

OPENING REMARKS BY

PROF. DANIEL MUGENDI DURING THE ANNUAL HIV & AIDS PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS AND WELLNESS CLINICS HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12TH JUNE 2019 FOR STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EMBU

- University Management Board and Senate members
- Counsellors and Clinicians from the Ministry of Health – Embu County
- HIV & AIDS prevention Committee members
- Colleagues
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning;

It is a pleasure for me to join you during this important activity in the University Calendar. The University cares deeply for the health and wellness of its staff and students, hence organizes this HIV & AIDS prevention campaign and wellness clinic.

**The theme of this campaign is Ending HIV&AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa
and in turn the University of Embu.**

I appreciate the work of the HIV & AIDS Prevention Committee led by Dr. Gladys Sitati and Ms. Bessy Mukami for their efforts in ensuring that this campaign is firmly rooted in the University.

According to reports by the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the global AIDS epidemic appears to be slowing down, but new infections are continuing to increase in certain regions and countries. The report also shows that significant progress has been made in various country's AIDS responses. This includes increase in funding and access to treatment, and decreases in HIV prevalence among young people in some countries over the past five years.

However, AIDS remains an exceptional threat and a major global public health issue, having claimed more than 35 million lives so far. In 2016, one (1) million people died from HIV-related causes globally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the end of 2016, there were approximately 36.7 million people living with HIV globally, with 1.8 million people becoming newly infected in the year 2016.

Kenya has the joint fourth-largest HIV prevalence in the world (alongside Mozambique and Uganda) with 1.6 million people living with HIV in 2016. In the same year, 36,000 people died in Kenya from AIDS-related illnesses.

Kenya's HIV epidemic is driven by sexual transmission and is generalised, meaning that it affects all sections of the population including children, young people, adults, women and men.

Closer home, the prevalence of HIV in Embu County is at 3.7%, with women at 5.0% and men at 2.2%.

In this regard therefore, HIV counselling and testing and linkages to health care and treatment are important steps in reducing the sexual transmission of HIV. Despite the huge importance of HIV testing as a way to accelerate prevention and treatment, according to a Ministry of Health report about 36.1% of Men and 16.3% of women in Embu County have never tested for HIV.

Today's Campaign Ladies and Gentlemen, is an annual event organized for the University of Embu Community to Promote our wellbeing by talking about HIV & AIDS, non-communicable diseases and at the same time giving us all an opportunity to know your status and also screen for diseases such as;

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Heart Diseases

- Cancer
- Obesity

It is estimated that there will be about 3.9 million deaths from these diseases in Africa by 2020. To avert the burden of non-communicable diseases in our community, everyone should play the role of prevention. We glad to have experts today, who will enlighten us on how to best play our roles and contribute **Ending HIV&AIDS** and averting non-communicable diseases

High rates of HIV-related sickness and premature adult deaths compromise household stability and investment in children; stress extended family and broader social networks; and diminish labor supply and productivity while increasing costs for households, public institutions, and private-sector companies leading to economic loss.

The world has re-committed to ending AIDS by 2030 and as a University, we must join and participate in this campaign fully. In recent years we have made remarkable progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS as a Nation, scientific breakthroughs have brought a once-distant dream within reach but still we have not ended it yet. The main aim is to leverage and build upon a comprehensive system of care and treatment to increase viral suppression nationwide to 90 percent. This can only be possibly through the new strategies put together by the Center for Disease Control (CDC); to diagnose, treat, protect, and respond.

As I conclude, let me leave you with a quote by Bill Gates who has contributed immensely in the fight against HIV / AIDs epidemic.

“Now as we move forward, everything we do must include effective campaigns to counter the stigma and discrimination that continue to undermine our efforts to beat this epidemic. So the final area besides the prevention and treatment is to gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural dynamics around this disease.”

With those few remarks, I would like to encourage you all to take advantage of this opportunity and interact with our well-trained Clinicians

and Counsellors so that we all can get to know our status and live accordingly.

It is now my pleasure to declare the 2018 Annual HIV & AIDS Prevention Campaigns and Wellness Clinics Officially Open.

Thank you.