



HIV+ / AIDS in Kenya

Kenya is one of the six HIV 'high burden' countries in Africa – about 1.6 million people were living with HIV infection at the end of 2013. Women in Kenya are more vulnerable to HIV infection compared to Kenyan men, with the national HIV prevalence at 7.6 per cent for women and 5.6 percent for men⁽¹⁾. The epidemic is geographically diverse, ranging from a high prevalence of 25.7 percent in Homa Bay County in Nyanza region to a low of approximately 0.2 percent in Wajir County in North Eastern region. The high burden of HIV and AIDS in Kenya accounts for an estimated 29 per cent of annual adult deaths, 20 percent of maternal mortality, and 15 percent of deaths of children under the age of five⁽²⁾.

The epidemic has also negatively affected the country's economy by lowering per capita output by 4.1 percent⁽³⁾. Kenya has an estimated 88,620 new HIV infections among adults and about 12,940 new infections among children annually. Stable and married couples are the most affected, as this group accounts for 44 percent of the new adult infections⁽⁴⁾. Men who have sex with men, prisoners, sex workers and their clients, and injecting drug users contribute a third of all new infections in Kenya. With growing evidence that they are key drivers of the national HIV epidemic – for instance, the alarmingly high HIV prevalence rates of 29.3 percent⁽⁵⁾ among sex workers, 18.2 percent among men who have sex with men, and 18.3 percent among injecting drug users – the government has initiated a program for these population groups.

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- Kenya has the fourth highest number of Aids infections in the world.
 - The HIV prevalence in the country stands at 1.6 million people, the Ministry of Health revealed Wednesday.
 - South Africa, with a prevalence of 5.6 million leads, ahead of Nigeria (3.3 million) and India (2.4 million), according to statistics from the UNAIDS and World Health Organisation (WHO).
 - An estimated 191,840 of the people living with the HIV virus in Kenya are children. Some 58,465 people died of HIV-related illnesses in 2013.
 - A government report, 'The National HIV and Aids Estimates', launched in August 2014 by Cabinet Secretary for Health James Macharia said there are at least 100,000 new infections in Kenya annually.
 - Kenya will need about Sh1.75 trillion by 2030 to prevent at least 1.5 million new HIV infections, the reports says⁽⁶⁾.

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 1) Kenya HIV Estimates Report, 2014.

2) UNAIDS, *Efficient and Sustainable HIV Responses: Case Studies on Country Progress*, 2013.

3) National AIDS Control Council, *Sustainable Financing of AIDS in Kenya*, 2011.

4) National AIDS Control Council, *Kenya HIV Prevention Response and Modes of Transmission Study*, 2009.

5) *Global AIDS Progress Report, Kenya*, 2013.

6) Extracted from the "2014 Kenya HIV Country Profiles" report by the Kenya Ministry of Health and other sources.

HIV/AIDS Situation in Mlolongo

Mlolongo town is located twenty kilometers Southeast of Nairobi and only 5-8 kilometers from the outlying industrial area east of the city, on the Mombasa, Kampala (Uganda) highway. Mlolongo is now a booming town due to its strategic location. Many people living there either work in the emergent industries like cement factories or commute to Nairobi every day. It is now a town with 80,000 inhabitants, several clinics, a couple of schools, two major colleges, and several banks. There are also three slums located close to Mlolongo with iron-built houses and very bad living conditions: Kicheko, City Cotton and Kwa Mbemba.

Mlolongo is also a key truck point for long distance lorry drivers on the East African route from the port of Mombasa or Tanzania to Kampala, Kigali and Goma in Uganda. It was the ideal location for a weighbridge where all the trucks entering Nairobi must be weighed and pay accordingly. That is how the town got its name, meaning “queuing” because of the high number of trucks waiting or parked along the highway at night. The place is very lively at night and has attracted many poor women desperate to earn some money, leading to their involvement in sex work for survival. Mlolongo is one of 39 highway stops along the Mombasa road, a road on which 2,400 trucks park every night, attracting 5,600 prostitutes ⁽⁷⁾.

Studies have revealed that there is a strong association between transportation hubs and HIV/AIDS prevalence. Towns along the highway tend to have higher prevalence rates than interior towns. It is indeed noticeable in Mlolongo where the prevalence is 12 percent instead of the average 7.4 percent in the country.



Mombasa Road, Mlolongo Area



Prostitution is a main cause of HIV infection. This can be explained by the multiple sex partners, the lack of education and knowledge about HIV, lack of prevention by using a condom and a lack of bargaining power to fight for reproductive and health rights. Female sex workers are vulnerable, especially when relating with truck drivers, as these men are currently estimated to have the highest prevalence of HIV and AIDS at 25 percent. Unfortunately, along the Mombasa highway, 30 percent of the female sex workers' clients are truck drivers ⁽⁸⁾.

Hard conditions of employment for the truck drivers contribute to their high-risk sexual behavior. Being away from home for long periods of time, earning a low income, isolation, and driving long hours all contribute to them being involved in the sex trade. A study has revealed that along the Mombasa-Uganda highway, only 25 percent of the bars have condom dispensers and 73 percent distribute or sell condoms. The situation is even worse in Uganda concerning the distribution and use of condoms, thus resulting in the high spread of HIV among trucks drivers.

Only a few Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) centres can be found in Mlolongo resulting in a lack of testing among the women who thus do not know about their status and keep on spreading HIV through unprotected sex. Moreover, the stigma is very high, and most women are too scared to be seen in a place like a VCT or PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) centre implying that they may be infected with HIV ⁽⁹⁾.

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- 7) Musyoki, Helgar et al. (2015). *Prevalence of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and risk behaviors among female sex workers in Nairobi, Kenya: results of a respondent driven sampling study. AIDS and behavior, 19 Suppl 1 (Suppl-1), S46-58.*
 - 8) Morris, C. N., & Ferguson, A. G. (2006). *Estimation of the sexual transmission of HIV in Kenya and Uganda on the trans-Africa highway: the continuing role for prevention in high risk groups. Sexually transmitted infections, 82(5), 368-71.*
 - 9) Njeru, E.H.N., Peter Mwangi & Mary N. Nguli, (2004). *Gender aspects in HIV/AIDS Infection and Control in Kenya. IPAR Discussion Paper Series*