



# WORLD AIDS DAY 2017



UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION



H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni  
President of the Republic of Uganda



Hon. Esther Mbulakubuzi Mbayo  
Minister of the Presidency



Dr. Nelson Musoba  
Ag. Director General  
Uganda AIDS Commission



Dr. Karusa Kiragu  
UNAIDS Country Director

## REACHING MEN, GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN TO REDUCE NEW HIV INFECTIONS

**T**ODAY, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate World AIDS Day (WAD). This is an important day for Uganda as our communities, families and individuals remember members of their families and communities who have succumbed to the AIDS epidemic. It is a day to reflect on areas of success in the fight against the AIDS disease, challenges faced during the fight and to remind ourselves of the enormous work still ahead of us as we journey towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

This year's World AIDS Day comes at a time when the President of the Republic of Uganda has offered himself to lead the Fast Track Initiative to end AIDS as a public threat in Uganda.

This Fast-Track Initiative acknowledges and seeks to reinforce current efforts, successes and achievements attained in halting and reversing the HIV epidemic in Uganda, and calls for expanded and targeted multi sectoral, multi partner action. The specific objectives of the Initiative include:

1. To engage men in HIV prevention and close the tap on new infections particularly among adolescent girls and young women.
2. To accelerate implementation of Test and Treat and attainment of 90-90-90 targets particularly among men and young people.
3. To consolidate progress on eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV.
4. To ensure financial sustainability for the HIV and AIDS response.
5. To ensure institutional effectiveness for a well-coordinated multi-sectoral response.

On Tuesday, June 6, 2017, The President of Uganda His Excellency, Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni launched the Presidential Fast-Track Initiative to end AIDS as a public health threat in Uganda by 2030. At the same function, the President made a public commitment to lead the fast track efforts of ending AIDS as a public health threat in Uganda, making it the first country to launch the Presidential Fast Track Initiative on ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat.

This year's Global Theme is "Right to Health." While the Theme for Uganda is: "Reaching Men, Girls and Young Women to Reduce New HIV Infections." This is in line with the main area of focus for the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda which focuses on these particular groups at higher risk of acquiring new HIV

infections. It also recognizes men, girls and young women's right to access quality HIV and AIDS services in line with the global theme.

The venue for national event is Kole District. The selection of Kole is premised on addressing the vulnerabilities that fuel HIV infection in the community. Kole district is situated in northern Uganda which is a high HIV prevalence region, on an international highway linking Mombasa in Kenya to Juba in Southern Sudan with emerging hotspots along the way. Kole is also a post conflict area.

World AIDS Day 2017 will also be used as a framework for district engagements and accountability for each district throughout the country. All districts are expected to commemorate World AIDS Day. Uganda AIDS Commission has provided technical guidance to each district on how to conduct World AIDS Day /accountability events as part of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative. All districts, with the support from the Ministry of Health will intensify service delivery prior to WAD as part of the 2017 WAD commemorations.

Among so many factors driving the HIV epidemic are behavioral, socio cultural and biomedical factors including multiple concurrent sexual partnerships, non-disclosure, transactional and commercial sex, low and inconsistent condom use, alcohol and drug abuse. Structural, socio-cultural and economic aspects, marriage and family values, poverty and wealth; gender inequalities; stigma, human rights and discrimination as well as limited male involvement are among the underlying drivers of acquiring new HIV infections in Uganda.

On the positive side, we have made significant achievements in the fight against the scourge.

HIV prevalence has reduced from 7.3% in 2011 to 6.2% in 2017. The number of babies born with HIV reduced from 28,000 in 2011 to 4000 by the end of 2016. The total number of persons newly infected with HIV has reduced from about 140,000 in 2011 to 52,000 by 2016. Persons dying from AIDS related illnesses also reduced from 55,000 in 2011 to 28,000 in 2016.

In the 1990s, emphasis was put on HIV prevention and consequently, we managed to significantly reverse the trend of the epidemic. We didn't have the medicine we have now. We didn't have the communication means like we have now. We didn't have as many partners as we have now. Today we are more equipped than we were and therefore better equipped to end AIDS as a public health

threat by 2030 especially with this renewed fight against the scourge under the able leadership of the President. The time has come and it is now for us to reach men, girls and young women to reduce new HIV infections.

Leadership is essential for a sustained HIV prevention programme. Let every leader test for HIV and know their status. By doing this we will be leading by example and guide the population to access a range of appropriate HIV/AIDS services. If the test is negative (and more than 90% of Ugandans are) you will be counseled and referred to other services that will enable you to stay HIV negative for ever. If the test is positive, you will access services to make you live a longer and productive life. If you exhibit this level of committed leadership, your followers will also take the same path and reap from the benefits of accessing services in time. Please utilize these services because they are free.

**For our young people:** It is the responsibility of each individual to abstain from sex until you are ready for the consequences and responsibilities that come with sex. It's important also to note that just because your friends are having sex does not mean you should have sex because the consequences are not shared among friends.

It is a responsibility of every adult to be faithful to their sexual partner. Every adult should protect themselves and their partners by testing and knowing their HIV status and using a condom. It is a responsibility of each individual to refrain from discriminating persons living with or affected by the AIDS disease.

**Leaders** ought to seek for and then provide accurate information on how to prevent AIDS; to mobilize the communities/constituents they lead to adopt risk reduction strategies; to encourage people to test for HIV and stick to prevention measures if negative or seek treatment if positive; and to discourage risky cultural practices that expose people to HIV infection.

**Parents:** Talk to children about the dangers of HIV and AIDS; set an example for children to emulate; openly discuss areas that expose children to HIV and the dangers that follow risky lifestyles; strive to establish a culture of discussion at home. Mothers have done a lot in preventing against mother-to-child transmission of HIV but of what use is it to bring children up only to lose them when they become sexually active?

