



International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS East Africa • HEPS Uganda • UGANET • HAG Uganda • NFOPHANU • Health GAP • Together Against AIDS Positive Association (TAAPA)

## **Civil society calls for an end to the crisis of stock outs of life saving medicines, HIV test kits, and blood test kits in Uganda**

*Results of new research shows persistent, avoidable stock shortages nationwide*

*PEPFAR and the MoH must ensure new “supply chain rationalization” policy does not increase the risk of stock outs and that treatment for all pregnant women (“Option B+”) is always provided with minimum standard of quality community-based adherence support and patient follow up*

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working to increase access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) and other essential medicines in Uganda are gravely concerned at persistent stock outs and shortages of rapid HIV testing kits, ART, drugs for opportunistic infections especially septrin and dapsone as well as CD4 count machines in some facilities and reagents for testing blood. This crisis is particularly concerning given Uganda’s rising rates of HIV incidence—unique among East and Southern African countries.

“Uganda’s response to HIV is already off track—without consistent supplies of essential commodities, people with HIV and their communities suffer,” said Margaret Happy of NAFOPHANU. “We are tired of this preventable crisis. It’s time for government to guarantee that stock outs will be a thing of the past.”

The JAAR – AIDE MEMOIRE 2012 reveals that the government of Uganda made commitments to: Increase ART accredited and active sites to all hospitals, HCVs and 60% of HCIIIs to adequately address access to treatment, including roll-out of option B+ for elimination of MTCT (eMTCT) and for the HIV/TB co-infected and support implementation of all PMTCT prongs through roll-out of plan of Option B+ to 85% of districts by June 2013. PEPFAR and the Ministry of Health also recently committed to “Supply Chain Rationalization,” a policy which activists fear is contributing to unreliable medicines access. Under this policy, PEPFAR partners will no longer be allowed to provide emergency “buffer stocks” when supplies are low, potentially increasing the risk of medicine interruptions among patients.

HIV testing is a critical entry point to treatment access, PMTCT and to prevention of sexual transmission of HIV. However, according to information generated from over 24 districts, there is a severe shortage of HIV test kits across the country. For instance Mityana district reported stock out of HIV test kits in all the facilities in the district both private and public for the last 3 months. Some of the districts that reported lack of testing kits included Bundibugyo district at Nyahuka HC4, all facilities in Kalangala, Kasese, Kamwenge and Iganga.

In addition, there is stock out of some medicines for ART—as reported by Ministry of Health national Stock Status Reports for May 2013. For instance, Mr. Ojuka Francis, the District Lab Focal Person reported on May

30, 2013 that Option B+ drugs were out of stock in all ART sites in the district since April, TB drugs RHZ and Streptomycin were out of stock in all the DTU except in Mityana Hospital and Mwera HCIV since January 2013. Hoima district reported stock out of efavirenz and dapson in Kikube HCIV for 3 months. Whereas Gulu district reported stock out of d4T in all accredited facilities from April – May, Abacavir in Awach HCIV for 4 months, TDF/3TC, in Bobi HCIII for 4 months, TDT/3TC in Gulu Independent Hospital for 1 month. Drugs for STDs such as Doxycycline was out of stock in all the health facilities in Gulu for 2 months April to May. Mr. Ngenda Phillip from Kabale district reported that on May 31, 2013, clients left facilities without refills due to drug stock out of DUOVIR-N, DUOVIR for children, ABACAVIR 300mg, COMBIVIR, EFAVIRENZ 200mg, DAPSONE and ACYCLOVIR tabs. Over 20 districts reported stock out of the drugs for opportunistic infections especially septrin and dapson. In the region of Karamoja, research found some districts had sufficient supplies and low levels of community demand, while other regions had dangerously low supplies of ART.

We call upon the members of the Country Coordinating Mechanism to expedite the process of procurement of the HIV testing kits and other essential commodities through Global Fund. We also urgently call upon the MoH, NMS, relevant offices in the local governments, and In-Charges of affected health facilities to ensure that clients access drugs and testing services.

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