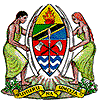
**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GENDER, ELDERLY AND CHILDREN**

***INAUGURAL SPEECH MADE BY THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER - PROF ABEL MAKUBI AT THE KICK-OFF MEETING SLATED TO LAUNCH THE EDCTP FUNDED PROJECT - ASCEND***

**APC HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA,**

**26th NOVEMBER, 2020**

* **Mr. Adam Mitangu Fimbo - Director General – TMDA**
* **Representatives from Project Consortium Partners**
* **Representatives from St. Andrews University – UK**
* **TMDA Directors**
* **Media Representatives**
* **Distinguished Guests**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, I feel incredibly honoured to be availed this opportunity to officiate this kick - off meeting of the ASCEND project.

I would like to begin by welcoming you all for those who have managed to be here including those who have joined us online. We **say karibuni sana** in our local language (meaning you are warmly welcome).

Let me also use the occasion to thank all those who took part in the build-up to this meeting, despite the COVID situation the world is fighting right now.

I know it is hectic, time-consuming and nerve-ranking experience to organize such gatherings and ensure that participants from all parts of the country arrive safely and assemble for the meeting. You are indeed acknowledged and indebted for your efforts and well planned coordination.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The National Health Policy which the Ministry has formulated and monitors its implementation, provides for setting up of systems for conducting research in the country, effective regulatory control and ethical reviews.

The policy further compels regulators and ethics committees to ensure that research including clinical trials are designed and conducted to protect participants from any potential harm whether intrinsic or inherent.

Academic institutions are likewise required to train and produce professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills in managing patients including being engaged in research that observes good research practices.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Through implementation of the aforementioned National Health Policy, various institutions had been established to include TMDA, NIMR, KCRI and MUHAS to either be engaged in research or control the conduct of research in Tanzania mainland. The same were conversely created in Zanzibar.

I would like to acknowledge the work you all have been doing in as far as research is concerned in our country. A number of milestones and targets had been achieved and it is through the cooperation that you have maintained, the current project I’m about to launch has been realized.

I have noted the envisaged objectives of the ASCEND project alluded by DG – TMDA. Indeed should you be able to attain the objectives, much improvements will be recorded and ethical and regulatory systems truly strengthened.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Before being appointed as the CMO, I used to be working at Bugando Medical Center in Mwanza and heavily engaged in various research activities including conducting clinical trials.

During that time, I experienced mounting challenges to include delays in authorization of clinical trials due to delays in ethical and regulatory reviews. These critically slow down efforts put forward by investigators and frustrates sponsors of research.

I therefore urge you to work in close collaboration to ensure speedy reviews and approvals. You should also network, maintain linkages and share information on regular basis as rightly expressed by DG – TMDA.

I have also been impressed by the consortium partnership arrangement that you agreed when contemplating on designing this project. The engagement of institutions from Zanzibar is also of critical importance as we need to remain united and assist each other in systems strengthening.

Our friends from Zanzibar will definitely benefit by being part of this project considering that most of their institutions had recently been established and henceforth needs support in setting up ethical and regulatory systems.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me now use the occasion to sincerely thank the EDCTP for considering the submissions and approval of the project. You should therefore ensure effective implementation and appropriate utilization of funding accorded to us.

You should also observe the timelines to be in tandem with the objectives and expected deliverables of the project.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me conclude by reiterating on the significance of forging partnerships, collaborations and cooperation amongst institutions. I have also noted that the project will bring together partners from abroad during implementation. This is really pivotal and we should maintain the stride even after completing this project.

From the Ministry perspective, we assure you our full support during and after project implementation. We will also be closely monitoring the project and in case you need any assistance whatsoever, the Ministry will be more than ready to help.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

With these few remarks, I wish you all the best in implementation of the project and I now have the honour to declare that the **ASCEND** project has been officially inaugurated.

**Thank you for your attention**

**END**