



STATEMENT ON CHRONIC SHORTAGE OF ANTIMALARIAL DRUGS (ALu) -FEBRUARY 10, 2012

SHORTAGE OF ANTIMALARIAL DRUGS – MINISTRY SHOULD STOP ARGUMENTS AND DISTRIBUTE THE DRUGS!

Sikika has been disturbed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare's statement to the public that there are sufficient anti-malarial drugs– "ALu" at health facilities across the country, contrary to the reality on the ground where most of the public health facilities have an acute stock out of such medicine.

A press release issued by the Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry on the 1st of February, 2013 and published in media was disputing facts from an earlier statement made by Sikika about the shortage of ALu and Quinine in 1,300 (26 %) health facilities across the country.

Sikika would like to remind the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare that there is a difference between having consignments of ALu that are ordered and availability of such medicine in the health facilities. A statement made by Sikika was highlighting the stock out of ALu in the health facilities while the Ministry's statement was pointing out the consignments of ALu that were shipped in the country and those expecting to be imported.

In spite of the Ministry's efforts to dispute the facts outlined by Sikika, the current situation is such that up to today (10/02/2013) there are still shortages of ALu and Quinine in some health facilities. The information that can be found from the Ministry's monitoring tool 'SMS for Life' shows that there are still about 1,280 (25%) public health facilities having no ALu at all (zero stocks).

The system also showed that regions that reported a shortfall in January 28, 2013 had not yet received the drugs that were said to be in the country by 8/02/2013. The stock out status of ALu in those regions were; Mwanza (59%), Ruvuma (49%), Shinyanga (44%), Tabora (40%), Mara (38%) and Kigoma (38%).

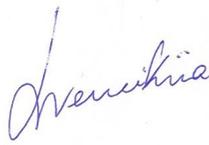
Sikika would like to believe the Ministry's argument on the availability of sufficient stocks of ALu. However, if that is the case, where are these drugs? Why are they not in the 25% of facilities that are completely out of stock? Is the Ministry telling us that it's monitoring system 'SMS for Life' is not providing accurate data as intended?

Whilst trying to dispute the ALu shortage facts, the Ministry's statement also stated '*the system only provides information on the availability of two kinds of antimalarial medicines which are ALu and Quinine and not other types...*'

Sikika would like to remind the Ministry that since 2006 Tanzania has been following the World Health Organization (WHO) malaria treatment guidelines that recommend the use of ALu for uncomplicated malaria and Quinine for severe malaria.

Thus, using these guidelines, health facilities have been managing malaria using the two said medicines, whilst the antimalarial SP is being used by expectant mothers. Based on these facts, Sikika is asking the Ministry of health and Social Welfare to make public the other medicines (apart from ALu and Quinine) that are being used but not reported by the ‘*SMS for life*’. Which guidelines are being followed? Who authorised these guidelines? When were health workers trained on the implementation of these “new guidelines”?.

Instead of investing time and energy arguing about undisputed facts, Sikika is calling upon the Ministry of Health to use its monitoring system “*SMS for Life*” properly in order to ensure that the health of Tanzanians is protected and that frequent stock outs of ALu and other drugs do not recur.



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