

## Hope Life International Charitable (HLI)\*

NGO – charitable hepatitis group  
Banjul, the Gambia  
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## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Government of the Gambia did not respond to the World Health Organization survey for the 2013 [Global Policy Report on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis in WHO Member States](#), and therefore Hope Life International Charitable could not comment on government information for this report.

**The organisation provided the following general statement regarding key hepatitis policy issues in the Gambia:**

**Awareness-raising, partnerships and resource mobilisation.** Some of the greatest problems with this component of the national response to viral hepatitis are as follows:

- › The government does not prioritise fighting viral hepatitis like it does HIV/AIDS despite the increasing hepatitis infection rate.
- › The government does not designate any department or unit to carry out viral hepatitis-related activities, such as prevention and control.
- › There are few health care institutions/NGOs that are carrying out viral hepatitis activities in the country.
- › The government does not have a viral hepatitis prevention and control programme that includes activities targeting health-care workers.

**What needs to change?**

- › The government needs to provide a conducive atmosphere to healthcare institutions and NGOs that are carrying out viral hepatitis activities in the country.
- › The government needs to realise the magnitude of the problem that viral hepatitis poses for communities and needs to encourage and support health care institutions and NGOs to fight it.
- › The government needs to designate a department or unit responsible solely for carrying out viral hepatitis activities.
- › The government needs to employ and train new staff to handle viral hepatitis activities.
- › Adequate information needs to be provided on the viral hepatitis prevention and control programme.
- › The government needs to be more committed in fighting hepatitis.

**What should be the government's role in bringing about these changes? What responsibilities should the government have?**

- › National governments should recognize viral hepatitis as an urgent public health issue and prioritise hepatitis. Governments should collect complete and accurate data on the screening of donated blood and institute or strengthen blood screening programmes in the country.
- › The government has not established the goal of eliminating hepatitis B.
- › The government should provide full support to health care institutions and NGOs working on viral hepatitis activities in terms of funding, technical support and moral support.
- › The government should provide a link between health care institution/NGOs and World Health Organization (WHO) country representative programmes on hepatitis activities.
- › The government through the Ministry of Health and WHO should organise training workshops for health care workers who work in hepatitis programmes.
- › The government should designate a department or unit to work and gather information on liver cancer cases registered nationally as well as publish hepatitis disease reports monthly.
- › The government should employ and train new staff to handle viral hepatitis activities.
- › The government should have a national policy for hepatitis vaccination.

**What should be the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders at the community, national and international levels?**

- › Increase access to hepatitis C treatment and care for higher-risk individuals and groups in the community.
- › Improve access to the viral hepatitis treatment continuum.

- › Implement programmes to reduce viral hepatitis infections in the communities.
- › Develop, expand, and support outreach services for clients with a higher risk of acquiring viral hepatitis.
- › Support the government's efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against viral hepatitis in the community.
- › Fund treatment and care for people living with viral hepatitis in the community.
- › Liaise with WHO to provide technical support to ensure that national governments are able to conduct effective surveillance and publish national incidence and prevalence statistics.
- › Implement awareness-raising programmes to reduce stigma and prevent infection.
- › Cooperate and partners with member and suppliers to ensure the affordable supply of auto-disable syringes and a timeline for their mandatory use in all national healthcare systems.

The evidence exists to support our organisation based on information gathered from other colleagues working in the Ministry, hospitals and from our daily activities. The Gambian government has really done well in the provision of health facilities but more needs to be done.

\* World Hepatitis Alliance member.