

The scourge continues to spread unabated despite public warnings in the electronic and print media not to mention billboards.

- File picture

Action taken to arrest a killer on the rampage

The Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) is the most serious outbreak of any disease in this century. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that as of 1992, 12 million men and women and one million children have been infected with the virus and will eventually develop Aids and die. About 7.5 million of these are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Also, by the end of 1992, 600,000 Aids cases had been reported to the global programme on Aids (GPA) worldwide. However, GPA estimates that the actual number of Aids cases is about 2.5 million.

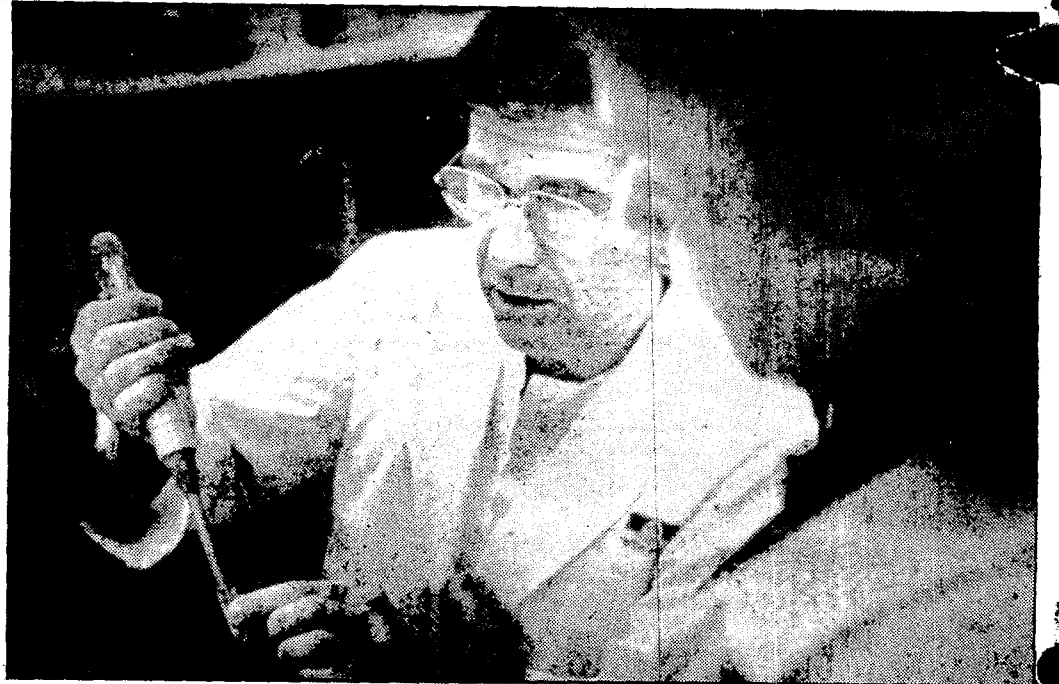
In Kenya, the first Aids case was recognised in 1984 and by the end of the same year, seven more cases were identified. In 1985, the National Aids Committee was established by the Ministry of Health to advise the ministry in all matters pertaining to Aids control but despite all the efforts made, the epidemic continues unabated.

Since 1990, the HIV prevalence rates have been rising rapidly from 3.3 per cent in 1990 to 4.4 per cent in 1991 and 5.6 per cent in 1992. The Kenya National Aids Control Programme estimates that the prevalence rate might rise to over 7.5 per cent by the end of 1993.

The urban prevalence rate is estimated to rise to 14 and 15 per cent from its 1992 rate of between 10 and 11 per cent.

It is thus estimated that for every 18 adults in Kenya, one is infected with the HIV virus. In urban centres, one in every nine adults is infected.

The number of people who are



Despite the great efforts being put by scientists the world over in Aids research, an effective cure to combat the killer is yet to be found.

- File picture

currently infected with the Human Immuno deficiency Virus (HIV) is estimated to be over 800,000. This includes about 35,000 children. Most of these people do not know that they are infected.

Since the epidemic started in the country, a cumulative number of over 41,000 Aids cases had been reported to the National Aids Control Programme by the end of October, 1993.

However, it is estimated that the actual number of Aids cases is over 130,000. This is based on the experience of under-reporting of cases in the country. It is estimated that only about a 1/3 of the cases ever gets reported to the National Aids Control Programme. The reasons for this under-reporting include:

- Some people never seek hospital care for Aids.
- Some doctors may not want to record a diagnosis of Aids because of stigma attached to Aids.
- Some people with HIV infection may die of other diseases before they are ever diagnosed as having Aids.

