**Aids conference**

**Is major step**

The Aid conference, which begins in Nairobi tomorrow, is

a major positive step in the war against the lethal infection

that is threatening the survival of millions of people.

The conference, to be attended by Aids sufferers as well

as people with no clinical symptoms, but who carry the

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), is important for

One areas . Although 1.68 million Kenyan carry the virus,

with 34,0 0 either suffering from Aids or in the throes of

the final stages of the infection, most people still claim they

do not know, or have not heard, about anyone with the

infection. In other words, Aids is, in ·many ways, still a

closet disease .

Top officials at Afya House, the Ministry of Health

Headquarters, say the conference will - using ,the

experiences and ideas of victims, including members of the

Know Ai Society (KAS) - examine the stages of the

epidemic n Kenya.

One sure thing is that Kenyans have failed to curb the

spread of Aids and this calls for a critical analysis and

evaluation of the causes of this tragic failure.

Indeed, there are various dimensions to the problem and

very few in our in the country can escape blame. Parents

have failed to help protect their children from the infection.

Aids is, in fact, said to be rampant among teenagers.

Equally iS , our youth should no longer look for scapegoats

and the lesson is now clear. Sex outside marriage and

promiscuity are a sure way to death.

First recorded in 1984, the rapid spread of Aids is a major

indicator hat Kenyans have to seriously examine their

morals. I deed, we agree with a senior official in the

Ministry ho said that there was an urgent need to reexamine

the whole issue of morality because it has been

lacking among our leaders - politicians, religious men,

community leaders or clan leaders and even the medical

profession.

Unless the rate of spread of the killer disease is curbed \_

its infection and death rate at least doubles every six

months - he country will soon be plunged into a major

disaster because Aids has major socio-economic, cultural,

legal and political implications that portend doom.

There is no doubt that an Aids test is already becoming

*an* important requirement for those who have been sexually

active be£ e marriage, especially if they want children.

Like all others, most of 1.68 million people infected with

HIV simply took their "chance". Even if the country's top

medical experts confess that they have been shocked and

caught unprepared by the rapid spread of the infection.

An organization like Unicef, which specializes. in

children's issues, has been forced to re-examine its

strategies or activities and seriously join the war against the

killer disease, which is wrongly assumed to affect only

sexually active adults. ,

Indeed, it is Unicefs country representative, Mr Vincent

O'Reilly, who recently warned against curbing the funding

of Aids progammes because the disease can rapidly retard

all the progress that has been made in the war against

poverty an diseases.

As parents die, leaving thousands of orphans, at least 30

per cent of children born by mothers with HIV also get

infected du . g or before birth and their. number is rapidly

increasing. Aids even hinders immunisation against

tuberculosis

There is need for strategies to help curb the killer

'disease, which afflicts seven per cent of our population and

reaches 30 per cent among some adult groups.

The KAS has done a good job in the war against Aids.

However, it is a shame that some hotels have been

discriminating against Aids sufferers, probably out of

ignorance. perhaps the Nairobi conference will help to

educate the about the spread of the virus. Employers in

Kenya definitely need training on the handling of HIV and

Aids victims.