

AIDS WATCH

AIDS Watch Africa is a statutory entity of the AU with the specific mandate to lead advocacy, accountability and resource mobilisation

By Vision Reporter

President Yoweri Museveni has vowed to rekindle the fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda and Africa, saying while medicine is improving and new techniques, including using disposable syringes and blood transfusion have progressed, greedy and indiscipline men are reversing the stride in the fight against the epidemic.

"The problem we have in Uganda today are the men. They are the mobile spreaders of AIDS. They do not go for testing, so they do not get ARVs and therefore spread the virus. What we want is to force them to test and put the sick on ARVs. That way, we close all the gaps," he said.

The President on Tuesday made the remarks during a session organised by AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) under the theme, "Presidential leadership: fast track to end HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria" on the sidelines of the 29th Ordinary Assembly of the African Union meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

AIDS Watch Africa agenda

AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) is a statutory entity of the African Union with the specific mandate to lead advocacy, accountability and resource mobilisation efforts to advance a robust African response to end the HIV/AIDS scourge, TB and malaria by 2030.

The President, according to a State House press release, gave an overview of efforts taken by the Government to fight the scourge.

"In 1986, when we found out that AIDS was widespread, with the prevalence in some areas as high as 30%...I was happy to learn that it was easy to stop. It was not like influenza because it was not transmitted by air. Even if you shook hands of somebody with AIDS you could not get it," he said, adding that, "AIDS was spread in four ways with the first and main highway of infection being through sex, injections, blood transfusion. That time there were no proper checks. And mother-to-child transmission," Museveni said.

Fighting HIV/AIDS

The President revealed that on getting the report on the scourge, he immediately called for mass sensitisation of Ugandans on HIV/AIDS. "I made *enduulu* (an alarm). When an enemy comes to the village, you make an alarm. We

HIV/AIDS IN 1986

According to Museveni, in 1986 we found out that AIDS was widespread, with the prevalence in some areas as high as 30%



Museveni addressing delegates during the 29th ordinary assembly of the African Union meeting in the Multipurpose Hall in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as other AU leaders look on. PPU Photo

Museveni rallies for CIPLA Pharmaceuticals

REPORT

Uganda has registered significant reductions in new infections from 135,000 in 2010 to about 60,000 by 2016, in men and women

made a sensitisation campaign and in no time prevalence dropped from 30% to 6%.

That is how we involved our strategy of ABC (abstinence, be faithful to your partner and use condoms)," he said.

Museveni added that the campaign slowed down into a regression when people abandoned the strategy but it has now been rekindled. "Things are easier now. We covered the other four and now remaining with one route; sex.

"Fortunately, we now have information that if you put people on ARVs, even if they misbehave with partners, they will not infect them because the drug would have suppressed the virus in body. It will not eliminate it but it is not strong enough to infect," Museveni remarked. The President observed that the drugs have improved and the strategy now is to go for testing. As soon as you find you are HIV-positive, go straight for drugs. "When



Foreign affairs minister Sam Kutesa (left) with delegates at the African Union summit in Addis Ababa

you do that, drugs suppress the virus and you cannot infect other people even if you misbehave through unprotected sex. That is why we are talking of an AIDS-free Uganda and Africa by 2030," Museveni explained.

Fast-track initiative

"The Presidential Fast-track Initiative on ending HIV/AIDS in Uganda by 2030", the first of its kind in Africa, was launched in Kampala during the event witnessed by UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé.

Sidibé noted that Uganda is a model country in the fight against HIV/AIDS, saying ending spread of the disease is an investment in human dignity and not a charity.

AIDS WATCH

World Wide, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 45% since the peak in 2005. In 2015, 1.1 million people died from AIDS-related causes worldwide

CIPLA Pharmaceuticals

While in Addis, Museveni also rooted for Uganda's pharmaceutical firm, Cipla Quality Chemicals Industries Ltd, a modern

UGANDA ON TOP

Uganda, according UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé is a model country in the fight against HIV/AIDS

pharmaceutical manufacturing plant in Kampala, with a principal activity of manufacturing anti-retroviral drugs. And artemisinin-based combination therapies to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria respectively, urging the World Global Fund to buy from Uganda even as they consider developing their own industry.

"I have developed a pharmaceutical industry in Uganda but you do not buy from me. The World Global Fund man spoke but I always find problems. They do not buy our ARVs and do not buy our antimalarial drugs. I do not know why," Museveni said.

PHARMACEUTICALS

I have developed a pharmaceutical industry in Uganda but you do not buy from me. The World Global Fund man spoke but I always find problems. They do not buy our ARVs," Museveni said.

Statistics

Over the years, Uganda has made progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The country has registered significant reductions in new infections from 135,000 in 2010 to approximately 60,000 by 2016, in men and women. And, new infections among children dropped from 26,000 in 2010 to 4,000 in 2016. Of the 1.4 million people living with HIV, 1,041,000 are enrolled in care and 980,954 on antiretroviral therapy.

In June, the Minister of Health, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, reported that the number of Ugandans dying from HIV/AIDS-related illness has reduced by 50.7% in one year. According to Aceng, 31,000 people with HIV died in 2014, down from 63,000 in 2013, a reduction of 32,000 deaths.

AIDS-related deaths were 67,000 in 2010 and over 75,000 in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Worldwide, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 45% since the peak in 2005.

In 2015, 1.1 million people died from AIDS-related causes worldwide, compared to two million in 2005, according to the joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).