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Stop depending on aid to fight Aids, Kenya told

By MIKE MWANIKI

The fight against Aids will only be won if Kenya stops its over reliance on donor funding, a senior Ministry of Health official has said.

Dr Willis Akhwale criticised the country's dependency on money from the Global Fund to fight HIV and malaria, saying this did not augur well in tackling the disease which affects over 2.5 million people in the country.

Recently, Public Health minister Beth Mugo announced that Kenya was set to receive Sh10 billion (\$130 million) to fight Aids. The news came just days after it had been reported that the country would be locked out of the fund because it could not account for Sh13 billion given to it in the past.

Prevalence rate

The money will be used to buy anti-retroviral drugs.

Although the Kenya Aids Indicator Survey shows that the national HIV prevalence rate stood at 7.4 per cent, Dr Akhwale cautioned people to practice safe sex to prevent new infections.

"The survey for example, shows a wide variation in prevalence from one per cent in North Eastern to 15.3 per cent in Nyanza," he said.

According to him, Nyanza and Rift Valley provinces are home to 50 per cent of all HIV infected adults in the country.

He said only 34 per cent of Kenyans had tested for HIV and the Government plans to increase counselling and testing sites during this financial year to encourage more people to go for tests.

Women launch campaign

By NATION Correspondent

Hundreds of women yesterday congregated at the KICC grounds to celebrate the launch of a new women's rights campaign.

The women, drawn from various provinces cheered and danced as they inaugurated a nationwide campaign on the elimination of violence against women.

The campaign, dubbed "We Can" will be funded by over 70 local and international organisations and is aimed at educating the public on gender violence and its effects.

No to violence

"We hope that by 2012 we will have reached 30 million people who can stand up and say no to violence," said Ms Stella Maranga of Oxfam Kenya.

Studies show that one in two women has been a victim of gender based violence.

"This means every Kenyan has personally experienced some form of violence or knows someone who has," said Mrs Norah Winyi, executive director of African Women's Development and Communication Network.

In a rare move, activists encouraged those in attendance to learn how to physically defend themselves.

They suggested that women learn basic defence tactics to fight off rapists.

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