians embarking on a comprehensive tour of healthcare facilities in Nairobi. Their first stop was the HOP TB Program at the Kenyatta National Hospital Ground. Tuberculosis remains a pressing global health concern, and this visit highlighted the commitment of both nations to combat this deadly disease. The delegation engaged in discussions with healthcare professionals, gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes in TB management.

The day’s itinerary also included a visit to the PCEA Pipeline Clinic, a Level 2 Dispensary located in Nairobi County’s Pipeline area. KANCO’s longstanding partnership with this health facility in childhood development programs was showcased. The Parliamentarians witnessed firsthand the positive impact of these programs on the lives of Kenyan children and their families. It was a testament to the power of collaboration between NGOs and the government in achieving meaningful healthcare outcomes.

**IMMUNISATION AND HEALTHCARE ACCESS**

Wednesday brought the delegation to the forefront of immunisation efforts as they explored the National Immunisation Program Facility Site in Kibra. Immunisation is a cornerstone of public health, preventing the spread of deadly diseases. The delegation’s visit highlighted the importance of access to vaccines and the need for continuous efforts to improve immunisation rates. Discussions revolved around vaccine distribution, community outreach, and the role of healthcare workers in ensuring the success of immunisation campaigns.

The Parliamentarians’ tour continued with a visit to the Ongata Rongai Sub County Hospital, where they were received by the County’s CECM Health. This facility exemplified the critical role that county-level healthcare institutions play in serving local communities.
The delegation appreciated the dedication of healthcare professionals in providing essential services to the public, even in challenging circumstances.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

One of the notable aspects of the visit was the interaction between the UK Parliamentarians and Kenyan nurses who are scheduled to travel to the UK for professional development. This exchange of healthcare professionals serves as a twofold opportunity. Firstly, it enhances the skills and experiences of Kenyan nurses, equipping them with valuable knowledge and expertise. Secondly, it strengthens the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations in the field of healthcare.

The Parliamentarians engaged in candid conversations with the nurses, discussing their aspirations and the expectations of their upcoming journey. This exchange was a poignant reminder of the global nature of healthcare and the interconnectedness of healthcare professionals worldwide.

PARLIAMENTARIANS IN LEGISLATIVE DIALOGUE

The week’s activities reached their pinnacle on Thursday as the UK Parliamentarians appeared before the National Assembly committee on health. This session provided a platform for engaging Kenyan legislatures and sharing valuable insights on legislative interventions in the health sector. It was an opportunity to learn from each other’s experiences and explore potential avenues for collaboration in crafting effective healthcare policies.

The dialogue between the UK Parliamentarians and their Kenyan counterparts was marked by a spirit of mutual respect and shared goals. Key topics of discussion included healthcare financing, regulation, and strategies for addressing emerging health challenges. The session was a testament to the importance of parliamentary engagement in shaping the future of healthcare.

A DEBRIEFING SESSION AND TOKENS OF APPRECIATION

The delegation later met with other Civil Society Organisations representatives for a debriefing session at the end of an eventful and successful Kenyan tour. This session allowed for a comprehensive review of the week’s activities and insights gained. It was an opportunity to identify areas of synergy and future collaborative projects that can further strengthen the healthcare partnership between Kenya and the United Kingdom.

In a heartfelt gesture of appreciation, KANCO presented the visiting UK Parliamentarians with tokens of gratitude at the event’s conclusion. These tokens symbolise the enduring partnership between the two nations in the pursuit of better healthcare outcomes for all.

A COMMITMENT TO A HEALTHIER FUTURE

As we bid farewell to our distinguished guests, KANCO remains committed to its mission of improving the health and well-being of Kenyan citizens. The visit by the UK Parliamentarians has reaffirmed the importance of international partnerships and knowledge sharing in our collective efforts to build a healthier and brighter future for all.

The week’s events have underscored the shared commitment of Kenya and the United Kingdom to addressing global health challenges through cooperation, diplomacy, and legislative action. It is a reminder that healthcare knows no borders, and together, we can create a healthier and more prosperous world to come.
KENYA CONVENES THE 7TH MAISHA SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE IN MOMBASA

In the picturesque setting of the Pride Inn Beach Resort in Mombasa, Kenya, a remarkable gathering. It was none other than the 7th Maisha Scientific Conference, a confluence of brilliant minds, passionate advocates, and dedicated leaders in the realm of public health. Among the distinguished attendees was KANCO’s very own Executive Director, a sentinel of progress and innovation in the field.

