

HIV/AIDS in Kenya

by Pastor Oscar Siema Mmbali

AIDS is a killer disease that is threatening Africa, including Kenya. Despite of other causes of AIDS, AIDS results to many serious problems in our societies. AIDS is the backbone of poverty, poor health, domestic violence, and economic decline, due to lack of adequate productivity in the industrial and agricultural sector. Life is expensive and if lost the gap can't be filled. AIDS also results to lack of education, development, political instability, religious instability and has remained a psychological 'terrorist' to the human species.

Factors that cause HIV/AIDS spread in Africa

Despite of many factors spoken of by many people, I may suggest something else.

1. The African Culture

African beliefs are carried in culture, hence religion is an every day practice. Every event of life is religious and an attribute to God. When Africans abandon some of the bad practices that cause health problems, they feel guilt and alien to their God whom they believe initiated these practices. Most African communities hold tightly on initiation rituals and practice. In these rituals circumcision is done and one knife is used for a whole group, endangering many lives of productive youths.

Africans may not abandon the practice so easily since it is an experiential activity, part and parcel of their life and passed on to the next generation in a ritually ceremonial manner.

The tribes that do female circumcision hold on historical claims experienced. In western Kenya, one community claims that during their migration to Kenya, women in this community incurred genital infections as a result of walking across flooded areas. It became a religious concern and circumcision became a discovery. This practice having begun as a religious response to a calamity was later developed into a religious ritual. Painfully speaking the problem was not its historical origin, but history used as a justification to female circumcision which has resulted to more health problems including HIV/AIDS. What they need now is medical care, not female circumcision.

Other cases include wife inheritance and child marriage. The women are the victims. They don't know their rights. It is culturally wrong for a woman to take the elders of a clan to court to defend her right. Most of them die helplessly. Other women get infected through rape which is quite often when there is a criminal rise in the towns, cities and during tribal clashes. Human rights are violated, darkening the nation's future.

2. Lack of responsibility

The local and national authority has failed to insure morality. Powers and the church have decided to condemn instead of entering the lives of people and reasoning with them to get their solutions.

3. Lack of Concern

The affected don't have any concern. They feel they are not the

victims. They assume that this is an individual problem. The church may associate the victims with evil, a fact that is very wrong. Those that are also infected may lose hope and eventually stop caring for themselves and for others. They start starving and forfeiting their lives to death while others go out and infect others.

4. Stereotypes

Many people associate condoms with evil, they feel shame and judged when they carry it. This is wrong and even some Christian and other religious communities go on condemning condoms publicly. Condemning does not help in any way. What we need is to reason for life.

5. Negligence

Many people neglect the idea of using condoms or taking care when you are involved in a sexual activity. They don't take their problem seriously and assume it is normal to die.

This is not so. What we need is to be serious with what is happening with our brothers and sisters out there.

6. Ignorance

Many deaths are associated with witchcraft other than the real thing. Even when it is known that it was as a result of HIV/AIDS, no open declaration will be made. Many people willing to be honest and speak out fear discrimination and therefore prefer to keep quiet. This has made many people to believe that AIDS has not reached them.

They think AIDS is in towns and cities. They also believe that only evil people get AIDS, not them.

7. Search for employment

In many areas in Kenya people, either men or women may not be employed unless they give in for insecure sex. This is called sexploitation. Both young and old are victims. One's qualifications don't matter a lot. This is the greatest corruption scandal we are dealing with since it claims lives, resources, and a country's or community's ability to grow.

8. Commercial Sex Industry

Since poverty rules in Kenya many schoolgirls dropout of school because they lack basic supplies. They then set off for urban cities in search of employment. When they miss their target, they join this industry which manipulates them since it is illegal in Kenya and has no proper structures. Since they have not chosen to do it as a job but an alternative, they fail to take productive measures. Sometimes they have unprotected sex and the gateway for getting infected is 100%.

