Incorporate counseling in schools

EDITOR: It is discomforting that HIV/AIDS is taking root in Ugandan schools as reported on page 22 of the *New Vision* of November 1. Uganda embraced the 90-90-90 UNAIDS strategy of ending the epidemic by 2030. However, the increasing prevalence and new infection rates, especially among the youth, particularly in schools, may derail the progress of such a strategy.

The high prevalence rates in schools have been among other factors attributed to lack of accurate information by teachers and students/pupils. If this trend is to be averted, there is need to appreciate the role of counselling in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Most schools do not have counsellors yet they can play a big role in educating and disseminating accurate information to these young people who are vulnerable to the epidemic. It can also help in dealing with issues such as disclosure. Even very few health units where youth can go to seek such information and other services like HIV testing and counselling have well trained counsellors.

The education ministry should think of incorporating counselling in the fight against HIV/AIDS in schools. A policy to compel schools to have at least one counsellor should be developed.

However, this does not take away the parents' responsibility of discussing with their children how they can avoid risky behaviours that can expose them to HIV/AIDS. "Achieving an HIV free generation starts with you"

Raymond Byomuhangi, Counsellor

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