The conference served as a beacon, illuminating the path forged over nearly four decades in our unwavering pursuit of effective responses to disease. It was not merely an event but a testament to our collective dedication to enhancing the quality of life for individuals affected by malady. At its heart, the conference was a platform where policy makers, scientists, communities, and partners converged to share knowledge and insights that have accumulated over the years.

If you walked through the halls of this knowledge sanctuary, you wouldn't help but feel a sense of awe at the collective wisdom that permeated the air. The conference sought to celebrate achievements, to recognise the victories we have achieved. Success stories were shared, strategies that have borne fruit were laid bare, and the air was electric with the palpable spirit of triumph.

But it was not merely a backward glance at the milestones we’ve reached; the conference embraced the spirit of innovation and progress. It beckoned us to look forward, to gaze into the horizon of scientific advancement. The challenge laid before us was clear: how can we harness the latest scientific breakthroughs to address the ever-evolving challenges posed by HIV and other epidemics?

One particularly enlightening session centered on Adolescents and Young People (AYP) and their perceptions of new and innovative HIV prevention strategies. It’s a pressing concern because AYPs are a dynamic population, their lives intersecting with a multitude of factors, from behavior to economic status and comprehensive knowledge of HIV. Bridging the digital and economic divides among adolescents was a prominent theme, with panelists providing valuable insights on leveraging technology for prevention and enhancing service uptake.

Throughout the conference, the clarion call for inclusivity echoed resoundingly. We recognise that progress isn't measured merely in numbers but in the inclusivity of our approach. The emphasis was on creating an environment where barriers to healthcare access are dismantled, and discrimination is relegated to the annals of history.

We delved into the significance of collaboration, uniting policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders in a harmonious symphony. The goal? To craft actionable strategies that prioritize key and vulnerable populations in the HIV response. Our mission is nothing less than reaffirming our commitment to equal access to prevention, treatment, and care services for all individuals, regardless of their geographical location.

The presence of KANCO’s Executive Director at this pivotal conference underscores our organisation’s unwavering commitment to progress and innovation in the battle against pandemics. It’s a testament to our dedication to collaborating with like-minded individuals and institutions to chart a course toward a brighter, healthier future for all.

As we depart from the 7th Maisha Scientific Conference, we carry with us not only the knowledge gained but also the burning desire to translate that knowledge into action. Our path ahead is clear: to continue innovating, collaborating, and advocating for a world where HIV is not a barrier to a fulfilling life. In the grand tapestry of the fight against HIV, the Maisha Scientific Conference was a vibrant thread, woven with care and dedication.
In a momentous gathering during the 78th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 78) in September 2023, world leaders convened not one, but three High-Level Meetings on health. These pivotal gatherings presented a historic opportunity for global leaders to place health at the forefront of the high-level political agenda. Their collective commitment focused on three critical areas: ending tuberculosis (TB), delivering universal health coverage (UHC), and fortifying pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.

As we stand at the midpoint towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is evident that the world is veering off track in attaining its health targets by 2030. Millions of people still face insurmountable barriers to accessing life-saving and health-enhancing interventions. Moreover, the devastating impact of out-of-pocket health expenses pushes over 1 billion individuals into the abyss of extreme poverty. The grim situation has been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

These High-Level Meetings unfolded at a moment of profound global recovery, where the world grapples with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside various humanitarian and climate crises. In the face of these formidable challenges, it becomes increasingly apparent that upholding the fundamental human right to health and constructing equitable health systems are prerequisites for achieving UHC. They are also pivotal in establishing sustainable frameworks for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, as well as for bringing an end to relentless epidemics like tuberculosis.

KANCO, represented by our esteemed Executive Director, Professor Allan Ragi, played a prominent role in these significant meetings held in New York. The meetings transpired as follows:

The UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPPR): This meeting emerged as a pivotal platform for Member States to galvanize political momentum. It encouraged the integration of a multisectoral approach toward pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. The meeting recognized the multifaceted consequences of pandemics, emphasizing the necessity for a comprehensive strategy to mitigate their impacts. In essence, this meeting underscored the critical importance of proactive measures in averting future crises.

