

## HEALTH

# HIV testing centres to be more friendly

They will be rebranded to avoid stigma on visitors

By **PATRICK MUTHURI**  
and **CHARLES WANYORO**

**C**entres for voluntary counselling and testing of HIV and Aids are set to undergo major changes to make them more friendly and effective in the fight against the scourge.

They will be re-branded as "comprehensive care centres" and will be adequately equipped. Competent staff will be employed to run them.

Medical Services minister Anyang' Nyong'o said yesterday that the centres will now offer various medical tests so that people can establish the state of their health instead of exclusively establishing their HIV status.

"People wishing to know their blood sugar level, blood pressure, among other diag-

nostic tests, will now be able to access such services at the centres," said the minister, who was on a tour of Meru Central District Hospital.

Speaking at Githongo District Hospital in Imenti Central, the minister said the move to re-brand the centres came after realisation that most Kenyans abhor visiting them because of the stigma associated with HIV and Aids.

Making such centres offer other diagnostic tests, the minister added, would act as a morale booster to those wishing to know their HIV status since other people will not know their exact mission.

## The scourge

"Most Kenyans shun the centres since they deal exclusively with Aids and anybody visiting them is invariably deemed to be infected. This attitude has to change if the war against the scourge is to be won," said the minister.

The minister said efforts to check the spread of Aids since its discovery over 20 years ago have partly been hampered by the stigma associated with the disease, coupled with inappropriate strategies.

"It has now become imperative for us to rethink our intervention strategies and remodel them to ensure the eradication of the stigma associated with the diseases," the minister said.

**The facilities  
will now  
check for  
other diseases**

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