

# Centre launches mobile TB, HIV/Aids campaign

By Felister Peter

THE International Centre for Aids Care and Treatment Programmes (ICAP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has launched a mobile campaign for HIV/Aids and Tuberculosis awareness and education.

ICAP Country Director Amy Cunningham informed about the campaign yesterday in Dar es Salaam when briefing journalists on the World Tuberculosis Day which is marked worldwide today.

She said the campaigns would be conducted at major bus stands in five regions countrywide and would mainly focus on educating the communities on the importance of early TB/HIV testing, prevention and counselling.

She added that about 25 well trained former TB patients would be dispatched in the campaign.

She mentioned the bus stands to be covered as Ubungo, ferry and Mwenge in Dar es Salaam and Maili Moja, Mkuranga and Bagamoyo in the Coast region. Other stands will be covered in Kigoma, Zanzibar and Mwanza, said Cunningham.

She also informed that the ICAP has established a national programme to fight tuberculosis known as 'Mkuta' which is run by the former TB patients.

"We have decided to use former TB patients because they have experience and power to convince people. They can also give testimonials which are likely to help encouraging people to go for testing," she said.

Meanwhile, ICAP Deputy Country Director for Programmes Dr Redempta Mbatia said her center in collaboration with the National Aids Control Programme (NACP) and the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Programme is providing technical assistance in municipal councils.

According to her, the assistance is given through building capacity of health workers to ensure better health services, including the creation of HIV/TB clinics at the grassroots level.

Mbatia said there is close relationship between HIV and TB whereby more than 50 per cent of TB patients are HIV positive.

She said that stigma contributes many deaths of TB patients as most of them decide to go to traditional healers instead of seeking proper treatment which is done for six months in hospitals.

Updating on the TB prevalence, Mbatia said statistics from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare collected in 2007 showed that the number of patients was on the rise whereby in every 100,000 people there were 500 TB patients.