

Comprehensive fight against HIV/AIDS needed

EDITOR: As the fight against HIV/AIDS continues, it should be emphasised that the most effective approach is one that is strategically collective and broad based. The Government and other actors should on top of providing HIV/AIDS related services, address the root causes as well. The individual should also take a more active role.

A comprehensive approach requires a concerted effort on the part of all actors. On an individual level, pregnant women should embrace antenatal care and have deliveries in the hospital; for those not yet infected, to abstain or use condoms and remain safe; for those infected, to adhere to their medication. At the institutional level to provide leadership, strategic regulatory and policy measures. The enactment of the HIV and AIDS and Prevention and

Control Act of 2014 is a step forward. Section 24 states obligations in the fight against HIV including funding for HIV programmes. If effectively implemented, the law will achieve much.

The campaign against AIDS has achieved tangible and commendable progress and we should, while celebrating this development, intensify our effort, evaluate our approach and fill the remaining gaps to achieve an AIDS free generation. First we should ensure that everyone has the relevant knowledge and skills for HIV prevention and mitigation.

Myths and misconceptions continue to mislead many and these can only be corrected by the provision of scientifically relevant information. Schools offer a ready audience for information delivery especially to the

youth. Government and NGOs should utilise this platform by implementing a nationwide HIV ABCDE (abstinence, being faithful, condom use, drugs to properly treat infections and educating oneself about the disease) awareness programmes covering all schools.

Investment in technical schools is a strategy to address unemployment and idleness, both factors that expose youth to early sexual behaviour.

Unemployed and idle youth are more likely to indulge in not only early sexual activity, but also drug abuse.

As we celebrate the successes achieved, let us also evaluate our strategies to close the existing gaps, address the root causes and realise the dream of an HIV/AIDS free generation.

**Denis Birungi,
Kabarole**

PICTURE BY WILFRED SANYA