



Press Release Monday, 18 November 2014

Deliberate Efforts needed to Reduce the Shortage of Medicine in the Country

Sikika is disappointed by the government's response to the shortages of medicine & medical supplies in the country. Of late, there have been reports from all over the country about this crisis but the government has not intervened promptly, hence, exposing its citizens under risk of advance and complicated illness and even death.

We had expected to see the government looking at the matter critically including committing itself to pay MSD the whole debt (Tshs. 90 billion), immediately. It is unfortunate that the amount set to repay MSD is not enough, the Tsh. 20 billion (already disbursed to MOHSW) and Tsh 11 billion to be disbursed in a month time. We argue for an immediate full repayment so as to enable MSD to improve the procurement and supply of medicine and medical supplies in order to decrease the current shortage in the country.

The MSD debt could have been paid a long time ago and the strategies for avoiding accumulation of debt could have been in place. So many times, the Members of Parliament and in particular the Social Services Committee have requested the government to repay MSD. The current situation could have been avoided if the government could listen and act promptly. Unfortunately, the debt was left to accumulate and the repayment plans were still not adequate.

As mentioned earlier, the current crisis of the shortage of medicine and supplies was caused by the accumulated debt at MSD, which led MSD to stop supplying medicines and medical supplies to health facilities with debt. However, the shortage of medicines and supplies in the country is chronic and needs to be solved deliberately. The main causes of stock outs in the country are inadequate budget allocations for essential medicine and supplies, delays in the distribution of allocated funds, inaccurate forecasting of the demand and stock outs at the MSD. So, we urge the government to also address the core causes of the shortages of medicine and supplies as they repay MSD full amount.

For instance, at Sinza Palestina hospital, the debt at MSD was about Tsh. 93 million. In October through the disbursed health basket fund, the hospital ordered medicine and supplies worth about Tsh. 100 million. However, the hospital received consignment worth Tsh. 25 million as MSD deducted Tsh. 75 million for paying the debt. As a result, the consignment received at Sinza Palestina hospital is only used for emergencies, as it cannot suffice the requirements of the hospital, about 600 patients per day leading to shortages of medicine as widely reported by the media. The experience at Sinza Palestina hospital is similar to many other hospitals so it is a time for the government to ensure the shortage of the medicines and supplies becomes history in the country.

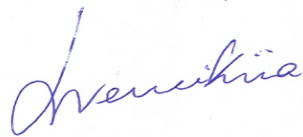
We therefore request the government to deliberate efforts in solving **the chronic problem of stock out in public health facilities** by addressing the root causes and

not just the emerge branches. We continue to advocate for the budget increase to at least half of the country's requirements, Tsh.250 billion per year. We also plea that, the MoFEA should disburse the whole amount of allocated funds to health facilities accounts at MSD at the beginning of the financial year.

We also call the MSD to strengthen the procurement and distribution of the medicine and supplies chain by ensuring that no stock outs occur at the warehouses. In addition, the MSD should minimize the delays in the distribution and deliveries to public health facilities and to improve the back order system for missed and unfilled items. Lastly, the MSD should improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in the supply chain system, which are the key pillars in the medicine supply chain system.

Sikika understands and would also like to make clarification again to the public that the recent disbursement freeze by development partners is only for the General Budget Support and not the Health Sector Basket Support of which one third of it is used for procurement of essential medicines and medical supplies

In conclusion, we would like to commend the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and the Permanent Secretary for the recent directive to stop the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) from raising the prices for the medical services. The new prices could not only deny many citizens the right to affordable health care, but it is also unjust to involve patients who seek medical care in paying the hospital's debt.



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