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PRESS RELEASE.**

**ACUTE SHORTAGE OF STOMA BAGS FOR COLORECTAL CANCER PATIENTS.**

Stoma World Kenya is a patient led organization of people living with a surgical stoma through which the body eliminates waste (urine or stool). The group has over 1000 patients with many more spread in different counties. These patients rely on special bags known as colostomy or ileostomy bags to collect body waste. Without the bags, patient's quality of life gets grossly compromised due to the social stigma associated with foul smell. We have confirmed reports of patients starving themselves as they are afraid to eat not knowing how they will handle the body waste.

Donors from North America have generously been supplying the patients with bulk donations of bags for more than 10 years while local charities and individuals have been supporting the port clearance and storage. A model that is not sustainable.

Stoma World Kenya applied for exemption and waiver of duty in December 2018 to facilitate clearance of donated colostomy and ileostomy bags. The process is now stuck between the Kenya Bureau of Standards and the Ministry of Industrialisation.

The patients are facing a crisis due to the exorbitant cost of bags with a single use bag going between Kenya shillings 300 and over 600/- way beyond what our patients can afford. Thousands of patients thus rely on donated bags. These vulnerable patients have major social stigma and face social discrimination because of the altered body physiology. The healthcare system does not adequately meet the physical and psychosocial needs of these category of patients and their families.

**Therefore;**

The Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations and the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance of Kenya (NCDAAK) are calling on the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the Ministry of industrialisation to:

1. Urgently grant waiver on tax and duty on donated colostomy and ileostomy bags to enable the donated supplies reach the users.
2. KEMSA to expedite the process of supplying stoma bags to the counties based on user recommendations. This will ensure long term sustainability and eliminate donor dependence.
3. That NHIF covers for this and related cancer rehabilitation products.

**-End-**

**Notes for Editor.****About**

1. Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations (KENCO) which brings together cancer non-governmental organizations and patient support groups working across the country.
2. The Non-Communicable Alliance of Kenya (NCDAK) which is the umbrella body of civil society organizations and people living with Non-Communicable Diseases (PLNCDs).

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