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BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

As Ugandans prepare to celebrate Christmas and usher in the New Year, the Uganda Aids Commission (UAC) has issued a warning against reckless behaviours, saying it could reverse gains made in the fight against HIV/Aids.

The UAC Director General, Dr Nelson Musoba, cautioned that while the festive season brings joy, social gatherings, and reunions with loved ones, it also increases the risk of new HIV infections if people let down their guard.

"Please know your status. If you have not yet tested, go and test and don't take any risks. If you must be with someone whose status you do not know, ask them to test and test yourself. If you are unsure, use condoms consistently and correctly. Practice safer sex and avoid alcohol and other substance abuse, as these can cloud judgment and reduce self-control," Dr Musoba said.

He added that HIV does not take a holiday. "As we enjoy the festive season, HIV

Be vigilant during festive season - Aids commission



Dr Nelson Musoba, the UAC director general said 94 percent of people living with HIV in Uganda know their status, and more than 1.3 million people are currently enrolled on life-saving antiretroviral therapy. PHOTO/FILE

remains active, and the moment we let our guard down is when it strikes. Let us stay vigilant and keep Uganda on the path to zero new infections," he said.

According to UAC statistics, more than 37,000 people were newly infected with HIV in 2024, while 20,000 people died from Aids-related illnesses in the same

year. An estimated 1.5 million people in Uganda were living with HIV as of December 2024.

While addressing the media at the UAC headquarters in Kampala, Dr Musoba commended Ugandans and development partners for their resilience and commitment in combating

HIV and Aids, saying the country has registered remarkable progress over the years.

He said 94 percent of people living with HIV in Uganda know their status, and 1.3 million people are currently enrolled on life-saving antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Dr Musoba explained that improved access to treatment has enabled people living with HIV to live near-normal lives, reduced Aids-related illnesses and deaths, and significantly lowered stigma and discrimination within communities.

"Our communities have increasingly embraced love, acceptance, and support. However, even as we celebrate this progress, we must not relax, we must remain vigilant," he said.

Dr Musoba further assured the public that Uganda's health system will remain fully operational throughout the festive season and encouraged people to utilise available HIV services.

"Health facilities operate 24/7, even during holidays. HIV services, emergency care, and routine services will remain available, and condoms will continue to be accessible through various community distribution channels," he said.

The UAC Board Chairperson, Dr Ruth

37,000
NEW HIV
INFECTIONS

Senyonyi, echoed the warning, saying despite Uganda's success in reducing HIV prevalence from 18 percent in the 1980s to the current 4.9 percent, HIV remains a significant threat to both Uganda and the world. She said the epidemic continues to

affect socio-economic development and places a heavy burden on individuals, families, and communities.

Dr Senyonyi highlighted rising new infections among young people aged 14 to 24, as well as the persistent challenge of mother-to-child transmission, with 4,700 children under five infected in 2024 alone.

She reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing antiretroviral medicines despite declining donor funding, citing the newly developed HIV sustainability roadmap aimed at transitioning the national HIV response from donor dependence to a country-led, integrated, and sustainable model.

Musician Moses Ssali, popularly known as Bebe Cool, also called on Ugandans to make responsible choices during the festive season, emphasising abstinence, faithfulness, and correct and consistent condom use as effective HIV prevention strategies.