



OPENING REMARKS BY MR. AMOS N. GATHECHA CBS, 'ndc'(K) PRINCIPAL SECRETARY MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, DURING THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP FOR THE DRAFT THE DRAFT PUBLIC SERVICE WORKPLACE POLICY ON HIV, AIDS AND RELATED DISEASES BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AT THE MACHAKOS UNIVERSITY, MACHAKOS, 27TH TO 30TH JANUARY 2025

Acting Secretary, Human Resource Management (Policy),

**Director, Health Promotion and Programme Management,
National Syndemic Diseases Control Council (NSDCC),**

**All Heads of Department in the Ministry of Public Service and
Human Capital Development,**

All Participants present,

Ladies & Gentlemen, Good morning!

It is my great pleasure this morning to officially open this validation workshop for the draft Public Service Workplace Policy on HIV, AIDS and Related Diseases. May I take this early opportunity to commend you for attending this workshop to work towards providing a clear framework of HIV and AIDS response in the Public Service.

We appreciate the leadership of our country for putting in place policy frameworks to address issues affecting the health of the people of Kenya. These frameworks include the Constitution of Kenya that has made provisions for health as a right for all, Kenya Vision 2030 and

other legislations that recognize the right to highest attainable standard of health as a key foundation for sustainable development of our country.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Taking cognizance that approximately, 3.7% (36,260) public servants are living with HIV, the implication is that HIV and AIDS has been a major drawback to the workforce in the service. This has therefore warranted reviewing of this policy to serve as a guide on appropriate integrated approaches to address HIV and AIDS towards achievement of the national development goals.

Further, this policy will guide on measures to mitigate the effects of loss of working hours due to HIV and related chronic health conditions at the workplace and improve employee's productivity as well as ability to seek health care services without fear of discrimination. Ultimately, the reviewed Policy will promote a safe and healthy work environment in the public service that guarantees dignity and fair labour practices for all public servants.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

There is a strong relationship between HIV and AIDS and Mental health challenges. Mental illnesses increase the risk of HIV infection; similarly, people living with HIV have an increased risk of mental illnesses. Stigma and discrimination remain a hurdle in mitigating against workplace HIV and AIDS and mental health.

There is an increase in mental health challenges in the public service that can be attributed to among other factors economic, social and pre-existing medical challenges such as HIV and AIDS and Non-

Communicable Diseases. Notably, there is an increase in demand for counselling services among public servants. In view of this, my Ministry is implementing interventions aimed at addressing mental health challenges. To date the milestones achieved include;

1. Reviewing of the Public Service Counselling and Wellness Policy, 2024
2. Increasing the number of counsellors in the Service to enhance access to quality counselling services
3. Providing counselling services to 14,000 public servants in the Financial Year 2023/2024.
4. Training a total of 1,010 Mental Health Champions to improve early detection and referral of officers in need of counselling support
5. Establishing Counselling and Wellness Units in six Huduma centres countrywide
6. Providing tele counselling services through Huduma Kenya Counselling helpline on telephone No. **1919**

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Ministry is implementing measures towards strengthening responses against HIV and AIDS and its related diseases. It is in view of this that we are implementing measures to reduce HIV infections among public servants. We have;

1. Developed the Public Service workplace policy on HIV and AIDS and reviewed in 2017 and currently under review
2. Provided counselling and wellness services

3. Ensured adherence to Human Resource Manual, 2016 on issues related to HIV and AIDS.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I do acknowledge the formulation of this policy has been a collaborative and participatory process with key stakeholders whose valuable contribution has been incorporated in this document. In order to ensure the policy document is properly structured it is critical that it is aligned it to the *'public policy handbook for Kenya, 2024.'* Towards this end the finalization of this policy is edged on the commitment of all players represented here.

The launch of and implementation of this policy cannot be over emphasized and therefore the Ministry and National Syndemic Disease Control Council has a huge task to deliver.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am hopeful that with the diverse expertise we have in this room, we are in a position to review and finalize this policy document. I urge each one of us to work diligently and remain focused for the days we shall be here.

I wish to thank National Syndemic Diseases Control Council (NSDCC) for the collaboration with the Ministry towards reviewing of this policy and further engagement in the launch and implementation of the policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with these few remarks, I now declare this validation workshop officially opened.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL!