

**MINORITY DEMANDS IMMEDIATE ISSUANCE OF TAX EXEMPTION WAIVERS AND  
CLEARANCE OF DONATED ANTIRETROVIRAL DRUGS AT THE PORTS.**

The Minority in Parliament finds it unconscionable gross dereliction of duty that government officials in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance will leave, since July 2023, donated containers of HIV anti-retroviral drugs at the ports creating needless shortages for Persons Living with HIV.

Ghana's National HIV and AIDS Programme is challenged on several fronts but key amongst them is funding and lack of commitment by the Akufo-Addo government, in particular, to prioritize the eradication of HIV/AIDS although the First Lady serves as an Ambassador of the Ghana AIDS Commission.

Funding for HIV/AIDS programmes in Ghana has largely been shouldered by donor partners with government making contributions in the form of maintenance of the Ghana AIDS Commission and paying counterpart funds in co-financing agreements with donor partners.

There have however been gaps in funding programmes such as educational campaigns and treatment. These funding gaps have increased due in part to government's lack of commitment to the HIV/AIDS fight as a whole.

In 2019, even before COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war, Ghana lost more than \$19m from PEPFAR and \$2m from the Global Fund due to failure to meet its co-funding obligations. From 2021 to 2023 government had co-financing obligations of \$17,138,222 to the Global Fund but paid only US\$4,202,698 leaving a balance of approximately \$13m.

Ghana currently risks losing another \$13m by early next year due to its continuous failure to pay its share of counterpart funds to Global Fund.

In summary, for the period 2021 to 2025 even with donor support, Ghana is facing a funding gap of US\$445m which represents about 67% of the total cost of the National HIV & AIDS Programme. Government cannot continue to be derelict in its duty to pay counterpart funds since this will widen the funding gap and exacerbate the HIV/AIDS challenge in Ghana.

Already, PLHIV are suffering the brunt of government's lack of commitment to HIV/AIDS programme with some experiencing increasing health challenges because they are required to pay out of pocket for HIV services which are supposed to be free.

There are many regimens in advanced countries to help manage HIV conditions but Persons Living with HIV in Ghana have fewer options with a large majority relying on Abacavir Lamivudine regimen to suppress their viral loads, keep them healthy and productive, and reduce new HIV infections.

It therefore smacks of gross insensitivity and wickedness that having failed to pay its share of counterpart funding for Ghana's HIV/AIDS programme, the Akufo Addo government will

now add on to its long list of reckless and irresponsible acts, excessive delays in the issuance of tax waivers required to clear donated antiretroviral drugs at the port.

This act of gross insensitivity is threatening to upset Ghana's HIV virus eradication agenda and unfortunately creating a fertile ground for the spread of the virus under these difficult economic conditions.

Persons Living with HIV who depend on the Abacavir Lamivudine regime are now at an elevated risk of developing resistance to this antiretroviral drug rendering it ineffective against the virus. Should this risk crystallise, government will require even more funding to deal with the HIV challenge in Ghana.

The Minority will not sit aloof and let Government plunge us all into needless danger. It is for this reason that we demand that:

- 1. The Ministry of Finance as a matter of urgency issue the necessary tax exemption waivers to ensure that immediate clearance of the antiretroviral drugs and other medical equipment and consumables .**
- 2. Implement an automated tax exemption waiver system for medical consumables and equipment to curtail needless delays in clearing such items at the port.**
- 3. Institute reforms at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to ensure that systemic failures that lead to needless delays in the performance of its functions are eradicated.**

This is a national emergency that if unchecked could lead to an increase in the prevalence rate of HIV in Ghana, increase in morbidity and mortality for Persons Living with HIV and increase the overall cost of HIV management in Ghana.

The Health and well-being of Ghanaians are non-negotiable, and we urge government to act swiftly and responsibly in addressing this crisis.

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**(Ranking Member – Parliamentary Committee on Health)**

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