Rising TB cases worry leaders

Cases. Health minister says Ugandans need to worry more about TB since the ministry records 1,200 new cases of drug resistant TB annually, but is able to only find 400 of those cases. The 800 remain in communities unattended to and infect more people.

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KAMPALA. An estimated 89,000 Ugandans are contracting Tuberculosis (TB) annually, surpassing the 60,000 new HIV/Aids infections, a government TB prevalence survey has revealed.

According to the Uganda National Population Based Tuberculosis Prevalence survey 2014-2016 conducted in 57 districts on 41,156 individuals, TB prevalence is now estimated at 253 per 100,000 people.

Previously, the curable and preventable disease was estimated at 159 per 100,000 people.

"We are sitting on a time bomb. While we have mobilised massively for HIV/Aids control, we forgot TB," Health minister Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, said yesterday at the release of the findings in Kampala.

"The bad news is that TB is airborne and it will get you. So you do not have to think about wearing a condom, abstaining and more so if you are in Kampala," Dr Aceng added.



Testing. A laboratory technician carries out tests on TB samples at the National Tuberculosis Centre in Kampala recently. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

Although the survey was not powered to label districts with their TB prevalence, Dr Frank Mugabe, the programme manager national TB and leprosy programme, said they noticed high prevalence in Karamoja, Kampala and south western Uganda.

According to the survey funded by Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunisation, the disease is four times higher in men compared to women.

Men at the great risk are those aged 33 to 44 years. Those in the bracket of 15 to 24 years have the highest missed cases. Urban centres have a higher prevalence of 504 per 100,000 than rural areas of 370 per 100,000 people.

The findings will act as a blueprint on how to best combat one of the leading cause of death in Uganda. TB mortality is about 4,000 people annually, an equivalent of the population in a parish setting.

Speaking at the same event, US Ambassador to Uganda, Ms Deborah Malac, said: "We can stop TB but only if the disease is detected and treated and that is the challenge we all know."

The survey estimates HIV prevalence among TB patients at 27 per cent.