Statement from the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) on the Occasion of the World Aids Day (December 01, 2015)

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) celebrates the Network of Persons Living with HIV and AIDS and all advocates of the rights of Persons Living with HIV and AIDS (PLHIVs) on the occasion of the World Aids Day. The day, which falls on December 1, 2015, is under the global theme “Getting to Zero”. Locally, Ghana is celebrating the day on the theme “Fast Track: Meeting the Health Needs of Children Towards an HIV-Free Generation” as launched by the Ghana AIDS Commission. The Center views both themes for this year’s celebration as very relevant.

The themes present a unique opportunity for all Ghanaians, especially the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP), Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC), government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to fast track the development and implementation of strategies and policies that will address the challenges facing PLHIVs. Challenges regarding the availability of Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART), test kits and other reagents for PLHIVs, including HIV positive pregnant mothers, require urgent attention from stakeholders. Addressing these challenges also require fast-tracking the promulgation of laws that will address violations and abuses of the rights, discrimination and stigmatization of PLHIVs.

As we celebrate the day and the notable strides that Ghana has achieved in the fight against HIV and AIDS, such as the consistent decline of HIV prevalence rate from 3.2 percent in 2006 to a low rate of 1.3% in 2013 and the positive trend towards continuous stabilization of the HIV epidemic, it is also important that we address challenges that still confront the nation in the fight against HIV/AIDS. For instance, the Afrobarometer surveys reveal that the percentages of Ghanaians who assess government poorly in combating HIV and AIDS rose by 12 percent between 2002 and 2012 and 10 percent between 2008 and 2012. To be sure, PLHIVs have consistently complained of inconsistent supply of ART as well as the quality of ARTs administered to them. These difficulties are likely among the reasons why citizens assess government performance in combating HIV/AIDs negatively.

This notwithstanding, the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, is decreasing. The 2014 Afrobarometer survey findings show that a significant majority of Ghanaians (i.e. 68%) do not mind having persons living with HIV and AIDS as neighbours. This positive finding suggests that efforts made to inform, communicate and educate citizens on behavioral change by various stakeholders is paying off and must be sustained. However, as a nation we should not lose sight of the fact that some still suffer severe discrimination and stigmatization, which makes it difficult to access health care among others.

CDD-Ghana therefore calls on all stakeholders to raise the level of education on HIV and AIDS, and encourage citizens to check and know their HIV status.

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