

HIV+ man throws away pills in fear of disclosing status to wife

BY SIFISO NHLABATSI

Mbabane

DESPITE that the country is making tremendous efforts to educate the nation about HIV/AIDS, some individuals are still reluctant to disclose their HIV status to their partners.

Some have even gone to the extent of throwing away their medication in fear of being exposed.

The story of a man who threw away his medication was shared by USAID Regional Mission Director John Groarke during the signing of Development Objective Agreement (DOAG) which saw Eswatini government receiving E3.2 billion from the United States government to fight AIDS.

Groarke said tremendous progress had been noted in the last years in Eswatini as many people affected by HIV now have better access to treatment.

He said the 2016 Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey 2 (SHIMS2) found a 44 per cent reduction in new infections among adults since the 2011 results due to collective efforts between the government of the Kingdom of Eswatini and its partners, including the United States government through PEP-FAR.

He said recently, he heard of a story of a Swati man who was afraid to tell his wife that he was HIV positive, so much that he threw away his pills. "When our partner the Luke Commission realised that he was not on treatment, they asked

to visit his home and counselled his family. His wife accepted the diagnosis and she continues supporting him to date," Groarke said.

He added that the wife and their baby tested negative for HIV and she was accordingly educated about the Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) until her husband's viral load is suppressed. Groarke said it is stories like this that make USAID proud of the work they are doing together. He said that is going above and beyond to make sure that the people of Eswatini are reached with comprehensive HIV services, stay on treatment and prevent new infections. Groarke said while Eswatini is among the top tier countries to achieve the UNAIDS 90-90-90 target, what remains a difficult challenge is finding people who do not yet know their HIV status and initiating them on treatment if they are positive, along with preventing new infections. He said given Eswatini's youth bulge, adolescents and the youth are priority populations for HIV services.

“

When our partner the Luke Commission realised that he was not on treatment, they asked to visit his home and counselled his family. His wife accepted the diagnosis, and she continues supporting him to date

”

**MY STATUS
IS NOT
A SECRET**