

MPs advocate for increased HIV support

BY MONITOR REPORTER

As Uganda continues its decades-long battle against HIV/AIDS, Members of Parliament on the House Committee on HIV/AIDS have positioned themselves at the forefront of the fight, pushing for policy reforms, increased funding, and greater protection for vulnerable groups.

Under the leadership of Hon. Sarah Netalisile Kayagi and her deputy Hon. Stephen Kisa - Luuka county south MP, the committee has worked tirelessly with relevant agencies and partners to sustain the country's hard-won progress against the epidemic.

Fighting for more resources to tame the scourge

However, a dent in the fight was the recent cut in foreign aid by the Trump Administration. The Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) is grappling with that weight. For example, officials from the UAC disclosed that at least Shs300b is required to shield Uganda from the potential impact of the aid cuts. These funds would procure medicines and related supplies that were previously shouldered by financing from the President's Emergency Plan for

AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) of the United States government.

Dr Vincent Bagambe, Director of Planning and Strategic Information at UAC, told the committee that this is in addition to the current commitment of Shs500b in annual budgetary support.

"The long-term goal should be to cover all antiretroviral therapy and commodity costs, allowing partners to focus on other activities such as capacity building, social support and protection, supervision, and technical assistance."

Dr Bagambe further advised the committee to urge government to consider fully funding the HIV/AIDS budget.

"This is the time for government to take full leadership of the HIV response to ensure that the gains made against the pandemic are not reversed, but that HIV services are domestically sustained for the long term," he said.

Dr Nelson Musoba, UAC Director General also noted that, in view of funding uncertainties, it is crucial to review HIV programmes and transition them from the current donor-supported emergency model.

Safety for incarcerated persons. At the start of the fourth session of Parliament, the House Committee on HIV/AIDS tabled a report



Health Minister, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng

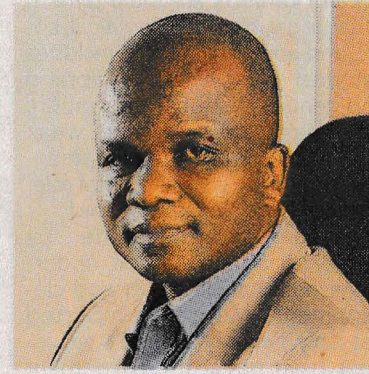
revealing that HIV prevalence rates in prisons were higher than the national average.

The report also noted that individuals in formally recognised detention facilities across Uganda faced unfavourable conditions, particularly those living with HIV/AIDS, including persistent stigma.

The Committee Chairperson attributed part of the problem to the manner in which persons living with HIV/AIDS are treated by security personnel.

"They ask about one's HIV status in the public. That contravenes the right to privacy," she said.

The committee further observed that most police holding facilities



Dr Nelson Musoba, UAC Director General

lacked sufficient resources and medical supplies required by persons living with HIV/AIDS.

"The Uganda Police Force had only 13 accredited Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) centres, while the Uganda Prisons Service had only 45 accredited ART centres. The committee finds these figures inadequate given the number of clients seeking HIV services," Hon. Netalisile noted.

In some districts, such as Amuru and Bukomansimbi, police stations lack health centres to provide medical care to suspects, police officers, their families, and nearby communities in need of HIV services.



Hon. Sarah Netalisile Kayagi, Chairperson of the Committee on HIV/AIDS



Hon. Stephen Kisa, Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on HIV/AIDS

While the foreign aid seems to be running dry, the Committee shows that Uganda can sustain the HIV/AIDS issue.