DECEMBER 2, 1995

Loose sexual behaviour blamed

for escalating Aids infections

BY GATONYE GATHURA

The World Aids Day was marked

it yesterday. More than 10,000

Kenyans have been killed by the

pandemic in the last 12 months

and an even higher number Will

have died by the time we celebrate

the next World Aids Day on

December l, 1996.

"Tomorrow and the next day,

just like many past weekends, a

number of Kenyans will spend

their time attending funeral ser.

vices and bunals Of Aids victims,"

regrets Dr Martin Kayo of the

National Aids Control programme

(NACP)\_

"Tonight those who have to

transport bodies to distant places

from urban areas such as westem

Kenya will be meeting to raise

money for the purpose and ask

themselves who will take care Of

the orphaned ones. ' '

These Kenyans will and are al-

ready experiencing many econom-

difficulties and no respite is visible. The present situation In Kenya

indicate that there are over 57,000

reported Aids cases in the country

since the beginning of the epidemic in 1984.

The scrounge has now spread

throughout the country and Aids

cases have been reported from every district. However, the reported

number is only the tip Of an 'Ce-

berg as there are more Cases which

go unreported because either the

victims do not seek medical care

or because some doctors do not re-

cord the diagnosis as HIV/Aids

due to the fear of stigmatisation

to the family or Of insurance

benefits.

The Other reason why many

more Aids cases go unreported is

because some people with HIV infection die of other diseases before

being diagnosed as Aids victims or

due to lack of diagnostic facilities

for HIV testing in the rural health

facilities.

Those infected With Aids are estimated to be over 850 which

includes 35,000 children, but most

Of them have not the slightest idea

that they are infected.

Since 1990, the HIV prevalence

rates have been rising rapidly from

3.3 cent in 1990 to 4.4 per cent

in 1591 and 5.5 per in 1992.

The National Aids/STD Control

Programme (NASCOP) estimates

that the prevalence rate may have

risen to over per cent by the

end of last year. The urban prevalence rate is estimated to rise to

between 14 and IS from its 1992

rate Of between 10-11 percent \_

In some parts Of the country, it

is estimated that out of every 18

adults, one is infected with the

z 40

o

.1987

REPORTED AIDS CASES

1987.1995 CUMULATIVE

implemented in eight districts

through the Kenya Institute Of

Education with the support of

UNICEF.

The emphasis has been on Family Life Education for young

people in order to provide them

With the information to protect

themselves from HIV infection.

Community based Aids education has been identified as a means

for behaviour change and sustainability Of Aids education projects/

activities within

It has been accelerated through

training Of multisectoral service

providers Who are expected to pro-

Vide services to individuals,

groups and community through

counselling services, public educa-

lion and peer education.

This strategy also addresses the

issues of Aids/STD in the work-

lace and a series of initiatives

have been undertaken by NASCOP in

collaboration with the Ministry of

Labour and Manpower Development, Federation of Kenya Employers and Non-Governmental Organisations.

The World AIDS Day that was

Observed the world over yesterday

is an annual event commemorated

on December 1 worldwide.

The theme for this year is

Shared rights, shared responsibilities which was chosen by

the World Health Organisation

(WHO) In consultation With Other

United Nations agencies and leading Non Governmental Organisations.

WHO aims to highlight the importance Of equality and solidarity

In the global response to HIV/Aids.

HIV pandemic can be addressed effectively Only if rights

and responsibilities are shared

equally across the globe, says Dr.

Hiroshima Nakayama, Director-

General of WHO

. 'People share the rights

whether or not they are infected

With HIV. And responsibilities involved in HIV prevention and caring for those infected must be

shared too'

Everyone —children, men,

grants, refugees, sex wokers, drug

• 1989

.1994

.1995

.1988

.1990

YEAR

herald for individuals, the fam-ily, the community, the nation and

the world?

You hardly need to be an expert

to understand that the most sexually active people are the young and

most productive in the community

hence Aids will affect the overall

economic output.

