

HIV/Aids prevalence in Uganda drops to six per cent

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KAMPALA. Uganda has registered a drop in the HIV/Aids prevalence rate among adults aged 15 to 49 years from 7.3 per cent in 2011 to six per cent in 2016, preliminary results from the 2016 Uganda Population HIV/Aids Impact Assessment (UPHIA) survey show.

The nationwide survey conducted last year to provide estimates of the HIV incidence, prevalence, viral load suppression, syphilis, hepatitis B infection, and other important HIV/Aids programme indicators also show that the prevalence is 0.5 per cent among children under five years, and those aged 5 to 14 years.

"The survey was conducted from August 2016 to March 2017 from 12,483 households and achieved very high participation rates of over 95 per cent for both interviews and blood draws. A total of 16,670 women and 12,354 men aged 15 to 64 years were interviewed

and tested for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B," the report reads in part.

Adult HIV prevalence was also higher among women at 7.5 per cent compared to 4.3 per cent among men.

It was also higher among residents of urban areas at 7.1 per cent compared to 5.5 per cent in rural areas.

Regionally, the prevalence HIV scale varied among the 10 geographic regions in the survey with the lowest rate registered at 2.8 per cent in west-Nile; 3.4 per cent in north east region; 4.4 per cent in east Central or Busoga region; 4.8 per cent in mid-east region and 5.5 per cent in mid-west region.

On the other hand, the prevalence was highest in south western region at 7.7 per cent; 7.6 per cent in central 1 region (greater Masaka), 7.4 per cent in central 2 (Greater Mubende, Luwero and Mukono) and 6.6 per cent in Kampala.

"The regional findings are similar to those of the 2011 Uganda Aids Indicator Survey (UAIS) when mid-eastern

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Prevalence. The prevalence was highest in south western region at 7.7 per cent; 7.6 per cent in central 1 region (greater Masaka), 7.4 per cent in central 2 (Greater Mubende, Luwero and Mukono) and 6.6 per cent in Kampala.

showed the lowest, and central 1 the highest estimated HIV prevalence," the report stated.

The 2016 UPHIA also established the rates of suppressed HIV viral load suppression (VLS) which is a marker of effective treatment. It showed that adults aged 15 to 49 years had a VLS of 57.4 per cent which was attributed to the support from development partners such as the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (Pepfar), the Global Fund and the government of Uganda.

"People living with HIV (PLHIV) with suppressed viral

load live longer, have fewer complications due to HIV, and are less likely to transmit the virus to others," Dr Aceng said while reading the survey results to journalists at Media Centre in Kampala yesterday.

Dr Aceng said with support from development partners such as Pepfar, the Global Fund and other programmes, the country is making great progress towards the UNAIDS and national goal of having population level VLS of at least 73 per cent by 2020.

Ms Deborah R. Malac, the US Ambassador to Uganda, congratulated the government for what she termed as tremendous work and efforts, as well as individual cooperation of participants.

"... today, Uganda joins four other countries: Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and most recently Swaziland to share compelling results that show how the US government's support is helping to control the HIV epidemic in Africa and other continents," Ms Malac said at the UPHIA press conference.