



KESHO
Kenya Society of Haematology & Oncology



**National Cancer
Institute of Kenya**
NCI - KENYA

PRESS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

BREAST CANCER MONTH COMMITTEE STATEMENT.

Nairobi, 21st October 2021

LAUNCH OF THE BREAST CANCER ACTION PLAN (2021-2025).

The Ministry of Health (MoH) will tomorrow, Friday, 22nd October 2021, proudly launch the **Breast Cancer Action Plan (2021-2025)** at Nakuru Level 5 Hospital. This is specially being done during the Breast Cancer awareness month, which is marked annually in October, to raise awareness of the critical importance of breast self-examination and screening, for early detection and timely treatment to save life.

The implementation of this Breast Cancer action plan will be a joint collaborative, multi-sectoral effort of partners, government at both National and County, Civil society, Health professionals, Communities and other key stakeholders.

Globally, cancer incidence and mortality continue to rise with female breast cancer surpassing lung cancer as the leading cause of global cancer incidence in 2020. There were an estimated 2.3 million new breast cancer cases, representing 11.7% of all cancer cases. In Kenya, Breast Cancer remains the most diagnosed cancer with an annual incidence of 6,000 and 2,500 cancer-related deaths. The problem is compounded by late-stage presentation of clients. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID -19) pandemic has further exacerbated this due to its disruption on the healthcare system. The pandemic has been particularly disruptive for cancer services across the country.

“At the peak of the pandemic, breast cancer screenings were down by over 85%,” said Dr. Mary Nyangasi, Head of the National Cancer Control Program. *“We are focused on getting this critical message on the importance of screenings & mammograms out to every woman across the country and encourage everyone to share this reminder with all of the women in their lives.”*

Scale Up of Breast Cancer Screening and Early Diagnosis:

To reduce incidence and mortality related to breast cancer in Kenya, MoH has developed an action plan to provide a country –specific implementation framework for scale up of breast cancer screening and early diagnosis. The action plan brings together current evidence and identifies key strategies for addressing breast cancer in the Kenyan context, based on the findings of a pilot study the MoH conducted in Nyeri County in 2019.

The target of this action plan is to reduce the percentage of women presenting with advanced breast cancer (stage 3 and 4) to below 50% by 2025 through increasing awareness, screening, early diagnosis, and linkage. The action plan also puts in strategies on how to improve uptake of mammography screening in the eligible populations. The overall objective is to ensure timely access to screening, early diagnosis, and further management of breast cancer for every eligible woman in Kenya. This will be done by:

1. Ensuring that at least 90% of symptomatic women are linked to timely further evaluation and management within 60 days of their first encounter with a healthcare worker.
2. Improving capacity and availability of breast screening services at the primary level.

“The rapid decline in the breast cancer screening rates in health facilities serving communities with lower incomes is alarming,” said Muthoni Mate, a Breast Cancer Survivor and Founder, Cancer Café and a KENCO member. *“It is important to note that these facilities already have barriers to accessing healthcare and have higher breast cancer mortality rates, meaning there is need for thorough implementation of this action plan”*, she added.

The action plan outlines the current situation and recommends a stepwise approach involving appropriate early diagnosis strategies at the primary level care;

Step 1: Health promotion through effective communication on prevention and risk reduction

Step 2: Breast health education on self-examination at community level and clinical breast examination at primary health care facilities.

Step 3: Screening and diagnostic ultrasound and mammography, biopsy for suspicious breast lumps and appropriate treatment as indicated.

There are five key thematic results areas, namely: Governance and Policy; Demand Creation, Community Education and Engagement; Training and Professional Development; Service Delivery and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research. Through these activities, it is anticipated that the defined target of reducing breast cancer mortality in Kenya by 2.5% per year, will be achieved.

Breast Cancer Rehabilitative Commodities.

Breast prostheses are artificial breast forms that replace the shape of all or part of the breast for breast cancer patients after mastectomy or lumpectomy procedures. They are used hand-in hand with mastectomy bras. Both are critical products that restore self-esteem, image and confidence for patients, post treatment. Unfortunately, in Kenya, these products are taxed, are expensive and out of reach for most patients.

We call upon the national government to consider tax exemption for breast prostheses and mastectomy bras, and ensure that they are readily available for breast cancer patients, countrywide, free of charge. Patients should live in dignity and should not struggle to access these critical products.

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Note for Editors:

National Cancer Control Programme is a division within the Ministry of Health, Kenya, charged with the implementation of the National Cancer Control Strategy 2017-2022, which has 5 main implementation pillars namely: Prevention, screening and early detection; cancer diagnosis, registration and surveillance; cancer treatment, palliative care and survivorship; coordination, partnership and financing for cancer control; and monitoring, evaluation and research. Email: headnccp@gmail.com

Kenya Society of Hematology and Oncology (KESHO) is the professional association of cancer specialists and cancer professionals. Email: secretariat@kesho-kenya.org

Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations (KENCO) is the national umbrella body of over 35 registered cancer civil society organizations, active in various aspects of cancer control, spread across the country and committed to a united response against cancer. Email: info@kenconetwork.org

Women 4 Cancer Early Detection and Treatment (W4C) is a registered Kenyan non-governmental organization (NGO) formed to address the stigma associated with cancer through educative communication campaigns, encouraging and facilitating early testing and improving access to cervical and breast cancer treatment through patient navigation and support. W4C is an active KENCO member and carries out a lot of advocacy work both at the grassroots, county and national levels. Email: info@women4cancer.org

KILELE Health Association is non-profit membership organization, that empowers people living with chronic conditions, especially cancer survivors, to be agents of change and advocates for prevention. It focuses on interventions to improve quality of life through addressing the four pillars (Physical Fitness, Mental Wellness, Spiritual Wellbeing and Financial Recovery). Email: kilele@kileleheath.org

The National Cancer Institute (NCI-Kenya) is a corporate body established under the Cancer Prevention and Control Act (2012) and serves as the overall coordinating body for all cancer control activities in Kenya. The main mandate is to provide oversight and regulation for cancer prevention and control in Kenya. The Institute's key functions include policy advisory to the Cabinet Secretary, registration of cancer centres, advocacy and awareness creation, cancer registration and coordinating cancer research. Email: support@ncikenya.or.ke