Since there is no cure for Aids, this disease threatens the social and economical well being of this country. Over 70 per cent of the Aids cases are aged between 15-49 years.

These are men and women of reproductive age and expected to contribute more in the economic development of the country.

In Kenya, the sexual ratio of the Aids cases is 1 to 1. Most of these cases are in urban and peri-urban centres. The main provinces most affected are the Coast Province, Nyanza, Western and

Nairobi Province. However, there is no single district which is spared from this scourge and the infection continues to spread.

The recognition that Aids is more than just a health problem, has made the Government take quick and decisive measures to deal with the killer and all its impacts.

Although a decade ago Aids was looked at as a family tragedy, today it is no longer a family matter. Aids problem has assumed entirely different dimensions and has become the concern of the whole nation. In other words, it is national tragedy.

Consequently, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Planning and National Development, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health's National Aids Control Programme and the Office of the President, organised a series of workshops for Provincial and District Commissioners on HIV/Aids.

The workshops were aimed at working out the integration of Aids into the National and District Development Plans for 1994-1996 in order to put in place programmes and projects for the mitigation of the impacts of:

- The transformation of Aids from a family tragedy into a national tragedy is based on the adverse effects it has on a number of national parameters.
- Since Aids strikes hardest, those members of the population who are within the most productive age groups and are therefore at the prime of their working life,

the implications of this is extremely devastating to the national economy.

Economic advisor, Dr Kangethe Gitu, of the Directorate of Planning in the Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Planning and National Development says the loss of the most productive individual is inevitably the loss of the manpower with the most urgently needed skills.

In Kenya, the loss of an employee with a bachelors degree, adds Dr Gitu, would be equivalent to about Sh1 million of fees and a loss of 14 years of nursery and primary schooling, four years of university education, some training; formal or informal, direct on the job.

All these expenses are a great cost to the family and the nation as a whole. The other loss incurred as a consequence of the age-group most affected is the loss of income.

Available estimates suggest that AIDS results into a loss of 22 years of productive life. Loss of productivity is also a direct result of Aids since those affected are usually the initiators of civilisation in society.

Dr Gitu further expounded that the group hardest hit (20-44) years is the age group most susceptible to Aids deaths. As a result, 75 per cent of those dying with Aids fall in this age group. The national average annual income of an employee is Sh14,675. The average annual income of a person with Aids is Sh19,200. Which means that the average Aids patient earns more than the

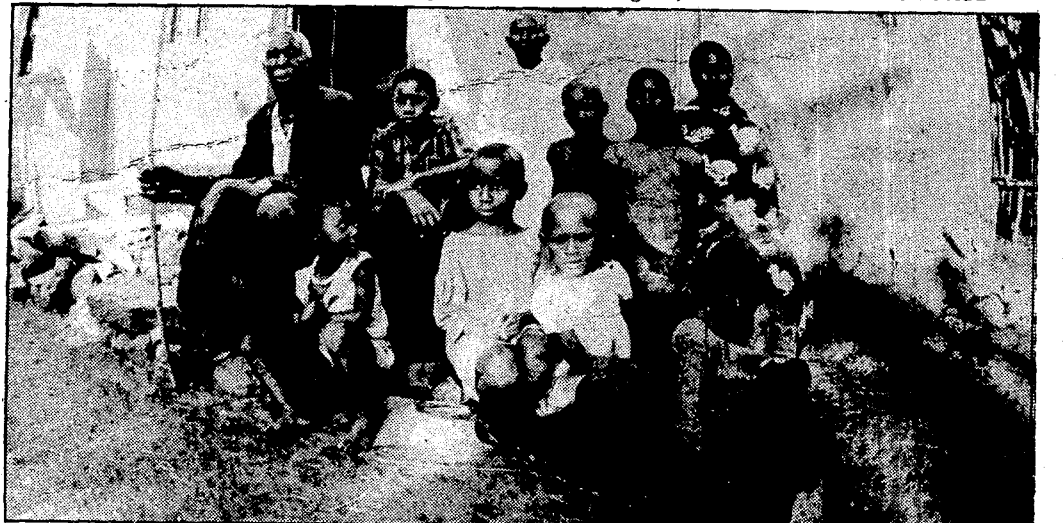
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WORLD AIDS DAY 1993

DECEMBER 1

THE KENYA NATIONAL AIDS CONTROL PROGRAMMES INVITES ALL TO KAJIADO SHOWGROUND

WORLD AIDS DAY COMMEMORATION
THEME: THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW



The disease has not spared children: Some are born with it while it has orphaned others.

- File picture