

Doctors alleged to misguide persons with albinism - UTSS

By Emmanuel Kwitema

IT is alleged that several doctors in urban centre hospitals across the country misguide patients with albinism who have contracted severe skin cancer to seek help from traditional medicine men in rural villages because their ailment is no longer treatable.

Condemning the practice, Executive Director of Under The Same Sun (UTSS), Vicky Ntetema said the perpetrators must be brought before the law.

The development comes in the wake of the recent incident in which Rukia Kasembe Michenga (55) a mother of three and grandmother of two with albinism and who is suffering from skin cancer recently claimed that bureaucracy and

negligence of some hospitals has caused her cancer to reach advanced stages.

"This is the third case of a person with albinism who is denied the right to be treated in dignity in such hospitals," Ntetema said.

She mentioned other victims of similar misguidance as several deceased identified by single names of Suzanna, another is Katusime and finally a 28 years old from Biharamulo whose name has not been availed.

"It is high time for the government to walk the walk and save the lives of persons with albinism suffering from skin cancer," she urged.

"The state should conduct campaigns against skin cancer which is treatable as it does for other campaigns to combat diseases such as Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Polio, TB, Breast Cancer, Cervical

Cancer just to mention a few," she added.

The UTSS Chief urged the Minister for Health and Social Welfare to make a close follow up of the claims and leave no stone unturned in order in their efforts to rescue the lives of other persons with albinism facing the same predicament

She also urged Members of the Constitutional Assembly (CAs) to make sure the clause of free skin cancer screening and treatment for persons with albinism is included in the new constitution so that they can enjoy life to the full just like other citizens without the genetic condition.

This year's National Albinism Day celebration was held in Dar es Salaam on May 4, 2014. At the event, persons with albinism told the government that 80 per cent of them die at home

simply because of limited access to healthcare services.

At the same time, they said that 78 per cent of persons with albinism who made it to the hospital do not get treatment in time because of too much bureaucracy and that by the time they are sent to referral hospitals such as ORCI or Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) at the Regional Dermatology Training Centre (RDTC) and Muhimbili, their cancer has already reached a terminal stage.

On the same occasion the minister for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Seif Rashid made comments on behalf of President Jakaya Kikwete by saying that persons with albinism in the country are equal to other members of the society, with equal rights to health and life.