

《Kenya launches new HIV drug, self-testing kit》

NAIROBI, May 4 (Xinhua) -- Kenya's ministry of health on Thursday launched a new drug and self-testing kit to aid HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment interventions.

Director of Medical Services in the Ministry of Health Jackson Kioko said Kenya was the second African country after South Africa to roll out a new HIV pill and self-testing kit as efforts to eliminate the disease gathers steam.

"Kenya has made significant breakthrough in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. The launch of HIV pill and self-testing kit are an addition to the existing arsenal to combat this killer disease," Kioko said.

The HIV drug Pre Exposure Prophylaxis is meant for high risk groups like sex workers, teenagers and gay communities whose vulnerability to the virus is high.

Kioko said Kenya's regulatory authorities have approved the pill.

"The Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a critical intervention in HIV prevention. It is only meant for HIV negative people and has over 96 percent efficacy," said Kioko.

He revealed the HIV pill is already being sold at selected private health facilities for 0.20 U.S. dollars but will soon be available for free in government-run health facilities.

Likewise, the HIV self-testing kit will be available at pharmacies and private clinics at a cost of 8 dollars and will help reduce the number of Kenyans who are not aware of their status.

Kioko said the ministry of health intends to avail self-testing kits to an estimated 400,000 HIV-positive individuals unaware of their status.

"The self-testing will be accompanied by a confirmatory test in government laboratories. It is integrated in Kenya's AIDS Strategic framework that aims to reduce new infections by 75 percent," said Kioko.

Kenya has an estimated 1.5 million people living with AIDS and two thirds of them are already enlisted in a treatment program subsidized by the state.

The Head of National Aids and STI Control Program (NASCOP) Martin Sirengo said unveiling of an efficacious and cheaper drug to prevent HIV transmission alongside self-testing kit will hasten progress towards making Kenya an AIDS-free nation.