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'A systems approach needed for HIV/Aids pandemic that encompasses medical interventions'

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Image: Reuters

Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

One of the world's leading Aids researchers, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim from the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa – says a systems approach is needed for the HIV/Aids pandemic that encompasses medical interventions, as well as the target group, and how to make it available to them.

This as people involved in the fight against HIV/Aids are focusing on what needs to be done to eliminate the pandemic as a global health threat by 2030.

Abdool Karim says consideration should be given to roll-out from the start of clinical trials.

As an example she says, “Two years after successful clinical trials of a pre-exposure prophylactic injection taken every two months by women, this product – which would make it easier for women to prevent HIV infection – is still not on the market.

“We want to change lives. We want people to benefit from these interventions. Then we have to walk with the key stake holders to ensure that interventions we develop, at a very early stage we're working with potential beneficiaries, we're working with policy makers,

we're working with donors to ensure that when we have a positive result, that's not when we're scrambling to look at access and availability and affordability issues, and provide and preparedness issues."

Abdool Karim says while pre-exposure prophylaxis is a critical tool with which women can protect themselves, it does not address the root cause why girls and women between the ages of 15 ad 24 continue to bear the brunt of the HIV pandemic.

"They're getting infected from men who are 25 years and older. So, an important part of this is interventions in young men before they reach the age of 25. And this is where voluntary medical male circumcision is an important intervention in addition to comprehensive sexuality education, both for boys and girls. When these men become 25 years and older it reduces their chance of getting infected and thereby transmitting HIV to young women."



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