

FROM : THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND POPULATION,
P.O. BOX 30377, LILONGWE 3.

TO : ALL HOSPITAL DIRECTORS FOR CENTRAL HOSPITALS
: ALL DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICERS,
: ALL ZONAL MANAGERS,
: ALL HEALTH FACILITY IN-CHARGES
: ALL DIRECTORS AND NAC DIRECTORS
: ALL SENIOR MANAGEMENT MEMBERS
: CHIEF EXECUTIVES, CENTRAL AND REGIONAL
MEDICAL STORES
: ALL HIV RELATED COORDINATORS (ART, HTS,
PMTCT)
: ALL LABORATORY MANAGERS
: PEPFAR, GLOBAL FUND AND OTHER IMPLEMENTING
PARTNERS
: HEALTH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS
: CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK LEADERSHIP

**MALAWI HIV POLICY UPDATES: THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI'S
COMMITMENT AND PLAN TO REACH HIV EPIDEMIC CONTROL
THROUGH 90-90-90 IN MALAWI BY 2020**

As you are aware, in 2015 Malawi committed to HIV epidemic control under the UNAIDS Fast Track goals. His Excellency the President of the Republic of Malawi, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika has consistently voiced his strong commitment to the battle against HIV, especially through the scale-up of evidence-based, targeted testing and high quality treatment for persons living with HIV (PLHIV). Malawi led the world in implementing Option B+ in 2011 and in rapidly implementing Test and Start in 2016. It is essential to maintain that same forward leaning approach to epidemic control and serving our people.

Utilizing the latest epidemiologic data from Malawi's December 2016 Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (MPHIA) Survey, along with routine data from the Department of HIV/AIDS (DHA) and UNAIDS Spectrum estimates, Malawi is now poised to achieve epidemic control.

However, **336,000 Malawians living with HIV remain virally unsuppressed.** Of these 336,000 PLHIV, approximately 32% are unaware of their HIV status; 41% are aware of their status but not on life-saving treatment; and, 27% are on treatment but not virally suppressed. All are at greater risk of morbidity and death as well as transmitting HIV to others.

Key Policy Updates include:

1. Accelerate initiation of **Dolutegravir (DTG)-based regimens for most newly diagnosed Malawians living with HIV, who weigh >20kg. Transition most Malawians currently on NNRTI-based ART regimens, who weigh >20kg to Dolutegravir-based regimens.**
 - Emerging scientific evidence shows that the benefits of DTG outweigh the risks.
 - All women of reproductive age can opt for the more effective DTG-based regimens based on an informed choice. Preliminary data from a birth defect surveillance study (TSEPAMO) in Botswana suggested a possibly increased, but still very low, risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) in children born to women receiving DTG-based regimens in the peri-conceptual period.
 - Access to long acting contraception should be supported for HIV positive women of reproductive age on ART. Women are not required to use contraception when opting for DTG.
2. Optimize HIV testing to ensure targeting those of greatest risk of contracting HIV. This includes the use of **Active Index Testing** (otherwise referred to as WHO-endorsed Voluntary Assisted Partner Notification), **HIV Oral Self Testing**, and **Recency Testing** (an emerging modality phasing in by district, beginning with Blantyre). All of these modalities are approved for use in Malawi (per December 7th Addendum to National Guidelines).
3. Implement **annual viral load testing and use of results** to empower clients and care providers to maintain a suppressed viral load from April 2019 onwards.
4. Provide **six month refills** for patients who are stable on DTG-based regimens by October 2019 (or soonest) as part of

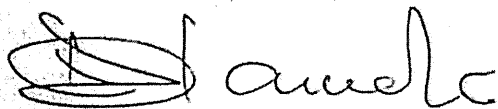
differentiated service delivery models that are expected to decongest crowded health facilities.

5. Keep the highest risk members of the population HIV negative through the use of **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)**. PrEP is approved for use in Malawi for clients at high risk of HIV acquisition, targeting key populations, AGYW, and sexual partners of people with HIV. These clients should be treated without stigma through a client centered, HIV prevention approach.

Should you have any questions about the above, please reach out to the Director of the HIV/AIDS Department.

I look forward to maintaining our global leadership in the fight against HIV and to being one of the first countries in the world to reach the 90-90-90 goals. Through your continued dedication, we will make this a reality. Thank you for your service to the people of Malawi.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Namarika', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Dan Namarika