



Press Release

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Disburse and spend HIVAIDS funds efficiently to save lives!

The recently released Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report reveals huge amount of unspent money meant for HIV&AIDS programs during the 2012/13 FY. A total of 58 councils failed to spend about Tsh. 2.3billion.

Other unspent balances for HIV&AIDS activities include Tsh 624.49 million by National AIDS Control Program (NACP), Tsh 307.2 milion by TACAIDS and Tsh 428.49 milion by Prime Minister Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMORALG). Failing to spend this huge amount of money while access to HIV&AIDS services is still a problem is indeed disturbing. As CAG pointed out, this may have resulted into partial implementation or incompleteness of planned activities.

Some of the reasons mentioned by the CAG for having large balances of unutilized funds are, funds not released in time by Treasury office and bureaucracy in using the funds at the local government level - LGAs. While this is happening, service users in communities are in high demand of HIV&AIDS services.

Early this year, there have been reports through media about acute shortage of ARVs. Regions mentioned to be most affected were Dar es salaam, Kilimanjaro and Mara. Sikika also came to learn that some health facilities in Iramba were also affected and specific medicines that were missing were *combivir* and *seprin*. Reports from Manyara indicated serious delays of medicines supply from MSD. In Dar es Salaam, some People Living with HIV (PLHIV) reported that facilities changed their medications without giving them reasons. Service providers at Ilala recently reported that they provided patients with monthly doses of ARVs instead of two because they had less supply.

A study on citizen's views of HIV&AIDS services that was published by Sikika in 2013 indicated that, inadequate availability of HIV&AIDS services by PLHIV has both direct and indirect negative impacts. These include, high costs incurred by PLHIV as they are forced to travel long distances to access health services, compromised confidentiality of PLHIV during counseling due to inadequate counseling rooms in CTCs, lack of treatment adherence and client retention caused by frequent shortages of ARVs and CD4 count machines.

The country's National Multisectoral Strategic Framework (NMSF) III has outlined challenges that contribute to poor availability of HIV&AIDS services such as inadequate and unpredictable financing. Others are long distances especially in rural areas, which prevent service users from accessing HIV&AIDS services in health facilities. Mobile services are meant to bridge the gap of distance but can't be implemented because of limited resources, shortage of ARVs and CD4 count services as well as poor infrastructure, which affect care, treatment and support. One would critically ask: **If a country has set a goal of having access to high quality services as it reads in the NMSF III; and if all these challenges still persist, how can so much money remain unspent?**

Development partners commit considerably huge amount of resources to assist Tanzania in implementing its HIV&AIDS activities. According to NMSF III, HIV&AIDS is one of the sectors in Tanzania that is highly donor dependent, about 97%. When government's contribution to the HIV&AIDS is low; proper management and utilization of donor resources should be paramount. Tanzania needs to demonstrate to citizens, LGAs and Development Partners that the little available resources are being effectively utilized.

We call for the Treasury office to ensure that funds are released in time so that activities can be carried out as planned. LGAs must implement activities as per plans and budgets without any delays, and PMORALG should monitor the implementation of planned activities at the LGA level. This will reduce or eliminate having huge amounts of unspent balances at the end of the financial year. Failing to spend the money which most of it comes from development partners, not once, but in three consecutive years calls for immediate corrective measures; irresponsible officials must be held to account.

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