

World Aids Day



A medical officer takes blood sample from a man who turned up during a mobile health camp in Masaka recently. Many men shun HIV/Aids prevention programmes, which is an obstacle in the fight against the virus. FILE PHOTO

Policy. The government has been advised to come up with a policy that makes it compulsory for men to test for HIV/Aids.

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While launching the five-point plan to end HIV/Aids in Uganda by 2030, President Museveni called upon men to go for voluntary blood testing.

His advice followed numerous complaints from women that many men continue to shun anti-HIV/Aids campaigns.

In a press conference organised by Uganda Aids Commission in Lira Municipality ahead of this year's World Aids Day celebrations, Kileleshwa Woman MP Judith Alyek who is also the chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on HIV/Aids said government should come up with a policy that makes it compulsory for men to test for HIV/Aids.

She said men have neglected the Ministry of Health Initiative of accompanying their wives to test for pregnancy.

"Many men are refusing to accompany their wives to the hospitals due to fear that they would be subjected to HIV/Aids testing. Their wives are now resorting to hiring boda boda riders who they present at the health facilities as their

husbands in order to easily access services," she said.

She added: "If a new policy is introduced by the government, which subjects all men to compulsory HIV testing from wherever they are, fighting the scourge will be successful since many men don't know their HIV status," she said.

On the other hand, Mr Nelson Musoba, the director of Uganda Aids Commission says some men have put efforts in escorting their wives for antenatal care which is a good cause. He, however, adds that most men are not going for HIV testing as frequently as they should and most of them who test positive don't take their medicines as they should. He says most of them leave in denial hence death and more so spreading it to other people.

Dr Musoba cautioned that the dream of eradicating HIV/Aids in Uganda by 2030 may not be achieved unless more

effort is put in the fight.

Uganda Aids Commission statistics show that new infections have reduced from 135,000 in 2015 to approximately 60,000 by 2016 (40 per cent among men and 60 per cent among women). Ms Margaret Tumusiime a counsellor

and teacher says engaging of men should start way from school, boys should be sensitized about HIV/Aids and advised on how to avoid it. She notes that the more a person is engaged the more responsible they will become.

She adds that there should

also be constant sensitization of men especially those in villages who rarely get to know about Aids hence live in ignorance. They should be taught the importance of testing and how to live positive through constant counseling. The problem is that most Aids campaigns end in urban areas yet these people can access information. Campaigns should be extended in rural area where people can't access information at all.

Early this year, while launching campaign calling on men's engagement in the fight against Aids, Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi said Aids cannot be eradicated in the country if men and youth are not fully involved since they are the biggest decision makers. "We hope to engage men at all levels to as change agents for gender equality and well-being so that the campaign on Aids will be truly successful," he said.

Men told to support HIV prevention programmes

KEY ISSUES

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