



## NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS FROM JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2009

In a three-month period of July to September 2009, a total of 510 health-related articles from the major daily and weekly newspapers (Mwananchi, Mtanzania, Tanzania Daima, Daily News, Habari Leo, The Citizen, This Day, The Guardian, Sunday citizen, Sunday news, Kulikoni, Nipashe and Raia Mwema) were cut and analysed.

The analysis was set to examine the trend and frequency of reporting. The viability of the reported news was examined to see whether or not they coincided well with health policies and strategies put to strengthen the health status of Tanzanians which emphasize on the marginalized and those most at risk. The task was also set to acknowledge the good work that reporters do as this contributes in strengthening health information system in Tanzania.

During this period, the most reported health news (19%) was on HIV/AIDS. Different initiatives have been reported to be taken by the Government and other Non Government Organizations to control the disease. Such initiatives include the introduction of Condom ATM which seems to be a good strategy to prevent new HIV infections. If this innovation is well taken up and accepted, it could have an additive effect in the standard condom outlets and overall HIV prevention package as most of Tanzanians feel shy when purchasing condoms in public shops.

Along with HIV/AIDS, malaria was another disease reported in these newspapers (Figure 1). In spite of different campaigns and measures taken, it is still a dangerous disease as it claims almost 100,000 lives of Tanzanians annually. According to World Health Organization (WHO) at least one child dies of malaria every 30 seconds. To respond to this, the Government of Tanzania has been implementing a number of anti – malaria strategies under the '*Roll Back Malaria programme*'. These strategies include the provision of insecticide-treated bed nets and indoor residual spraying (IRS). It was reported in the newspapers that in 2010 the government plans to distribute a treated mosquito net to every Tanzanian. This programme has received support from the Global Fund which contributed USD 111m/- together with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Clinton Foundation. If this strategy will work out positively will help to reduce the problem.

Apart from HIV/AIDS and Malaria, Reproductive and child health care has been given much attention by the Government, Non Government Organizations and it occupied about 15% of all health news reported in the newspapers for this period. This is a response to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals targeting to reduce infant and maternal mortality by  $\frac{2}{3}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  respectively by 2015. Different newspapers

reported on different strategies taken to realize reductions in infant and maternal mortality. For example recently the Government launched the National programme named '*Helping Babies Breathe*' with the aim of training all health personnels around the country on how to keep newborns alive in their 24 hours. There has also been a big amalgamation of Non Government Organizations working on health issues through a network of NGOs called Health Equity Group (HEqG)<sup>1</sup> who launched a campaign to reduce maternal mortality on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009 during Gender Festival, organized by TGNP. These efforts will complement other efforts by the government of providing free of charge delivery kits and health care services in order to reduce child and maternal mortality in Tanzania.

One of the factors for high maternal and child mortality rates in Tanzania is shortage of human resource for health. This has been a major challenge to the health sector in improving health service provision. Apart from being inefficient, health workers have also been reported to be corrupt and dishonest. For example most of the newspaper under this period reported on the missing of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria drugs in Tanzania. This relates to mismanagement of such drugs by some of health workers. Also it has been reported that 4bn/-Tsh salaries has been consumed by 1,511 ghost health workers in different regions in Tanzania for the period from 2005 to 2009. This indicates that some of our health workers, as it has been the case throughout public service, do not abide to their professional ethics.

In response to the HRH crisis which is about 65% as indicated in the HSSP III, the Government has implemented a number of strategies such as re-employing the retired but not tired health workers, lowering terms of employments to inexperienced workers and increasing students' enrolment in training institutions.

Apart from shortage of HRH, lack of functional health facilities and equipments also contribute significantly to poor health services delivery in Tanzania. This also has been speculated by most of the newspapers for this period.

Reports of disease outbreaks was given priority (9%) in the local newspapers. In this category, swine flu was a dominant airborne disease reported locally and internationally. Regarding swine flu, most of newspapers wrote on routes of transmission and on how to avoid the infection. Other diseases reported were heart diseases; cancer and TB (Figure 1)

Health sector financing had also a space in the newspapers for this period. Although the world is facing economic crisis, different people, countries and organizations continue to support health sector by donating funds and different health equipments. Examples of

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<sup>1</sup> The Health Equity Group (HEqG) consists of four civil society organizations namely CARE Tanzania, Women's Dignity (WD), Youth Action Volunteers (YAV) and Tanzania Gender Networking Program (TGNP). The main objective of the HEqG is to strategically promote research, analysis, debate, public engagement and coalition building as a means to achieving the Groups common vision - that is, an emerging popular health movement promoting the progressive realization of the right to health for all Tanzanians through extensive engagement with political leaders and decision makers.

news reported under this category are: Denmark avails 230bn/- to boost health sector, 'German grants 27bn/- for health' and 'Kilango ( The Same East constituency MP) donates 70m for construction of maternity and child ward at Ndugu health Center'. This encourages and gives hope of reaching our targets of bringing good and quality health services to Tanzanians as stipulated in the Millennium Development goals and health policies.

Finally, this period (July to September 2009) had a lot of health events such as the breastfeeding week which started from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2009. Most of newspapers educated Tanzanians on the importance of breastfeeding in preventing infant mortality. This is a good spirit among our reporters in using the media for dissemination of different health educational and promotional messages. It was also during this period when the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare launched the Health Sector Strategic Plan III. Among other things, the plan aims at building partnership between the government and other stakeholders in achieving the Millennium Development Goals especially in reduction of Child and maternal mortality and control of infectious diseases in Tanzania.

In this case, YAV congratulates all reporters for their good job and wish to encourage them to do more in order to build a healthy and responsible society for the development of our country.

NB:

The below diagram summarizes newspaper analysis from July to September, 2009.

**Figure 1 NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS FROM JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2009**

