



Press Release

Monday, 18 February 2013

Sikika Commends Minister Mwinyi's Responsiveness

Sikika hails the Minister of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW), Dr. Hussein Mwinyi, for coming clean that there is a shortage of ALu, the main drug used in the fight against malaria - in public health facilities across the country.

Speaking to the Media recently, Minister Mwinyi conceded that there are shortages of this important drug for treating malaria as shown by the *SMS for Life* but advised the public not to panic as the situation is under control and that distribution is underway. We sincerely commend him because we believe that this is a right step towards transparency and accountability.

This comes in about two weeks after the MoHSW's Ag. Permanent Secretary, Regina Kikuli and a Spokesperson, Mr. Nsachris Mwamwaja from the same Ministry refuted findings by Sikika that the drug was out of stock in at least 26% of all facilities in the country. The findings were drawn from Ministry's own monitoring tool – *SMS for Life*. In her statement, Ms. Kikuli claimed (falsely) on there being other types of anti-malarial medicines, which are not reported under the *SMS for Life* tool.

Sikika urges the Ministry to speed up ALu distribution process as a matter of emergency as some facilities are experiencing stock outs for over 300 days now. In the same note, Sikika would like to urge the government to reform the process of ordering and receiving medicines. Currently, dispensaries and health centres are restricted to a quarterly (every three month) ordering cycle while deliveries would only happen after another two or three months. Sikika recommends a monthly ordering cycle to reduce the chronic stock out problem.

The rainy season is about to start in many parts of the country, hence increased malarial cases. The disease is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among outpatient and inpatient admissions. Antimalarial drugs are therefore vital to combat the disease and reduce deaths and morbidity thus, their constant availability is fundamental.

It must be noted that Tanzania has had access to ample funds from the Global Fund (GF), United States of America President's Malaria Initiatives and other donors for the last 10 years, for the fight against Malaria. Approved funds for Malaria from GF alone have been to the tune of USD 331,112,207 and thus far USD 294,975,327 has been disbursed and spent. Despite this sufficient funding, stock outs of ALu are perennial.

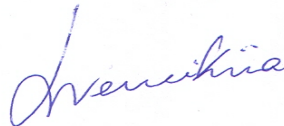
It is also important to point out there are four WHO approved global suppliers of the generic antimalarial, ALu. These are said to have sufficient production capacity to meet the global demand and that lead times for deliveries are known. Our Ministry of Health fails in the stock

projections, timely ordering to take into account the time required for manufacturing and shipment, and inefficient distribution system.

The time is overdue that the National Malaria Control Programme, Pharmaceutical Services Unit, the Medical Store Department and the District Medical Officers act in unison to permanently eradicate the inexcusable perennial medicine stock outs in Tanzanian public health facilities. Solutions to this problem are well known, action is lacking.

We advise the Ministry to broaden the scope of the *SMS for Life* tool to include other essential medicines and medical supplies. This tool provides for real time visible data on stock of medicines, which would allow the Ministry to respond accurately and on time. It also improves transparency and accountability in the supply chain which may lead to improved availability and better health service delivery.

Notably, Sikika hails the Media for the persistence it has shown to bring the matter to the public, despite the concerted efforts of some officials at the MoHSW to obfuscate the facts. Once again, the Media has proved that public interests come first in their line of work.



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