

Since it took over power, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government under the able leadership of our dear President, Gen. Yoweri Museveni, has long recognised that healthy citizens are the foundation of prosperity.

This explains why, during its entire tenure in leadership, government has prioritised extending safe, reliable treatment within the reach of every Ugandan. With NRM's deliberate and evidence-driven approach to safeguarding the health of Ugandans, our country has become a global 'miracle' in some key health drives.

Today, I will dwell on our success stories in the fight against HIV and in immunisation programmes that have since wiped out the deaths of children from the killer diseases.

OUR IMPRESSIVE HIV/AIDS FIGHT

The recent nationwide survey by the health ministry demonstrates our continued commitment to up-to-date monitoring of the HIV epidemic through tracking prevalence, incidence, viral load suppression and risk behaviours.

The good news is that the gains for these efforts are already tangible. National reports show that in the 1990s, Uganda's HIV prevalence rate was between 18%-30% — one of the highest in the world. Specifically, in 1985, the rate stood at 11% and rose to 25% by 1990. But through vigorous interventions, including government support for testing, ART provision and community outreach, this dramatically reduced to 6.5% in the late 2000s.

Having achieved the dramatic reduction in prevalence, the Government substantially increased funding for HIV research, treatment and support. As a result, the prevalence rate has gone further down to 4.9% in 2024, as per the latest Uganda AIDS Commission (AIC) report.

The AIC, a strong national partner, has augmented Government efforts through community-based testing, youth-friendly services and targeted outreach to key and vulnerable populations. AIC's national footprint and programming reach mean that prevention and care services reach places and people that formal facilities sometimes struggle to reach. Collaboration between

How NRM's interventions in HIV and immunisation have safeguarded lives

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the Government and civil society multiplies impact; this is how public programmes become community programmes.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Recently, the Government launched the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2025-2030, whose objective is to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

The new plan comes at a time when AIDS-related deaths have declined by 63%, while new HIV infections have fallen by more than 60% since 2010.

Due to sustained sensitisation, 94% of Ugandans living with HIV are aware of their status; 90% of whom are on treatment and 97% are virally suppressed — a formidable progress towards the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. What we shouldn't forget is that the above are not mere statistics, but rather a representation of millions of Ugandans' lives saved, families preserved, and communities strengthened.

The figures also reflect the Government's unwavering political commitment to better the citizens' lives, as well as the active engagement of all stakeholders in the multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

**IMMUNISATION, THE
HEALTH GAME CHANGER**
Complementing HIV
work is the country's

immunisation programme, a bedrock of child survival and community resilience. Uganda's immunisation coverage for key childhood vaccines has remained strong, protecting the majority of our children from vaccine-preventable diseases.

These programmes have dramatically reduced childhood morbidity and mortality, sparing families the grief and economic shock of losing young lives. For instance, statistics from the World Bank Open Data show that in 1986, when the NRM Government came to power, the infant mortality rate stood at 119. However, this has been reduced to just 36.86 in 2025.

And beyond routine vaccination, Uganda has shown it can mount rapid, large-scale campaigns when outbreaks threaten our citizens. Recent mass campaigns co-ordinated by the health ministry of Health with partners reached millions of children and adults in tightly managed rounds, stopping disease spread and reinforcing public confidence in government health action.

These emergency responses reflect planning, logistics and a culture of readiness cultivated under NRM leadership.

THE CHALLENGES SLOWING PROGRESS

However, while our gains are undeniable, we must confront the challenges that still stand between us and our national health targets.

These represent the harsh realities we must collectively overcome. The first challenge is the pockets of low immunisation coverage in hard-to-reach areas like islands, mountainous regions and border districts, which still stand as a major drawback. This is caused by poor road networks, long distances to clinics, and seasonal weather disruptions, hence making it difficult for parents to take their

children for routine vaccines.

Vaccine misinformation and hesitancy are also another challenge, especially on social media and among peer networks.

This continues to discourage some parents from completing their children's immunisation schedules. Trust must be continuously built, especially among young parents and urban informal communities where hesitancy has grown.

In some districts, the number of health workers remains too low for the size of the population, which is another challenge.

This means fewer outreach sessions, longer queues and slower follow-up of defaulters. When health workers are overstretched, both immunisation and HIV services suffer.

But perhaps the biggest dilemma we still face as a government is the number of new HIV infections, which remains higher than the number of AIDS-related deaths. Our young people — especially women — continue to account for a significant proportion of these new infections, hence reminding us that control of this epidemic has not yet been achieved, despite all the efforts so far.

TIME FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

The NRM government remains committed to saving the lives of Ugandans through immunisation and ensuring an HIV-free population.

However, it is important for every citizen to appreciate that government alone cannot reach every corner, nor can it overcome all social and logistical hurdles. This, therefore, makes health a shared responsibility.

Every Ugandan is, therefore, called upon to join government to preserve their health through behavioural change and embracing government's health initiatives. Together, we shall then achieve the target to eliminate HIV by 2030. The good news is that this ambitious target is achievable, considering where we have come from.

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