

# Lenacapavir: The AIDS finish line is in sight

In continuous efforts towards ending AIDS by 2030, Uganda approved a ground-breaking, long-acting prevention drug called Lenacapavir, officially launched on April 17, at Lira Regional Referral Hospital. The event was led by Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, under the theme: *Expanding HIV Prevention Choices with Lenacapavir: A bold step Towards an HIV free generation.*

Lenacapavir, a twice-yearly injectable, joins other HIV-preventive and effective options including daily oral Pre-Exposure Prophylactic (PrEP) tablets, the monthly Dapivirine vaginal ring and long-acting *Cabotegravir* (an injection every two months).

Lenacapavir works by stopping the virus from invading the body; think of it as a shield that blocks HIV at the door. It is intended for sero-different couples, where one partner is living with HIV and the other is not; key persons most exposed to HIV, such as young people, especially adolescent girls and young women, sex workers, fisher-folks, truck drivers who are frequently on the move, and men who have sex with men.

In February, Uganda received 19,200 packs of Lenacapavir, equivalent to 9,600 doses; the roll out is happening now, with services at selected health facilities nationwide. Large-scale medical studies showed that Lenacapavir is highly safe and incredibly effective; in fact, it worked so well that the trials were stopped early so everyone could be offered the shot. The most common side effects include pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, but these are mild to moderate and go away within about two weeks.

Uganda has fought HIV with courage and resilience for decades. With this powerful new weapon finally here, we have a new reason to hope and a new urgency to act. The finish line is in sight.



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