If Aids is more prevalent among

the economic elite and educated

.1992

-1993

Dr Martin Kayo: Aids

escalating fast in Kenya.

injectors, gay men — has the right

to be able to avoid infection, the

right to health care, if sick with

Aids, and the right to be treated

with dignity and without discrimination\_ Regardless of HIV status,

shared rights also include

to liberty, freedom Of movement

to employment, to marry to

found a family, and seek asylum

As for responsibility, says the

WHO press, individuals have a responsibility to protect themselves

and others from infection. Men in

particular, because Of their dominant status in many societies, has

the responsibility to practise safe

Families and communities have

a responsibility to educate their

on Aids prevention, am

to care for those affected by H

governments, fulfilling their duty

to protect public heal have a responsibility to implement appropriate HIV prevention policies

to ensure that all their citizens

have equal access to health

services.

For its part, continues WHO, t

international community has the

responsibility to ensure effective

global co-operation On HIV/Ai

and to support poorer

meeting the challenge.

For the world AIDS Day 9

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HIV While in some urban

one in every nine adults is in-

Reports from all parts Of

country record high prevalence Of

HIV infection among pregnant

women as from 20-30 out Of every

100 tested.

For the IOW prevalence rate, the

range is between 2-10 out of every

I (H) women tested but the treatment could lead to reduction in

economic growth

Sectors to be affected most will

include the security forces and others in mobile work such as transportation extension services and banking will also be affected since

many of the workers are young

sexually active men Who are away

from their families.

Deaths of strong people in the

countryside Will affect the agricultural sector and hence the capacity

Of the families and consequently

the country's capacity to feed

itself.

In such a scenario, farmers will

embark on less labour requiring

food crops than on cash crops

while the Aids- affected, the dying

and the dead will require attention

from the living whether children Or

Old people \_

Fortunately, this horrendous

is not new to Kenyans. What

is unfortunate is that Kenya's are

not changing their sexual

Dr. Martin Kayo.

Dr, Kayo, the NACP

Programme manager, says his organisation is seriously going into

analysing whether the rigidity

among Kenyans to change their

behaviour is related to some cultural rigidity or some Inherent

socio-economic variables.

In the presence of so much Poverty around us. Dr. Kayo observes

that poverty makes people vulnerable to factors which enhance the

spread Of HIV such as high risk

sexual behaviour.

"There is no reason why such

cannot use condoms if they

must have sex," he says and

stresses that "we shall go out of

our way to reach places where

these activities take place including bars and lodging houses to get

people to realise that we now have

to convert awareness into action.'

Dr Kayo who is a Senior Director of Medical Services is convinced that discipline and morality

are the central issues which must

be addressed by all including

churches, mosques, schools and

families because the society needs

to re-evaluate itself.

He Says Kenyans must now 100k

back and revisit the traditional

African way of looking at issues as

The plan called for action in six

major strategies:

prevention of sexual transmission Of HIV/Aids.

Under this section which

and Out Of action is being

Many Aids cases go unreported

because some people with HIV infection

die of other diseases before being

diagnosed as Aids victims or due to lack

of diagnostic facilities for HIV

testing in the rural health facilities.

Those infected with Aids are estimated to be

over 850,000 which includes 35,000

children, but most bf them have not4fie

slightest idea that they are infected

shows that it is rising fast.

According to NASCOP , areas

like Kisumu With high infection

rate seems to be levelling at 20 per

cent \_ The average HIV rate among

women Of reproductive age is esti-

mated to be seven percent.

What do this chilling figures

people with well-paying jobs, then

the Impact is more felt than the absolute number of Aids deaths.

Because the costs of

AIDS which include expenditures

for medical care, drugs and funeral

expenses are financed Out Of Savings, then the reduction in invest-

AGE SEX DISTRIBUTION OF AIDS CASES

1986 - NOV. 1995

FEMALE

• 15-59 .20-29

AGE GROUPS

A billboard that to warn the public

casual sex as there is no cure for Aids.