



The Right to Health: The aftermath of the post election violence

Access to Treatment

Following the post-election crisis in Kenya, the right to health has been severely affected. The skirmishes have led to the eviction of communities from their homes thereby denying them access to basic needs such as food, shelter, security, education and health among others. It is no longer easy for the sick to visit health institutions that they are accustomed to. Most of them have been forced to flee from their homes in search of security, majority ending up in camps, while a few are hosted by relatives and/or friends. Due to the sudden nature of the skirmishes, majority of the sick were unable to carry with them vital medical documents and medication making it difficult for them to continue with their treatment regime.

Of great concern are the people living with HIV&AIDS whom the government had placed on the ART programme within their locality. Their displacement to the camps or to new locations has interrupted the treatment and therapeutic programmes. This has adversely affected the community and group support which were crucial in ensuring treatment adherence, economic and psycho-social support. There is therefore a likelihood of losing the gains made in guaranteeing the right to treatment and dealing with stigma and discrimination relating to HIV&AIDS in Kenya.

We therefore call upon the government and development partners to devise strategies that would ensure all patients on treatment are able to access treatment, care and support within their current living conditions. It is critical to mobilize the affected communities into support groups that can address their emerging health, psycho-social, emotional and economic needs. We urge the government, development partners, CSOs, the private sector, well-wishers and individuals to provide their support in meeting these vital needs.

Effect on health workers

The post-election violence has greatly affected professionals working in the affected regions. The most affected are teachers and health workers who are not indigenous members of regions to which they had been posted to provide their services. They were targeted for eviction, property destruction, and in some cases murdered despite the vital services they provide in the affected regions. This has greatly compromised access to both health and education.

So far, the whereabouts of some health workers remains unknown while others have been displaced, and have expressed fear about working in the affected regions. Considering that there was already a critical shortage of health workers in the country even before the skirmishes, this is likely to have a negative impact on the quality and access to health care in those regions. The government should consider declaring these regions as high-risk zones hence provide risk allowance and security for health workers among other public officers until normalcy returns.

There is also a need to establish the situation of existing health facilities in the affected regions in particular to find out if they were vandalized and/or destroyed. This would enable the government and development partners to plan for their rehabilitation where need be.

We also call for speedy efforts in addressing the root cause of violence in Kenya especially in Rift Valley. Unless this issue is urgently addressed, the gains made in the health sector including the health MDGs shall not be realized as anticipated. It is also our concern that the solutions to these skirmishes cannot be achieved without the concerted efforts and involvement of all stakeholders, including health workers. We therefore call upon health workers to rise to the occasion and provide the much needed leadership within their spheres of influence as we search for peace, truth and justice.

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