



For more information, contact:

Dr. J P Bor, jpormalenya@gmail.com, +254722372096

Barrack Owino, bowino@women4cancer.org , +254725234696

For Immediate Release

STOP Cervical Cancer Coalition Applauds adoption of WHO Global Strategy on Cervical Cancer Elimination

Calls on a series of concrete steps in Kenya to send a strong signal of the importance of cervical health to women, our communities and our economies.

Nairobi, 17 November 2020 -- Today, the World Health Organization officially launched the Global Strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem, a significant milestone in the fight against this deadly cancer. The STOP Cervical Cancer Coalition, a collaborative effort of more than 17 other civil society organizations in Kenya, stands ready to work in partnership with other national stakeholders to ensure that these global commitments are taken forward in Kenya.

Caused by infection with the human papilloma virus (HPV), cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally. Despite being preventable, it is also a serious issue in Kenya, where 5,250 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year, while 3286 die--more than eight women per day.

The new strategy outlines the three pillars of cervical cancer elimination – prevention through HPV vaccination, cervical screening and treatment – and provides concrete targets to be achieved by the year 2030. The strategy also emphasizes the need to integrate the implementation of services within communities, ensuring equity in access and financial protection for all women.

“We welcome these bold targets, which will amplify the local efforts and strides made by the coalition and partners towards providing healthcare to our women and girls to protect their future” said Liz Mbutia, Co-founder, Women4Cancer. *“STOP Cervical Cancer appreciates the WHO’s leadership in championing this cause, motivating nations with the most severe burden of cervical cancer to move from commitment to action in order to make cervical cancer elimination a reality.”*

In Kenya, despite the on-going burden of cervical cancer, strong political will and commitment has led to progress in recent years, including through:

1. The development of the National Cancer Screening Guidelines in 2018 to standardize screening and streamline referral along the levels of care in Kenya in order to improve outcomes.
2. The national rollout of the HPV vaccine into routine immunization schedule, in October 2019. The vaccine targets 10-year-old girls and is given free-of-charge in public health facilities, in two doses, six months apart.
3. Supporting population-based screening for cervical cancer for women aged 25 to 49 years. This includes a phased introduction of HPV testing using DNA technology, including self-testing, which will be followed by a roll out to all counties, as well as strengthening existing screening programs.
4. Strengthening health systems at county level to respond to the need for optimized diagnostics and treatment.
5. Development of the Cervical Cancer Advocacy Guide in 2020 to sensitize opinion leaders as champions for cervical cancer prevention.

STOP Cervical Cancer Coalition calls for three early steps in Kenya to send a strong signal of the importance of cervical health to women, our communities and our economies.

1. We call for our government to establish a technical working group to update an effective national cervical cancer elimination strategy and implementation plan and to ensure that women's needs and perspectives are well represented;
2. We call on the government to make a public commitment to the 2030 targets. Kenya has a long journey towards achieving the elimination threshold of four annual cases of cervical cancer per 100,000 women; the current incidence of cervical cancer is 40/100,000 women per year. STOP Cervical Cancer Coalition will mobilize community support and play a leading role in building knowledge and confidence in key prevention and early detection services, which will save lives every year as we work towards the elimination goal. We invite all stakeholders to join us in building a partnership for elimination in Kenya.

"We want all women in Kenya to know about cervical cancer. They must be informed about risk factors, signs and symptoms and where to go for help. However, we also want our community to be knowledgeable and support girls and women in prevention to maintain a healthy cervix," said David Makumi, NCD Alliance of Kenya.

In August 2020, WHO Member States adopted the strategy alongside other health resolutions as part of the silence procedure launched after the last World Health Assembly in May this year. On November 17, following the close of the 73rd World Health Assembly, WHO marked this historic announcement and officially launched the elimination strategy. The adoption and launch sends

a strong signal of worldwide interest in progressing on these important public health issues, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

###

The **STOP Cervical Cancer Initiative** is a collaborative effort between Kenya's National Cancer Control Program, Kenya's National Cancer Institute, Women 4 Cancer and 17 other civil society organizations that have joined forces to profile cervical cancer as a growing public health concern in Kenya. In January 2019, the STOP Cervical Cancer Team made great strides in cervical cancer advocacy with the inaugural National Cervical Cancer Awareness.