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ASIA EDITION

Breakthrough anti-HIV drug "lenacapavir" by Gilead Sciences deployed in African countries

February 24, 2026 | News

Zimbabwe and Kenya Joins Global Effort to Curb New Infections



Zimbabwe has taken a groundbreaking step in its fight against HIV by launching the administration of **lenacapavir**, a long-acting injectable HIV prevention drug.

Health Minister Douglas Mombeshora inaugurated the program, said, that the initiative, supported by funding from the U.S. government and the Global Fund, aims to provide lenacapavir to over 46,000 high-risk individuals across 24 sites nationwide.

The drug, developed by **Gilead Sciences** and approved locally in November 2025, is nearly 100% effective and eliminates the need for daily PrEP pills, offering a significant advantage for those with adherence challenges.

Priority groups for the rollout include adolescent girls, young women, and sex workers, who face disproportionately high infection rates. This targeted approach aligns with Zimbabwe's ongoing efforts to address its HIV burden, as the country carries one of Africa's highest prevalence rates, with 1.3 million people living with the virus. Despite this, Zimbabwe has made remarkable progress, achieving UNAIDS' 95-95-95 treatment targets and reducing HIV prevalence from 34% in the early 2000s to around 12% today.

Meanwhile, **Kenya** has also received its first shipment of 21,000 starter doses of lenacapavir.

The Kenyan Ministry of Health plans a phased rollout beginning in March 2026, focusing on 15 high-burden counties before expanding nationwide. This evidence-driven strategy emphasizes service readiness and sustainable scale-up. Community response in Zimbabwe has been positive.

In Epworth, community leader Melody Dengu, who received the injection earlier this month, has already referred 12 others.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described lenacapavir as "the next best thing to a vaccine," underscoring its transformative potential in HIV prevention. With this rollout, Zimbabwe positions itself at the forefront of innovative HIV prevention strategies, reinforcing its commitment to reducing new infections and improving public health outcomes.