

Allow them do their Job

Who is protecting them from being finger pointed? Who is protecting them from false accusations? Who can protect them from being stigmatised? We are talking about the health cadres. With the coming in of the AHA, we have continued to witness stories of some community members openly pointing at and accusing health workers as promoters of homosexuality. They have accused them of entertaining “bad people” that include sex workers, in their communities. This has meant increased fear and some of them have been forced to withdraw their much-needed services.

Yes, the Ministry of Health circular on Provision of Services to all People Without Discrimination has been at least adequately disseminated amongst the different duty bearers and many of them have responded positively to it. However, we forgot the power of community members.

One, they don't have the correct information about the AHA, thus the threat they pose to health workers. They believe anyone suspected to be a homosexual, sex worker, etc., is supposed to be reported to the Police and should not be sheltered to access services.

Unfortunately, the attackers are not moved by truth, perception takes the day. In some communities, to them appearance is enough to conclude that one is a homosexual or a sex worker. This has forced many young people, especially the key populations to seek refuge in hiding, shunning health facilities and health services.

Surely, we need to ensure the safety of health workers. We need to protect them from zealous community members. We need to ensure the safety of clients at our health facilities. It's critical to invest in educating the masses about the law and MoH circular.

As we appreciate initiatives by MoH to reassure service providers to continue providing services to all people regardless of their sexual orientation; strengthening the capacity of health workers on the provision of KP-friendly services, orienting law enforcement officers, technical people, politicians, and religious leaders among others on the need for continuity of services, and to allow every person access to services, we need to do more with community members.

We must invest in sensitising them so that we are at the same wavelength of understanding the law. Access to services is everyone's right no matter their identity.