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**Aids drive to target grassroots**

By NATION Correspondents

Leaders in Central Province will start a grassroots campaign to  
fight the spread of H1V/Aids in the region.

They called for an end to the culture of silence on Aids which  
they said had killed thousands and left about two million Kenyans infected with the virus that causes it.

A leaders' forum in Nyeri on Saturday resolved to start the  
campaign from the sub-locations in order to empower all community leaders in an attempt to end the silence on issues of sex and sexuality.

The leaders had gathered at the Green Hills Hotel to discuss

the Sessional Papcr No.4 on

AIDS in Kenya in what was referred to as

“The Nyeri Declaration of

1999”, the leaders led by the

Democratic Party of Kenya

chairman, Mr Mwai Kibak said people should start recognising the magnitude of the HIV/Aids problem in the province.

It was announced that during the grassroots campaign, leaders  
will be assisted by the provincial administrators who will be mobilising the public. The forum also said NGOs will be consulted and requested to give financial support.

The Aids problem will be part of the agenda of issues to be addressed during the national holidays, public meetings and barazas.

The leaders, who included Members of Parliament from the province, observed that the rate at which HIV/Aids was spreading was alarming. They all called for collective social responsibility in dealing with the pandemic.

People infected with HIV and those who have the symptoms

for Aids should be treated at home as their numbers in hospitals had doubled and was causing a serious congestion in the institutions.

The community will be encouraged to take care of the patients and reduce the stigma associated with HIV/Aids infection.

Leaders appealed to the government to put up in place the legal framework for the implementation of the Sessional Paper to hasten the establishment of a

National Aids Council. The government, they said, should take  
action against some churches which are discouraging the use of condoms.

However, Kiambu and Thika district MPs failed to attend the forum. Also, the Nyeri town MP, Mr Wanyiri Kihoro, his Kieni counterpart Dr Chris Murungaru arid Mukurwe-ini legislator Mr Muhika, did not attend.

The high incidence HIV\Aids among teenage girls in

Western Province is being exacerbated by the belief among older infected men that having sex with teenagers can cure their infection.

An HIV/Aids symposium in the province yesterday heard  
that older men from age 35 and above were luring students and teenage girls into unprotected sex after learning that they were infected with either sexually transmitted diseases or HIV.

The symposium was told that the main contributors to (tie escalating cases of child defilement in the province were being caused by the same kind of men.

Men believe that if they have unprotected sex with teenage girls, their sexually transmitted ailments would be cured, it was reported.

Dr Sobbie Mulindi of the University of Nairobi said. “22 percent of the primary and secondary school children in the province are now HIV positive. This is extremely alarming since among other important factors,

they have been the main source of blood for the national blood bank and their blood is no longer safe.’

Dr Mulindi said the high incidence of the disease was putting extreme pressure on bed occupancy government hospitals and mortuaries across. He added that the bed occupancy rate in hospitals had risen from I5 to 5I  
 percent increase within the last two years.

More than 70 per cent of the increasing number of people with TB in the region were also H1V positive.

The medic said that a World

Health Organisation study had

recommended that Kenyatta

National Hospital mortuary alone be expanded IO times to accommodate the dead ‘ because of Aids-related deaths that were escalating in the country as a whole,

He said there was need for political commitment to revise the

popu1ation growth rate which was being adversely affected by  
the high death rates occasioned by Aids,

The HIV/Aids problem, the university lecturer said, was no  
longer a medical problem to the country since its impact was  
more adverse economically, socially and politically.