

LETTER OF THE DAY

Uganda's fight against HIV encouraging

Recently while launching its 30-year Master Plan, Mildmay Uganda reported that since 2014, children born to HIV-positive mothers whom they handled were born free of HIV and have since remained negative.

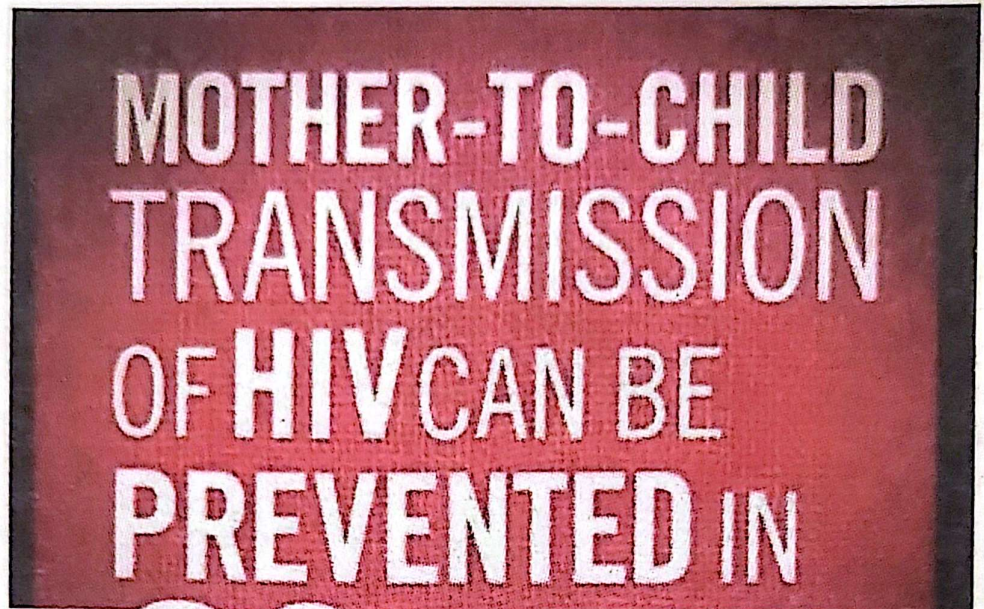
This is positive step and effort in the general context of the fight to eradicate mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) in particular and of working towards achieving an HIV-free generation in the country in general. We applaud Mildmay for its contribution to the National HIV/Aids Strategic Plan 2015/16-2019/20.

Nevertheless, other records still indicate that mother-to-child transmission accounts for about 90 per cent or more of new HIV infections among children in Uganda.

Eradicating MTCT, therefore, implies achieving 90 per cent reduction of HIV transmission rate among children, which is a great step towards the fight against HIV/Aids.

However, despite significant efforts by institutions such as Mildmay Uganda and others, the fight against MTCT in particular and HIV/Aids in general, continues to remain a challenge, especially among the youth, who have become complacent.

It is painful to see a child born free of HIV to an HIV-positive mother



later contracts the virus at an adolescent or adult age, rendering the earlier efforts to prevent MTCT by the mother and health workers during childbirth meaningless.

A lot, therefore, still needs to be done, especially in terms of behavioural change. Unfortunately, most youth and majority of the young population appear to think that since there is effective HIV treatment, death due to HIV/Aids is already history. This is wrong.

Besides death, the cost of living with HIV goes beyond is huge. Consider the emotional, social and economic impact to self and others infected and affected by HIV/Aids. Even then, people still die of HIV/Aids-related diseases despite ac-

cess to treatment.

This is due to various factors some of which are due to personal weaknesses such as failure or difficulties in following the prescribed treatment guidelines while others are beyond the victims' control.

Young people need to change their behaviours. Behavioural change, especially among the youth, is the greatest sustainable weapon in the fight against HIV/Aids. Therefore, there should be adequate funding and other resources towards the fight against HIV/Aids should be invested.

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