



NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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MEDIA STATEMENT

WEDNESDAY 13TH OCTOBER, 2021

The National Executive Council has appointed long-time Senior Researcher and Deputy Director of the National AIDS Council Secretariat(NACS) Mr. Tony Lupiwa to lead the organization as Acting Director for a until a permanent appointment is being made.

"I am very grateful to the National AIDS Council for recognizing the potential and trust in me to lead NACS hence the appointment by NEC," Mr. Lupiwa said.

The acting appointment comes after the three-year term for former Director Dr Nick Dala expired on the 22nd of February, 2021.

Mr Lupiwa has been engaged with the HIV response for over 20 years as a senior researcher with the PNG Institute of Medical Research(PNGIMR) and later joined NACS as Research Manager to his substantive position as Deputy Director.

With wealth of knowledge and experience in HIV work, Mr Lupiwa is confident to lead NACS in coordinating the national HIV response.

"I am determined to work closely with both our local and international stakeholders and partners to ensure prevention efforts in addressing the HIV epidemic is intensified in order for PNG to meet global and international targets to end the HIV epidemic by 2030". The Acting Director said.

Under his leadership and going forward into 2022, Mr Lupiwa has highlighted priority programs that NACS will be embarking on. These programs include; ***Signing MOAs with Provincial Governments to take ownership of the HIV response; Increase Condom Distribution to all provinces; Review of important NACS Policies such as the HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Act 2003 and Development of the new National HIV Strategy (2023-2028); Voluntary Male Circumcision; Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis(Pre-EP), and Mass HIV Awareness Program.***

In presenting the current HIV situation in PNG, the Acting Director explained that PNG has a mixed epidemic which means that HIV has affected both the general population as well as Key Population with an emerging prevalence of up to 0.9% in 2020. The 2020 HIV Estimates indicates that there are **55 000 People Living with HIV**. About **3400 new cases** recorded annually, and in a day about **9 people** are infected with HIV.

Of the total PLHIVs, **48000 are adults** between the ages of 15-49 years whilst **3200 are children** between 0 to 14 years old. Also, from the overall number of PLHIVs, 32 018 are on the Anti-Retro Viral Treatment (that is about 62% on ART coverage) and already there has been 605 AIDS-Related Deaths (these were only figures recorded but there could have been more deaths but not recorded).

"Whilst much attention has been focused on COVID-19, let us not forget the fact that HIV is still here in PNG and on the rise." Mr Lupiwa stressed this.

He said for this reason, NACS ultimate focus is on Prevention based on the 5 HIV prevention pillars adding that these prevention programs are vital to help contain further spread of HIV.

- a) *Combination Prevention for Adolescents girls and young women*
- b) *Combination Prevention with Key Populations*
- c) *Comprehensive Condom Program*
- d) *Voluntary Male Circumcision and*
- e) *Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis*

"But the biggest and overall challenge that NACS has been facing is funding from the government to effectively implement all our programs."

As the new Head of NACS in my acting capacity as the Acting Director, I am appealing to the national government under the leadership of Honorable Prime Minister, James Marape, Minister for Health & HIV, Honorable Delta Wong, Finance Minister Honorable John Pundari, our Development and Donor Partners, Corporate Business Sector that HIV is still present in PNG and is on the rise again. With the rise in COVID-19 cases there will increase in HIV cases as experienced globally.

"We are appealing to the government to beef up its development funding support to NACS in 2022 so NACS can be able implement its programs and coordinate the national HIV response more effectively."

He said addressing HIV is a multi-sectoral response therefore has extended this plea for support to all Development and Donor Partners, Government Departments/Agencies, and Corporate Organisations, to work with NACS to contain further spread of HIV and STIs in PNG.

Thank you.

Approve for release by


Mr. Tony Lupiwa
Acting Director