

MP demands mandatory HIV/Aids testing for men

Policy. Kole Woman MP Judith Alyek argues that a new policy to compel men to go for HIV/Aids testing is needed to reduce new infections.

BY PATRICK EBONG
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KOLE. Government should come up with a policy that makes it compulsory for men to test for HIV/Aids, Kole Woman MP has said.

Ms Judith Alyek, the Parliamentary Committee on HIV/Aids chairperson, argued that the move is necessary because many men are responsible for the spread of the virus.

She described as ineffective a policy by the Ministry of Health, which requires men to accompany their pregnant wives for antenatal care in government health facilities, where both partners are subjected to HIV/Aids testing.

"Many men are refusing to accompany their wives to the hospitals due to fear that they would be subjected to HIV testing, so 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 on Monday.

"If a new policy is introduced by 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

during a press conference organised by Uganda Aids Commission in Lira Municipality ahead of this year's World Aids Day celebrations. Kole District will host the national celebrations on December 1.

According to Ms Alyek, women and young girls are being infected by men yet when they test positive, they refuse to take life-prolonging medication and end up dying.

As a result, she said men leave behind their wives with the burden of looking after the families.

“ As members of Parliamentary Committee on HIV/Aids, we will keep on pressing the government to make sure anti-retroviral drugs are available in government health facilities.”
JUDITH ALYEK, KOLE WOMAN MP

The director general of Uganda Aids Commission (UAC), Dr Nelson Musoba, warned that the war against HIV/Aids might not be achieved unless implementing agencies prioritise the fight against the scourge.

"People will continue to die of HIV/Aids in Uganda unless all the partners put up a spirited fight together. We should never get tired of sensitising the public on the impact of HIV," Dr Musoba said.

He noted that despite UAC efforts

to make Uganda free of HIV by 2030, a lot needs to be done, especially by other partners to make the dream a reality.

"Other stakeholders such as schools should join us in sensitising pupils and students on the dangers of contracting HIV so that we contain its spread by reducing new infections," Dr Musoba added.

THE STATUS

Death. Statistic from UAC shows that in 2016 alone, 14,348 men died of Aids compared to 9,600 women.

Aids-related deaths reduced from 100,000 in 2004 to 28,000 in 2016 and new infections among children dropped from 26,000 in 2010 to 4,000 by end of 2016.

Reduction. New infections have also reduced from 135,000 in 2010 to approximately 60,000 by 2016 (40 per cent among men and 60 per cent among women).

Infected. An estimated 1.4 million people are living with HIV, of these 1,040,000 are enrolled on care and 980,954 were on antiretroviral treatment by March 2017.