With Men, Girls and Young Women On Board, It Is Possible To End AIDS By 2030.

*Together we share the challenge!*



## WORLD AIDS DAY 1 DECEMBER 2017 MESSAGE



**Michel Sidibé**  
Executive Director of UNAIDS  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

This World AIDS Day, we are highlighting the importance of the right to health and the challenges that people living with and affected by HIV face in fulfilling that right.

The right to health is a fundamental human right—everybody has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The world will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals—which include the target of ending AIDS by 2030—without people attaining their right to health. The right to health is interrelated with a range of other rights, including the rights to sanitation, food, decent housing, healthy working conditions and a clean environment.

The right to health means many different things: that no one person has a greater right to health care than anyone else; that there is adequate health-care infrastructure; that health-care services are respectful and non-discriminatory; and that health care must be medically appropriate and of good quality. But the right to health is more than that—by attaining the right to health, people's dreams and promises can be fulfilled.

On every World AIDS Day, we look back to remember our family members and friends who have died from AIDS-related illnesses and recommit our solidarity with all who are living with or affected by HIV.

From the beginning, the AIDS response was built on the fundamental right to health and well-being. The AIDS community advocated for rights-based systems for health and to accelerate efforts for the world to understand HIV: how to prevent it and how to treat it.

Too many people—especially those who are the most marginalized and most affected by HIV—still face challenges in accessing the health and social services they urgently need. We all must continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people being left behind and demand that no one is denied their human rights.

This year has seen significant steps on the way to meeting the 90–90–90 treatment targets towards ending AIDS by 2030. Nearly 21 million people living with HIV are now on treatment and new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are declining in many parts of the world. But we shouldn't be complacent. In eastern Europe and central Asia, new HIV infections have risen by 60% since 2010 and AIDS-related deaths by 27%. Western and central Africa is still being 2 left behind. Two out of three people are not accessing treatment. We cannot have a two-speed approach to ending AIDS.

For all the successes, AIDS is not yet over. But by ensuring that everyone, everywhere accesses their right to health, it can be.

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UNAIDS  
The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.



## World AIDS Day Message 2017



**Dr. Karusa Kiragu, UNAIDS Country Director**

Today, we join the rest of the world to commemorate World AIDS Day. It is an opportunity for every community to unite in the fight against HIV, show solidarity with people living with HIV, remember those that have died from AIDS, and join hands with the millions affected by the virus. It is also an opportunity to re-energize our efforts to prevent HIV in order to ensure that Ugandans who test negative remain negative, and receive information and services empowering them to stay HIV-free.

The global theme for this year's World AIDS Day is **"the right to health"** while

the national theme is **"Reaching men and boys, girls and young women to reduce new HIV infections"**, aligned to Pillar 1 of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda by 2030. This calls for accelerated efforts to combat the epidemic, and to implement proven actions at an adequate scale. The Presidential Fast-Track Initiative, which was launched in June 2017 by His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, seeks to leverage the highest leadership of the country in the drive to achieve epidemic control by 2030. The 5-point plan in this Fast-Track initiative, paves the way for the implementation of targeted biomedical,

behavioural and structural interventions, with regional and district-specific approaches in Uganda. With methodical focus, it is possible for Uganda to attain the goal of epidemic control, and make history once again.

The right to health is the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This includes the right of everyone, including people living with and affected by HIV, to the prevention and treatment of ill health, to make decisions about one's own health and to be treated with respect and dignity and without discrimination.

As Uganda marks 35 years of the fight against HIV/AIDS, the country is on track to achieving the 90-90-90 targets by 2020. The national HIV prevalence stands at 6.2 % with 1,400,000 people living with HIV. The number of new infections in adults reduced from 99,000 in 2010 to 52,000 in 2016 while the number of new infections in children reduced from 26,000 in 2010 to 4,600 in 2016 and this is mainly because of increased enrolment of people on ART.

The progress made so far is proof of Uganda's Fast Track commitment and determination as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, more needs to be done to avert the new infections – 1,000 Ugandans acquire

HIV each week, and most are among young people especially adolescent girls and young women. Marginalized groups remain at high risk of HIV infection, largely due to stigma and discrimination. More needs to be done to ensure that the 30% of people living with HIV who do not have access to treatment can get it, and can acquire viral suppression. And more needs to be done to reach men – men in Uganda are twice as likely to die of HIV as women, because men are less likely to get tested, less likely to start treatment, and less likely to adhere.

Like many countries, Uganda forges forward in the context of a challenging health infrastructure, limited resources, and competing priorities. The ongoing reported stock-out of antiretroviral drugs demonstrates the fragility of progress, and shows how hard-won progress can be eroded.

The Presidential Fast Track Initiative provides an important template to end AIDS as a public health threat in Uganda. This requires commitment and action from all stakeholders – the leaders, the communities, the implementers, the health care workers, the families, the men, the women....all of us. Ending AIDS demands focussed vision and action from all of us, and there can be no spectators.

The earliest struggles to end HIV three decades ago began with recognition

that everyone had a right to health, including a right to accessible and affordable treatment. This human rights approach became the basis for activism and effective mobilization. It empowered mothers to seek services in order to prevent transmission to their children. It empowered the marginalized to seek care instead of going underground. It enabled inclusion of the voiceless. It built partnerships with people living with HIV, who are the strongest allies in the fight to stamp the infection out of the country.

All Ugandans should have a right to access quality HIV and AIDS services without discrimination. Without their right to health, people cannot effectively prevent HIV or gain access to treatment and care, and we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. The right to health is the underpinning framework on which we can Fast Track AIDS out of Uganda.

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