Some of the Solutions Proposed

1. Don't trust anybody, just use a condom when having sexual activity.
2. Educate the youth & old about some of the changes we can make in the African culture so as to suit the generation of the 21st century in relation to fight against AIDS.
3. Say no to female circumcision.
4. Say no to traditional midwives and male initiations.
5. Get informed and inform the next person and let us train to train others.
6. Let us take the issue of HIV/AIDS seriously as our greatest enemy. Let it be the concern of the society.

7. Let us know and defend our rights whether we are young or old, female and male.
8. The commercial sex industry should be informed to take the right procedures.
9. Let us get concerned so that we can save our society.

My Opinion on the HIV/AIDS Disaster

We should get out of religion, culture, race, government, offices and everywhere and live into a world of concern.

Let our religion be "The Fight Against AIDS"

Having been born and become an orphan, and having been brought up under hard and most difficult environments I have seen a call to reach the society for the fight against AIDS.

When I see orphans around I try to imagine how they will feel in future by relating to my experience. I don't want people to die and leave orphans behind who can't support themselves.

As a pastor and a student of religion, I have made a lot of study on the world religions including the African traditional religion and I have seen the pit hole that I feel by help of God and well wishers, I can walk around Kenya and Africa preaching the gospel of hope by fighting against AIDS.

According to James 1:27 the true religion is to look after orphans, widows and keeping one self from being polluted by the world.

We can look beyond St. James and work for prevention instead of waiting for orphans and widows coming onto the scene.

We need to sit down and reason together other than just saying no to the society in relation to what we feel is ungodly.

A condom is just a product that has been made for the security of man in his activities.

If we let them die we will lack the people to reach. I challenge pastors all over the world that our call is not to bury the dead but saving those who are doomed to die. Luke 4:18

I understand that AIDS is a disaster like any other ever. I'm sure that it is my responsibility to train and go out and save lives by training other people.

Many churches claim they are called in the peace keeping mission. It is my pleasure to make them realize that AIDS is war against humanity and therefore destroy its spread and gain peace.

I have decided to go beyond the church boundary and reach the society regardless of their beliefs and practices. What we need is to save life.

Jesus himself said that "I come that they have life and have it indeed."

God also says in Jeremiah 29:11 that he has got good plans for us, not plans of desperation but plans of prosperity. It is then our call to stand and say no to the killer disease.

I plead with those concerned to accept the people in our society the way they are. They should not condemn them or even judge them. Helping means that we need to become part of the problem in the perspective of empathizing.

Life is what we make it by the help of our God. We have the potential to help and see to it that the strife has melted away.

I have a group of about 15 people that also are willing to train for this project. They include pastors from different parts of Kenya and as well as non-Christians but those who have the zeal to stop HIV/AIDS.

What I lack is training and qualification for them.

Kenya's Youth Pastors

1. Oscar Mmbali
2. Agrey Ntombi
3. Jario Mukunga
4. Davidson Wekesa

5. George Situma
6. Albert Njeria
7. Stanley Khamasi
8. Alyayo Muranda
9. Dominic
10. Florence Iminza
11. Josephine Magumba
12. Robal Khayanje
13. Joseph Muhindi
14. Kennedy Mullah
15. Nelson Ida

The above named people have the potential to reach people and educate them about HIV/AIDS. If they are trained they will cause a great impact since they come from different parts of Kenya mostly from western and Nyanza and Rift Valley provinces. If they are used they will make a difference by their commitment.

I hope to see one day that Kenya has gone a thousand miles in this issue. I want to be an active committed participant in cooperation with many other people.

I plan to reach bars, beer clubs, hotels, lodgings and all places where I can save life for the good of the society.

I'm confident it is my call to reach the society. I also like visiting students in schools, colleges and universities to share about HIV/AIDS and what we can do to prevent the continuing attack.

As a comedian I'm looking forward to record movies both for entertainment and educative purposes. I have been doing it locally because of lack of exposure and resources as well as qualifications. It is my prayer that I become one of the information artists for the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa as well as in the world.

Given time, prayer and support I'm able to come up with some movies that are educative and that can pose a challenge all over the world.

I pray that many people will rise to help fight against AIDS.

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