

Uganda records gains in HIV fight as Museveni preaches abstinence

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President Museveni has reiterated his appeal to young people to refrain from risky sexual behaviour and concentrate on studies if they are to remain free of HIV.

"HIV is acquired through risky sexual behaviour. If you avoid it, you will not get infected with HIV. Abstain from sex and concentrate on your studies until you are ready to deal with the consequences of sex," he said in a speech delivered by the Vice-President, Jessica Alupo.

The remarks were made at World AIDS Day celebrations in Kizinda town council, Bushenyi district, on Monday.

They were held under the theme: *Building a sustainable HIV response to end AIDS as a public health threat.*

The celebrations were attended by Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) director general Dr Nelson Musoba, religious leaders, health ministry technocrats as well as top officials from organisations such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, World Health Organisation, Unicef, UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the health ministry.

The President also warned young people against wasting time on social media and



Vice-President Jessica Alupo (foreground, second-left) hands a certificate to UAC chief Dr Nelson Musoba as the Minister for the Presidency, Milly Babirye Babalanda (left) and Minister for Local Government Raphael Magyezi look on. This was during the World AIDS Day celebrations at Kizinda playground in Bushenyi on Monday

instead encouraged them to engage in sports.

"Poor health undermines your ability to contribute to development. You should always endeavour to keep your body, mind and spirit in good health condition to be able to contribute to the development of your country and the continent," he said.

STATISTICS

Museveni's message comes at a time when the country is grappling with a spike in new HIV infections, especially among young people.

Last year, Uganda recorded 37,000 new HIV infections.

VICTORY OVER HIV

Dr Nelson Musoba from the Uganda AIDS Commission said the latest status report under the Presidential Fast-Track Initiative shows that the country is closer to achieving the global 95-95-95 targets.

"We are winning the war in the fight against HIV... By December last year, 94% of the people living with HIV knew their status, 90% have enrolled on treatment and 96% are virally suppressed," he said.

Musoba said the other notable achievement was the 61% reduction in new HIV infections since the initiative was launched in 2017. National prevalence among people aged 15-49 dropped from 5.8% in 2020 to 4.9% in 2024.

He added that testing uptake has also increased sharply. National HIV tests rose from 3.1 million in 2020 to 9.5 million by 2025. During this period, the positivity rate fell from 2.8% to 1.4%.

Alarming, young people aged 5-24 accounted for 14,000 (45%). Among the new infections, 11,000 (78%) were adolescent girls, while their male counterparts were 3,000 (20%). The data show that four out of five young people infected with HIV are girls and young women.

The President also urged adults to remain faithful to their partners, avoid multiple sexual partners, alcoholism and drug abuse, noting that the substances impair judgement and individuals end up making wrong decisions.

Bishop Amos Twinomujuni of West Ankole Diocese called

for a revamp of the ABC (Abstain, Be faithful or use Condoms) model alongside other interventions to protect Ugandans from infections.

Data from the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) shows that southwestern Uganda, especially in Mbarara district, is becoming the epicentre of new HIV infections. The 2025 national HIV estimates report revealed that Mbarara city recorded an HIV prevalence of 9.9%, while Kiruhura district had 11.2% and Bushenyi 8%.

MORE INJECTABLES NEEDED

Uganda is also benefiting from obtaining long-acting injectable drugs — cabotegravir and lenacapavir. Cabotegravir, an injectable taken once in two months and lenacapavir, taken once in six months, protect people from HIV infection.

Although the Global Fund has offered 38,000 doses that will benefit 19,000 people in one year, Dr Musoba said they are insufficient to cover the entire risk population.

FUNDING GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED

Dr Musoba said Uganda will protect the gains made in the fight against HIV despite global cuts in donor aid.

In this regard, the Government has reinforced the HIV response by approving a supplementary budget to address gaps caused by donor withdrawals, he said.