

Inmates complain over poor feeding

By Petride Mudoola

Joseph Kamurasi, serving a death sentence over murder in Luzira Maximum Prison, is HIV-positive. His life in jail has been one hell of a nightmare. "It is double tragedy living positively behind bars," he says, citing poor feeding as one of their challenges.

For a man whose state of health requires constant and proper feeding, Kamurasi says even though inmates receive the required medication from the Prison's Health Services, there is need for a supplementary diet for HIV-positive inmates.

"We are given ARVs as required, but the cornmeal and beans provided in prisons do not come close to the high protein diet recommended for HIV-positive patients. Sometimes we end up throwing away the drugs for fear that we may experience more serious complications," he said.

Kamurasi made the revelation at an event where Vision Group was handing over an assortment of foods to HIV-positive inmates at Luzira Prison yesterday, ahead of today's World AIDS Day commemoration.

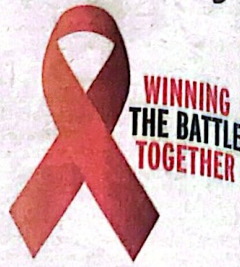
Frank Baine, the Prison's publicist, said Uganda's prisons accommodate over 50,000 inmates within its 239 units. Of these, over 2,000 prisoners are HIV-positive; 800 prisoners in Luzira Prison are living with HIV, but only 320 access ARVs.

"While the Prisons is required to cater for HIV-positive inmates, due to meagre resources, we have no specific budget for feeding inmates on ARVs (on a special diet). However, those on treatment are provided with vegetables and eggs obtained from the prison farms," Baine said.

He added: "Those who voluntarily test and are HIV-positive are referred to the inmates' health facility for treatment and are restricted from engaging in hard labour. However, there is little support to curb the spread of the virus among inmates."

A recent survey revealed that the HIV prevalence is higher among female inmates since many of them come from peri-urban poor neighbourhoods with high prostitution rates.

Patrick Ndyomugenyi, the chairperson of Luzira Prison's HIV clinic, commended Vision Group for the support extended to prisoners living with HIV.



"Most prisoners are abandoned by their relatives and some have never been visited yet require a balanced diet. That is why we request organisations to support us," he said.

Handing over the food, Joseph Banyu, Vision Group's corporate social responsibility co-ordinator, said: "We are pleased to be joining the prison community in commemorating World AIDS Day and celebrating the strides made in eliminating stigma and encouraging positive living in the community."

The nutritional supplements included silver fish (*mukene*), millet flour, rice, sugar, cooking oil, wheat flour, groundnuts and soya flour.

Healthy diet

According to Joseph Ndawula, a nutritionist at Norvik Hospital, someone living with HIV should ensure at least three major balanced meals a day with sources of proteins (from plants or animals), carbohydrates and micro-nutrients, which are provided majorly by fruits and vegetables.

Examples of protein sources include fish, beans, soya porridge, silver fish, eggs, milk, yoghurt, beef and chicken. Foods that can provide energy includes posho, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes, matooke, rice, yams and pumpkin.

See special World AIDS Day pullout on page 19

CORRECTION

The head of the Skills Development Facility at the Private Sector Foundation Uganda is Ruth Biyinzika Musoke, not Ruth Matovu as reported in yesterday's supplement on page 36.

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