

Leon Lidigu (31) is a Kenyan multimedia science journalist with the Nation Media Group in Nairobi Kenya. (<https://nation.africa/kenya/author-profiles/leon-lidigu-1912096>). He was born and bred in Malinya, a small village in Western Kenya.

Lidigu graduated from Pacific University, India with a Summa Cum Laude in Journalism and Mass Communication.

He is passionate about solution oriented journalism and change with a focus on health systems, children, diseases such as Malaria, HIV /AIDS, neglected tropical diseases(NTDS), food, environment climate as well as sexual and reproductive health.

In 2021, he won the International Centre for Journalists(ICFJ) 2021 Global Nutrition and Food Security reporting contest. See here : (<https://www.icfj.org/news/journalists-kenya-india-nigeria-take-top-prizes-reporting-malnutrition>) for his multimedia feature titled ‘ The Cost of Malnutrition’.

In 2022 , he emerged third globally for another multimedia feature titled ‘ Away with ARVs, I just want to die,” in the WHO/ICFJ (Violence Against Children Reporting Contest 2022. See here : <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/nmg-journalist-leon-lidigu-bags-global-award-4029286>).

As a result of this multimedia feature story , the government of Kenya has embarked on mobilizing for funds that it says will be directed to sorting out the needs of persons living with HIV in the country as the gains it had made were immensely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The National Aids Council reached out and indicated that they had commenced a psychological support and counselling initiative in

the area just to talk to young people who are now giving up on taking antiretroviral therapy as well as combine forces with the gender ministry to set up more shelter houses for young children and girls being subjected to gender-based violence.

They plan to make the campaign nation-wide and have settled on the young lady who has been encouraging others living with the virus to continue taking ARVS as their face.

Last week, the United States Global HIV/AIDS coordinator Dr John Nkengasong while visiting President William Ruto said that PEPFAR is going to work more closely with the government to push for more funds to save the lives of children as we fight to end HIV.

President Ruto assured that his government is currently working on a school feeding program that will provide food to children and especially those on ARVs.

A number of well-wishers and civil society organisations have also reached out to the Nation and have been connected to the persons highlighted in the story where they continue to provide food and monetary support as well as pay fees for some of the girls.

Another impactful story Mr Lidigu has recently published is here . <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/kdf-threw-me-out-for-hiv-positive-status-3933142> .

The Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) is currently in court facing the HIV tribunal after the Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN), reached out and provided a lawyer for the 23 year old victim.

He tells me that he is determined and hopeful to get the dream job and future that was discriminatorily and illegally stolen from him and that KDF is seeking to 'settle the matter quietly.'

The feature opened a can of worms as many junior KDF officers who have been afraid to speak up in the past are now more bold to speak and are sharing their painful experiences and the injustices meted on them by the system after they saw the identity of one of their own safely concealed, I did not disclose to even my editors.

The National Aids Council is on public record condemning the discrimination and stating that no persons living with HIV should undergo any form of discrimination in a work place and that no person should be tested against their will to get any form of employment in the country.

The National Aids Council told nation they have decided to come up with guidelines and a training program for all employers so that no one is discriminated because of their HIV status.

In the same year at the Annual Journalism Excellence Awards (AJEA 2022) by the Media Council of Kenya, Mr Lidigu won the 'Big Four Agenda' special category award for his universal health coverage reporting in Kenya . See here : (<https://www.nationmedia.com/nmg-journalists-bag-2022-media-awards/>).

In 2010 , Lidigu was awarded a Presidential Award medal by the late President Mwai Emilio Kibaki for community service.

Mr Lidigu also believes that just like condoms, sanitary towels should be made free in Kenya and that no woman deserves to left to grapple with period poverty.

Last year, while on a field assignment in one of the largest slums in Africa , Kibera , he met young girls who had resorted to selling their bodies for as little as \$0.25 and risking HIV infections just to afford sanitary towels while others had opted to using dirty worn out rags ,and cuttings from their beddings to deal with menstrual flow.

Because government officials he approached did nothing to solve the predicament, Mr Lidigu took to Twitter (<https://twitter.com/LeonLidigu>) after rounding up his media friends to crowdsource and raise money to start a free sanitary pads centre in Kibera with the help of a pastor who operates a safe space in the area known as Christian Best Camps of Kenya .

To date , the free sanitary pads centre has helped over 20,000 girls so far as per data from the centre. (

<https://twitter.com/CBCKENYA/status/1579045531917385729?s=20&t=y6ZhQZEH6eYRIDSYqtT3rw>)

You can watch the full launch of the free sanitary towels centre here (<https://youtu.be/IYFLdy-whTk>).

As Mr Lidigu joins the Africa REACH Leadership Council , he hopes to learn , unlearn and relearn while strategically contributing to the regional goal of ending HIV/AIDs in children and young people by 2025.