



The Chief Justice, Bart Katureebe (centre), with some judicial officers from the greater Masaka area

Judiciary employees forge HIV results to access freebies

By Dismus Buregyeya

Some employees in the Judiciary forged HIV/AIDS results to benefit from the institution's HIV/AIDS support scheme.

"We have employees who registered as HIV-positive to benefit from the support scheme. We must learn to be truthful to ourselves," the under-secretary to the Judiciary, Eseri Muhindo, said yesterday.

Muhindo was addressing judicial staff from the Greater Masaka region at the Golf Course Hotel in Masaka municipality during a one-day workshop on HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

He said the Judiciary initiated a monthly pay for staff living with HIV/AIDS to encourage positive living. He, however, regretted that some employees took advantage of the scheme and presented forged HIV results.

The Judiciary principal human resource officer, Patrick Barugahare, warned the culprits to de-register from the beneficiary scheme.

"You know what the consequences mean," he warned.

More measures

Barugahare said the beneficiaries will be required to present fresh evidence of their regular clinical visits from qualified health facilities for a period of six months.

"We are going to demand the treatment history of the beneficiaries. You must present the treatment schedule from your health facilities," he said.

He noted that the initial idea of depositing money on the accounts of individual beneficiaries had encountered some challenges.

Barugahare said the money deposited on the beneficiaries' bank accounts ends up servicing their loans.

Asked to extend the support to families of the HIV/AIDS infected



Masaka Chief Magistrate Samuel Munobe (left) addressing judicial officers yesterday. Photo by Dismus Buregyeya

"We have people who do not fear HIV at night. They even practise unprotected sex with prostitutes."

Tom Otim

staff, Barugahare advised that the request should be registered for redress. He noted the process of registering beneficiaries is affected by

inadequate funds.

The Masaka Grade One Magistrate, Adam Byarugaba, said some employees forged HIV/AIDS results to benefit from the scheme because of miserable welfare.

"The Government should increase the welfare of the judicial staff to avoid such scenarios," he said.

Byarugaba added that poverty has contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. "Many of our people are falling prey to HIV/AIDS because of poverty. Imagine those being evicted from houses for failure to pay rent! Other women have turned to commercial sex," he said.

The Uganda AIDS Commission co-ordinator for the public sector, Tom Otim, commended the Judiciary, saying it was among the institutions

with the best practices on HIV/AIDS.

"Despite the HIV negative employees registering for benefits from the institution's support scheme, the Judiciary deserves to be thanked for the support and care initiative," he said.

Otim advised all judicial staff who tested positive to be enrolled on ARVs to suppress the virus and reduce infection levels.

He said President Yoweri Museveni opened the fight against HIV/AIDS during the 1980s when the prevalence rates were high among soldiers that had been deployed in Cuba for military training.

He said significant achievements were made in registering decline in the HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in Uganda.

Great achievement

Otim said it was a great achievement to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence from 18% to 7.5%.

"We have people who do not fear HIV. They even have unprotected sex with prostitutes," he said. Otim said HIV/AIDS had infiltrated married couples because of irresponsible sexual behaviour.

He cited some areas like Toro and Busoga where cultural practices are messing up the population. He said women in the affected areas are not supposed to reject sexual demands from men.

Dr Steven Watiti, an HIV/AIDS activist attached to Mildmay, advised professionals and other big shots in government not to fear testing for HIV/AIDS and enrolling for ARVs.

He said judges, lawyers, doctors and engineers must not be wasted by HIV/AIDS.

"We do not want judges and magistrates to sit in courts passing judgments while as HIV is multiplies in their bodies.

"It is a shame to lose important people in the nation just like that," he said.