

## **Mandela Fellows' Statement on World Sickle Cell Day**

Worldwide, Sickle Cell Disease constitutes a significant burden that is not amply addressed. It is estimated that 400,000 children are born annually with this condition. Sadly, the greatest burden exists in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 75% of the world sickle cell disease occurs.

The World health organization indicates that prevalence levels vary from region to region; with 1% to 2% in North Africa, 1% in southern Africa and between 20% to 30% in countries like Cameroon, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Ghana. As a matter of fact, most of the Kansas fellows attest to this scourge in their countries. For Uganda, Tusubira who lives with sickle cell testifies that his country has one of the highest burdens on Africa. Sickle Cell contributes to 13.25% to the under-five mortality rate with persons living with sickle cell disease facing constant stigma and discrimination. In Rwanda, Habinshuti agrees that in the rural areas the persons with sickle cell are discriminated but he believes, that the government policies are key to promoting equal access to education, health and jobs. In Togo, Bamba points out the struggle of sickle cell youth groups who are trying to promote awareness of this conditions through the different media platforms and taking accompanying measures to help their peers. In Cabo Verde , Tavares indicates that Sickle Cell is real and it is very sad for the families affected. He urges all of us to come together to support the affected live a better life.

On June 19<sup>th</sup> every year, the World Sickle Cell Day is commemorated as set by the United Nations (UN) to raise awareness on Sickle Cell Disease. The UN resolution on the “recognition of sickle-cell anemia as a public health problem”, urged Member States and United Nations organizations to raise awareness of sickle-cell anemia - among the World's foremost, and at times most lethal, genetic diseases. It's potentially a fetal disease and one of the main cause of premature deaths among children under five in most African countries.

As fellows at Kansas State University, we call upon our respective leaders to action against this silent killer and we pledge our support towards efforts of promoting the wellbeing of people living sickle cell disease in our respective communities.

Together, we stand against Sickle Cell Disease in Africa.