

Genocide by Denial: How profiteering from HIV/Aids killed millions

BY LAMBERT RUSOKE

Standing on the lake shores of Lake Victoria in the villages of Kasensero in Rakai District, the evening waves blow away.

From a distance, the local fishermen are seen laying their traps(nets), preparing for an overnight of prey catching.

This is their life. This is their economic activity, and none seems bothered by the 'strange' onlookers, who are admiring the way the nets are being laid, or acknowledging the strength that these fishermen have, to be out there in the water, on canoes that have no life jackets, and yet its business as usual for the folks.

But beyond this rather summarily observation, is a well scripted, informative, touching, and sad account, for the roots of HIV/AIDS at Kasensero, by a man who has been right at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS fight.

Dr Peter Mugenyi comes to the fore, with his 'no-holds barred' approach, mixed with anguish and yet in a way whistle blowing and fighting for the poor in his book, *Genocide By Denial-How Profiteering from HIV/AIDS Killed Millions*.

The 292-page book breaks down the nitty gritty of the disaster that HIV/AIDS is, and singles out in very well structured chapters, how the locals were caught by surprise, ignoring the factual truth, only heeding to voodoo cures as is the case in African traditional settings, and then purely turning the blame of the millions of deaths to a mindset of Profiteering from the manufacture and sell of drugs, rather than a balance between profits and morals.

In here, he mentions of how earlier efforts to fight the disease in Poor Africa, and Uganda in particular was down to something called, 'Tragic Denial'.

Tragic in a sense that, there was a killer disease taking the sons and daughters of a country. Denial, in a sense that whereas efforts to fight the disease were identified earlier on, the hurdles were always with the exorbitant drug prices, that many a person could hardly afford.

And yet, relevant stakeholders could-easily have intervened on this price issue, save for the 'business line' involved, from the big pharmaceutical companies seeking reward for their Research and Development works, to International experts brought in devise means of reducing the scourge, to government officials with a hand ready to receive envelopes from the richer nations of experts and cut on the fight for equal rights.

Dr Mugenyi's account in this one is that of a man who has had first hand encounter with the patients, pharmaceutical companies, research experts, government officials and international donors over the years, and was privy to have been part of the fight of the first cases of HIV/AIDS or 'slim' when many were still living in denial.

Dr Mugenyi was also was a gem when he led efforts, though at first in vain, to fight the denial of drugs to the poor patients who were dying quietly and softly. And his works with the team at the Joint Clinical Research Organization(JCRC) cannot go unnoticed.

Following the commemoration of World Aids Day on Monday, December 1, *Genocide by Denial* is a piece of literature that any human, willing to know and learn about the deadly disease, should read out and join hands to fight the genocide.

Read Out Loud

I would turn to 'page 197, under the chapter 'Dubious Schemes', where Dr Mugenyi, goes on to plead, in an interpreted local saying,

"If you deny help to a drowning man, at least spare him the laughter"

He was mainly pointing out to all businesses especially Pharmaceutical Companies, that, however much they have to get profits from their trade, an ethical way in doing so, would go a long way in saving the poor people from dying.

Title: Genocide By Denial

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