



Strengthening Kenya's STI Response

April 2026

Executive Summary

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain a major public health challenge in Kenya, affecting both the general population and key populations, with many infections asymptomatic and undiagnosed. Kenya is actively transitioning to clinical and etiological management, adopting a more evidence-based approach that enhances diagnostic accuracy, promotes appropriate treatment, strengthens antimicrobial stewardship, and improves surveillance of STI trends and resistance patterns. This transition is supported by the ongoing revision of the 2018 Kenya National Guidelines for Prevention, Management and Control of Sexually Transmitted Infections led by the Ministry of Health through the National AIDS and STI Control Program (NASCOP). Despite commitments to Universal Health Coverage (UHC), STIs have not received sustained policy attention.

This advocacy agenda advances coordinated efforts to strengthen policy alignment, workforce capacity, community engagement, and evidence-informed decision making through the following strategic goals:

1

Elevate STIs as a national health priority including advancing adoption and implementation of modern diagnostic technologies and updated clinical guidelines.

2

Increase awareness of STI burden and strengthen prevention and care, through community engagement, health workforce capacity building, and public education.

3

Strengthen the use of data and evidence, improving STI surveillance, research visibility, and evidence-informed policy and program design.

STIWatch

An initiative of  AVAC
Advocacy. Access. Equity.

Vision

Afya bora — Optimal Health for All

A Kenya where evidence-based policies, modern diagnostics, strong health systems, and empowered communities work together to reduce the burden of sexually transmitted infections and ensure equitable and quality access to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

The Case for Action

STIs remain highly prevalent in Kenya and represent a major but often under-recognized public health concern. Epidemiological studies demonstrate high rates of infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and trichomoniasis across multiple populations. A [meta-analysis of 51 studies](#) involving over 32,000 participants estimated a chlamydia prevalence of 5.8%, with particularly high prevalence among women over 25 years of age.

[Research among PrEP users](#) and key populations shows that many infections are asymptomatic and therefore undetected without laboratory testing. Kenya has historically relied on syndromic management, which has improved access to treatment in settings with limited diagnostic capacity but often misses asymptomatic infections and contributes to inappropriate antibiotic use.

Recognizing these limitations, Kenya is actively transitioning from syndromic to etiologic management of STIs, which relies on diagnostic testing to confirm infections and guide treatment. This transition is aligned with global guidance from the World Health Organization and Kenya's broader commitment to strengthen laboratory systems, antimicrobial resistance surveillance, and quality care under UHC. This transition is being supported through the ongoing revision of Kenya's national STI treatment and prevention guidelines led by the Ministry of Health through NASCOP.

This transition to an etiologic approach will require addressing gaps with diagnostic capacity, workforce training, surveillance systems, and community engagement. Addressing these gaps is essential to strengthen STI prevention, improve health outcomes, and reduce the broader impact of STIs on HIV transmission and reproductive health.

Key Actions to Improve STI Prevention, Diagnosis, and Care in Kenya

1

Update National STI Policies

Kenya is advancing efforts to transition from syndromic to etiologic management of STIs, supported by updated national guidelines (Standard Operating Manual and integrated guidelines for management of HIV, Viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections). Implementing these evidence-based approaches will improve detection of asymptomatic infections, strengthen antimicrobial stewardship, and enable more effective surveillance and treatment of STIs. Continued policy alignment, provider training, and investment in diagnostics will be critical to successfully implement this transition across Kenya's health systems.

2

Strengthen the Health Workforce's Capacity for STI Prevention and Care

Healthcare workers play a critical role in delivering STI services and translating policy into practice. Strengthening provider training, mentorship, and continuous professional development in STI prevention, diagnosis, and case management will improve the quality of care, increase adherence to updated clinical guidelines, and help reduce stigma within health services. A well-trained health workforce is essential for expanding equitable access to STI services across Kenya's developed health systems.

3

Strengthen Community Voice and Participation in STI Advocacy

Communities affected by STIs should play a central role in shaping policies, programs, and accountability mechanisms. Strengthening platforms for community engagement will support awareness, demand creation for STI services, and meaningful participation in national and county-level policy dialogue. Empowered community networks can improve service uptake, reduce stigma, and ensure that policies respond to lived realities.

4

Strengthen Data Systems and Evidence Use

Improving surveillance, research visibility, and the use of epidemiological data will help guide targeted interventions and strengthen accountability. Supporting integrated HIV/STI surveillance strategies, strengthening national reporting systems, and promoting access to STI research outputs will enable more effective policy decisions and program planning.

Strategic Approach

This advocacy agenda advances a coordinated approach that promotes policy engagement, strengthens health systems, fosters research collaborations, and supports communities.

Policy Engagement and Government Alignment

Advocacy efforts will support continued engagement with the Ministry of Health and national technical working groups to ensure STI priorities are embedded within national health strategies, clinical guidelines, and UHC initiatives. Aligning STI advocacy with national policy frameworks strengthens sustainability and government ownership.

Community Engagement and Public Engagement

Community-centered advocacy will strengthen awareness of STI prevention, care, and treatment while addressing stigma that prevents people from seeking care. Engagement through community networks, media platforms, and civil society organizations will support demand creation and public accountability for improved STI services.

Healthcare Workforce Capacity Strengthening

Training and mentorship programs will support healthcare workers in delivering comprehensive, confidential, and non-judgmental STI services. Strengthening provider capacity will improve implementation of updated guidelines and enhance integration of STI services within broader HIV and reproductive health programs.

Equity and Community Engagement

This advocacy agenda places communities most affected by STIs at the center of Kenya's STI response. Key populations, adolescents and young people, women, and people living with HIV often face structural barriers, including stigma, discrimination, and limited access to services, that increases their vulnerability to infections.

Community organizations and civil society groups play a critical role in delivering education, promoting prevention, linking individuals to care, and advocating for improved services. By strengthening collaboration with these networks, the STI response can become more responsive to the needs of affected communities.

Meaningful community participation will ensure that STI policies and programs reflect lived realities and address social and structural barriers to care. Embedding community leadership in advocacy and decision-making strengthens accountability and supports more equitable access to STI prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.



Conclusion

Kenya has a strong foundation for strengthening its response to sexually transmitted infections through its commitment to UHC, integrated sexual and reproductive health services, and evidence-based policy development.

By updating clinical guidelines, strengthening the health workforce, empowering communities, and improving surveillance and research systems, Kenya can build a more coordinated and equitable STI response. This advocacy agenda provides a practical pathway for aligning policymakers, healthcare providers, researchers, and communities around shared priorities to reduce the burden of STIs and improve health outcomes across Kenya.



Felix Mogaka

STI testing and treatment advocate, Kenya



Mercy Nyakowa

STI testing and treatment advocate, Kenya

About This Work

This advocacy agenda is part of STIWatch, an initiative of AVAC, a global advocacy organization working to advance equitable access to HIV prevention. This agenda was co-created with STI experts, advocates, researchers, healthcare providers, and community leaders in Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, ensuring they reflect national priorities and local realities. AVAC's role is to support, convene, and amplify, working alongside in-country partners to advance advocacy that is locally driven, context-specific, and grounded in existing health systems and community leadership. This work is made possible by the support of the Gates Foundation.

Find out more at STIWatch.org and avac.org.

Follow AVAC



@avac.org



@aids-vaccine-advocacy-coalition

STIWatch

An initiative of 