The High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC): This gathering served as a beacon of hope, providing countries and stakeholders with an opportunity to reinvigorate their commitment to achieving health for all. It laid the foundation for implementing policies that would ensure the robustness of health systems for future generations. Building upon the 2019 Political Declaration, this meeting sought to accelerate progress toward achieving UHC.

The UN High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis (TB): With a profound aim, this meeting conducted a comprehensive review of the progress made toward the agreed tuberculosis targets set forth in the 2018 Political Declaration. It also identified gaps and proposed solutions to hasten our journey toward ending the tuberculosis epidemic by 2030. The meeting rekindled the global commitment to this cause and set a clear path for the way forward.
The Istituto Affari Internazionali brought together specialists to discuss the African Health Product Industry and the preparedness of Africa for the next pandemic. KANCO’s Head of Programs, Mr. Jack Ndegwa was one of the panelists.

As the continent continues to navigate the complexities of healthcare, this industry is emerging as a vital player, weaving together innovation, sustainability, and the promise of improved well-being.

Africa, often hailed for its rich cultural diversity, is now showcasing a tapestry of health product innovation. From traditional herbal remedies to cutting-edge pharmaceuticals, the industry is a testament to the fusion of ancient wisdom and modern science. The development of locally sourced and manufactured health products not only addresses the unique health challenges of the continent but also fosters economic growth by creating jobs and supporting local businesses.

In an exciting week of collaboration and partnership, KANCO had the privilege of hosting Prof Amir Khan, the Chief Coordinating Professional at the Association for Social Development (ASD), in Kenya. This visit was a testament to the commitment of both organizations to work together towards common goals, including the fight against hepatitis, tobacco cessation, and mental health promotion.

Over the course of a week, KANCO and ASD engaged in a series of meetings and visited various institutions to further their shared objectives.

Both organisations conducted meetings to strategise and plan their collaborative efforts. These sessions laid the foundation for a successful partnership in addressing critical health issues.

Prof Amir Khan and a team from KANCO visited several institutions to gain insights into the local healthcare landscape. They explored HOYMAS in Kajiado and a medically assisted therapy clinic at Karuri Hospital in Kiambu, run by Médecins Sans Frontières.

The week also included discussions with key partners in the healthcare and social development sectors. These dialogues focused on harnessing collective efforts to combat hepatitis, promote tobacco cessation, and enhance mental health support in Kenya.

One of the central themes of these meetings and site visits was the fight against hepatitis. Both organizations recognized the urgency of raising awareness, ensuring testing and diagnosis, and providing access to treatment for hepatitis. The collaborative efforts between KANCO and ASD aim to make a significant impact in combating this public health challenge.

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In an era where healthcare data spans both physical and digital realms, Kenya’s evolving health data protection framework is a pivotal step in securing sensitive personal information and ensuring its responsible management. However, it’s imperative that we recalibrate our approach to encompass all forms of health data, not just digital records. Furthermore, the issue of seamless access to one’s health data deserves a closer look.

Kenya’s Health Data Protection Bill for 2023 is a commendable endeavor, emphasising the preservation of confidentiality, privacy, and security in healthcare information. Yet, the nomenclature should reflect the broader spectrum of health data, which extends beyond the confines of digital records. Health data comes in various formats, including paper-based medical records and diagnostic reports. Acknowledging this diversity in the bill’s title would underline the inclusivity of the regulatory framework, ensuring that data in all its forms receives adequate protection.

One aspect of health data management that requires focused attention is access. Patients should have a straightforward and efficient means of accessing their own health information. This not only empowers individuals but also enhances the overall quality of healthcare services.

Internationally, countries have been exploring innovative ways to provide individuals with easy access to their health data. Digital portals, secure authentication mechanisms, and standardized formats for sharing data with patients are some of the strategies adopted by forward-thinking healthcare systems.

Incorporating such provisions into Kenya’s health data protection framework would not only bolster patient autonomy but also foster a sense of transparency in healthcare delivery. When individuals can readily access their health information, they become active partners in their own care, enabling informed decisions and smoother transitions between healthcare providers.

The bill also ought to have given clarity regarding the mandate for promptly notifying data breaches to relevant authorities and affected individuals. A provision enforcing transparent notification would contribute to accountability. Also, given the global nature of healthcare, provisions on international data transfers should be incorporated to align with international standards.

