

# Mkapa Foundation on HIV/AIDS focuses on 15 districts



*SOME of the fellows from Benjamin William Mkapa Foundation in Iringa.*

By **NASHON KENNEDY**

THE Benjamin William Mkapa HIV/AIDS Foundation (BMAF) through its Mkapa Fellows Project is targeting to improve HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis health service delivery to fifteen districts in Rukwa, Shinyanga, Simiyu, Kagera and Zanzibar.

The Foundation's Chief Executive Officer Dr Ellen Senkoro said in Mwanza recently that the selected districts are expected to benefit and get quality health services in the second phase of the five-year programme.

The programme aims to increase equitable access to HIV/AIDS services to rural and hard to reach areas through recruitment and deployment of skilled health professionals.

Dr Senkoro says the programme is implemented into two phases, the first phase started in January 2013 and ends in December this year and the second phase will start in January, 2015 up to December 2017.

"In the first round, nine health facilities in six districts of Sumbawanga (Rural), Kalambo, Nkasi, Msalala, Kishapu and Biharamulo were reached," Dr Senkoro says.

Fellows were being recruited on contractual basis by the Foundation to serve the underserved communities in order to

give them health services.

In the first round from Jan 2013 to 2014 lots of achievements were recorded by the foundation, adding that a total of 30 health workers were employed and directed to report to those six district councils.

"Health experts who were employed as Fellows reduced the challenge of shortage of healthy staff to healthy facilities to an average of 17 per cent and also the burden of work decreased from 10 working hours per day up to 8 hours," Dr Senkoro adds. In the first phase of the programme 30 health professionals received training on how to provide health services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

"In those districts we provided capacity building on HIV service delivery and prevention of mother to child transmissions," she emphasized.

A total of nine theatres were constructed including purchasing of a theatre equipment.

Dr Senkoro says the foundation aims to ensure that women who die of pregnancy related conditions have a better treatment place. "The Reproductive Child Health Report of 2011/12 shows an average of 500 women died each year in the lake zones regions while only 4 per cent of them gave birth at health facilities. As a

foundation we want to ensure that those women in the lake zone get our health services," she says.

Dr Senkoro says the total amount of the Mkapa Fellows project for the five-year plan (2013-2017) will cost 15bn/-, but cash in hand is 10bn/-

Dr Senkoro says the project made a great impact whereby 54 per cent of pregnant women now deliver at health facilities compared to 40 per cent in the past. She thanked the government for recognizing the programme as a hub that nurtures future health leaders. As a result, 21 fellows were employed by the government.

According to officials, the prevalence of HIV is 5.7 per cent, for women it's slightly higher at 6.3 per cent. 1.6 million people in the country are living with HIV and only 30 per cent of those in need of antiretroviral therapy can access the drugs. Overall shortage of health professionals stands at 68 per cent (1 doctor serves 100,000 people in rural areas compared to 1 doctor for 4,000 in urban areas)

Only 42 per cent of women deliver in health facilities in rural areas compared to 82 per cent in urban areas. Every year at least 8,000 women die as a result of pregnancy-related cases and 32 newborns die out of 1000 live births.