A proper legislative framework should have given precise guidelines for data disposal after the retention period should be articulated to prevent inadvertent data retention and potential privacy breaches.

Standardised formats for obtaining and recording consent can enhance clarity and minimise misunderstandings should have also been provided for as well as the provision of a comprehensive guidance on modern technological safeguards, including encryption and regular security audits would have strengthened the framework.

We hope these considerations are made!
WE SHOULD EMBRACE INNOVATION IN A NEW ERA FOR HARM REDUCTION

By Alex ‘Picasso’ Wanjima - Finance, KANCO

In the ever-evolving landscape of public health, the paradigm of harm reduction stands as a beacon of progress, ushering in a new era of innovation and compassion. As we navigate the challenges posed by substance use and related health issues, it becomes imperative to stay at the forefront of transformative trends that not only address immediate concerns but also pave the way for a healthier, more inclusive future.

BREAKING DOWN STIGMAS

One notable trend is the concerted effort to destigmatize substance use and prioritize empathy over judgment. Recognizing addiction as a health issue rather than a moral failing is crucial for effective harm reduction. Language matters, and framing discussions around health, support, and recovery fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered to seek help without fear of societal condemnation.

INTERSECTIONALITY IN ACTION

Addressing the diverse needs of communities requires an intersectional approach. Harm reduction strategies are becoming more nuanced, acknowledging the unique challenges faced by different demographic groups. Whether it’s tailoring programs for LGBTQ+ individuals, understanding cultural variations, or considering socio-economic factors, a one-size-fits-all approach is giving way to targeted, inclusive initiatives that ensure that no one is left behind.

TECHNOLOGY AS AN ALLY

The digital age brings with it unprecedented opportunities for harm reduction. From virtual support groups to mobile applications providing real-time assistance, technology is playing a pivotal role in making resources more accessible. Telehealth services are breaking down geographical barriers, connecting individuals with healthcare professionals and support networks, particularly vital in regions where physical access to healthcare may be limited.

POLICY EVOLUTION

As we witness a global shift towards a more compassionate understanding of substance use, legal frameworks are adapting to reflect this evolution. Decriminalization of certain substances and the implementation of supervised consumption sites are gaining traction, emphasizing a health-centered approach rather than punitive measures. These policy changes not only reduce the burden on criminal justice systems but also contribute to a more empathetic society.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Successful harm reduction is inherently community-driven. Empowering communities to take charge of their health fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility. Grassroots initiatives, peer-led support networks, and community-based education programs are proving to be formidable tools in the fight against substance-related harm. By amplifying the voices of those directly affected, we create solutions that are not only effective but respectful of individual autonomy.

ENLIGHTENMENT

There are two and half a trillion (give or take) of red blood cells in your body at any moment. To maintain this number, about two and a half a million new ones need to be produced every second by your bone marrow. This is like a new population of the county of Nakuru every second.

NUGGETS OF WISDOM

“I learned that my voice has power, and I will not sit down, and I will not be quiet. I’m always going to speak out, and I’m always going to encourage others to speak out.”

Michelle Obama, from her book “Becoming.”
KANCO WEEKLY NEWSLETTER Vol 9/23

ADVOCACY

KANCO GIVES RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROPOSED LAW

IN BRIEF

- KANCO presented memoranda on the Social Health Insurance Bill, the Digital Health Bill, the Primary healthcare Bill and the Facility Improvement Financing Bill. 
- KANCO also presented a memorandum on the Kajiado County Early Childhood Education Bill. 
- The National Government legislations have since become Acts of Parliament.

INSET: Kinyua wa Kibiru presents KANCO’s memorandum on the Kajiado County Early Education Bill Committee on Education, Vocational Training, Youth and Sports

KANCO continues to play an integral role in shaping laws and policies. This more so at a time that much is happening in the legal landscape of health and other related sectors.

Most notably, President Dr William Ruto assent ed into law four new bills that sought to introduce new funding mechanisms with the aim of strengthening universal health coverage in Kenya.

The Social Health Insurance Act repeals the National Health Insurance fund, establishing a social health authority that introduces three new funds that will secure publically funded primary health care, universal health insurance, and equitable access to quality health services. A primary care fund to pay for primary health care services will be set up. The new Social Insurance Fund payment will enable low-income households to receive subsidised insurance with an emphasis on primary care and prevention. A third fund will pay the costs of management of chronic illnesses after the depletion of Social Health Insurance and pay for emergency treatment.

To support the primary care fund, employed Kenyans will make a monthly contribution of 2.75% of their salary capped at a minimum of Ksh 300 and a maximum of Ksh 5000. Non-Kenyans resident in the country for more than 12 months are eligible to register. Details of financing for the other funds have not yet been established.

On the Kajiado Early Childhood Education Bill, KANCO submitted that the bill should align with the Early Childhood Education Act, which obligates counties, under section 6, to provide free and compulsory early childhood education in public education centers. The enforcement mechanisms for this obligation are not not addressed in the Kajiado Bill. The principles of inclusivity, public awareness, advocacy programs, and access to timely information on early childhood education are also not adequately addressed.

Furthermore, the Kajiado Bill was critiqued for its failure to incorporate provisions for the board or management of early childhood education centers.

ALL IN A DAY’S WORK...

A man returned to the U.S. after a trip abroad feeling very ill. He goes to see his doctor and is immediately rushed to the hospital to undergo a barrage of extensive tests. The man wakes up after the tests in a private room at the hospital, and the phone by his bed rings.

“This is your doctor. We’ve got the results back from your tests, and we’ve found you have an extremely nasty virus that is extremely contagious!” “Oh my gosh,” cries the man. He’s in a panic now. “What are you going to do, Doctor?” “Well, we’re going to put you on a diet of pizzas, pancakes, and quesadillas.” “Will that cure me?” asked the man hopefully. The doctor replied, “No, but it’s the only food we can get under the door.”
YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS
World Pneumonia Day was marked on November 12, 2023. This day was established in 2009 with the goal of raising awareness about pneumonia, promoting interventions to guard against, prevent, and treat pneumonia, and generating action to combat the disease. One of the most common infectious diseases that kills both adults and children is pneumonia. While pneumonia can strike anyone, the elderly and young children under two years old are particularly vulnerable.

Discover more about pneumonia, including its causes, symptoms, and treatments, and use this day to spread awareness of the illness among others. Every year on November 12, World Pneumonia Day is observed to increase public awareness of pneumonia, which is the world’s greatest cause of mortality for children. The day aims to highlight the importance of diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of this treatable and preventable disease. Millions of people have pneumonia every year, especially in low-income nations where access to healthcare is limited.

Global Pneumonia Day is observed annually on November 12 to increase public awareness of the illness and provide information on how to prevent it. Pneumonia is the leading cause of infectious mortality in both adults and children globally, accounting for the majority of deaths in children under five. The day also focuses on encouraging global action, especially in low- and middle-income countries, and offering many opportunities to lower the number of deaths from respiratory illnesses like pneumonia.

Pneumonia is an inflammatory respiratory illness caused by infections with bacteria, viruses, or fungi that harm the lung’s "Alveoli" (air sacs). The accumulation of mucus or fluid in the air sacs makes breathing challenging. It’s an infectious disease that can be fatal to anyone with compromised immune systems, particularly young children and the elderly. By spreading knowledge about the risk factors, symptoms, and available interventions, World Pneumonia Day plays a vital role in reducing the burden of pneumonia and saving lives. It acts as a reminder that we can all work together to stop and prevent this terrible illness.

A child in the world passes away from pneumonia every 20 seconds, despite the fact that it is one of the illnesses that is most easily treatable. It’s time to unite the fight against pneumonia by raising public knowledge of the disease, its signs, and its remedies. World Pneumonia Day serves as a warning that pneumonia is a dangerous, sometimes fatal infection that can strike at any time and any place. Additionally, it gives activists, groups, and individuals a chance to coordinate awareness-raising activities. World Pneumonia Day is a significant global observation that falls in November.

The first World Pneumonia Day was observed on November 12, 2009. As a result of the widespread support for Stop Pneumonia, numerous government agencies and private organizations supported and implemented better policies and campaigns to educate the public and provide better facilities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where children suffer from air infections and malnutrition.

Infectious diseases like pneumonia may be treated and prevented. In spite of treatment being available, the death toll from respiratory infectious diseases like pneumonia has risen dramatically in recent years.