



UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMEMORATION OF CANDLELIGHT DAY HELD ON 17TH MAY 2024 AT BOMA GROUNDS, HOIMA CITY-BUNYORO REGION



Commemoration of Candle Light event in Hoima City, Boma Grounds, Hon. Minister for Presidency, Milly Babirye Babalanda signs the Quilt in Memory of those who passed on of AIDS.

MAY 2024



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The International Candlelight Memorial (CLM) is one of the oldest and largest grass root mobilization campaigns for HIV awareness in the World. The day started in 1983 and takes place annually every third Sunday of May. Candlelight Memorial provides an opportunity for communities to stand in solidarity with those who lost their dear ones to AIDS; and a platform for advocacy and stimulation of individual and collective resolve and actions to fight the epidemic.

Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) employed a multi sectoral approach at national and subnational levels to coordinate stakeholders in the commemoration of Candlelight 2024. At national level it was led by Office of the President through National Organizing Committees drawn from Ministries, Departments, & Agencies (MDAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Culture, Media, Parliament, Young People, Faith Based Organizations, Private Sector

As part of advocacy and community mobilization efforts, UAC spearheads the commemoration of key global and national events on HIV and AIDS with an aim to re-invigorate commitment of leaders as well as stimulate communities to reflect on their contribution in fighting the epidemic. The long experience in coordination and the existing collaboration with multi sectoral Stakeholders provide an opportunity to reach out to communities with messages and services for prevention of HIV and AIDS.

Key among the advocacy events that are spearheaded by UAC include; the International Candle Light Memorial (CLM) which is one of the oldest grass root HIV and AIDS event that is aimed at promoting solidarity with those who lost their dear ones to AIDS, as well as drumming up support for renewed commitment to end AIDS as a public health threat.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The UNAIDS estimates that in 2022 there were about 39 million People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in the World, with the East and Southern Africa countries accounting for 54% of this number (*UNAIDS Factsheet 2023*). In Uganda, approximately 1.4 million people are living with HIV, of which 1.2 m are currently on treatment. HIV prevalence among adults of reproductive age 15 to 49 years is 5.1 percent (7.2 percent among women and 4.3 percent among men). The prevalence of HIV in adults 15 years and above is higher in urban areas (7.1 percent) than in rural areas (5.2 percent) (UPHIA,2020). Annually, there are 17,000 AIDS related deaths and 52,000 new HIV infections are recorded especially among the young people in the country (*Uganda HIV&AIDS Factsheet 2023*).

Uganda has however made tremendous progress over the last four decades; the HIV prevalence rate has decreased from 18% in 1990s to 5.1% to-date; 94% of the People Living with HIV are on treatment and 94% of those have suppressed viral load; and the AIDS related deaths among children decreased from 23,000 in 2000 to 3,800 in 2022, resulting from the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV programme which targeted HIV positive mothers and HIV exposed infants.

Uganda's success story in the fight against HIV and AIDS has been largely attributed to high level political commitment spearheaded by H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda and the consequent multi-sectoral approach in tackling the epidemic at National and Subnational levels.

3.0 Candle Light Theme 2024

The International theme for the CLM this year was *Together We Remember, Together We Heal, Through Love And Solidarity*. Uganda customized this theme and came up with a national theme: **Ending AIDS by 2030: Keeping Communities at the Centre**. This theme was carried forward from the previous World AIDS Day for purposes of consistent communication. The theme resonates well with the Country's aspiration of ensuring efficient and effective community involvement and meaningful involvement of People Living with HIV in the journey towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

3.1 Objectives

The Candle Light Memorial event served as an important platform for global solidarity, breaking down barriers of HIV related stigma and discrimination and giving hope to new generations.

Specifically, the objectives of the Candle Light 2024 are:

1. To receive an update on the progress made in Bunyoro Region towards implementation of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative on ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030
2. Engage communities across the country to reflect on prevention of new HIV infections and ending HIV related stigma and discrimination.
3. To promote commitment by Communities towards improved retention in Care and Treatment as well as Social Support and Protection for People Living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

4.0 Key achievements

- i. 6 Million Ugandans reached via media forums and 5000 people physically in Hoima stakeholders across the country were reached in renewed efforts to end stigma and discrimination of PLHIV through the various pre CLM events and during the Candlelight commemorations on the 17th May 2024

- ii. Regional PFTI Stakeholders engagement meeting held in Hoima district and PFTI report consolidated
- iii. Held 3 National Organizing Committee and 5 COC meetings to prepare the Candle Light with stakeholders
- iv. Held pre-event interventions such as Book Launched Aging Gracefully with HIV, regional stakeholders' engagement with over 250 people attending in President's Office
- v. Held media campaign across the country focused on the CLM Theme with different stakeholders using various platforms
- vi. Health services provided in Bunyoro subregion and other regions including the SCEs offices with over 3,000 received different services, these include HIV testing and counseling, TB, Cancer management, non-communicable diseases, were brought closer to the communities through the various medical camps that were organized during the Pre and Candlelight Day commemorations.

4.1 MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AT NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

Commemoration of Candlelight day employed an integrated media approach that was phased into Pre-event and Event Publicity. Both phases utilized Mass Media, Social Media and Events. The target audience was the Media, AIDS Development Partners, District Local Governments, Parliament, Self-Coordinating Entities, PLHIV, Leaders, Ministries, Departments & Agencies and the General Public. In total 6 million people were reached via the different media platforms.

4.2 Press Conference at the Uganda Media Centre

On 7th May 2024, UAC organized a Press Conference at the Uganda Media Centre to inform the public about the Candlelight Memorial Day and urge all Ugandans to light a candle in memory of their loved ones. Hon Kyofa Kabuye, the State Minister for Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs, was the Chief Guest. Also present was His Worship Brian Kaboyo, the Mayor of Hoima City, Ms. Sarah Nakku who represented the UNAIDS Country Director, Dr. Stephen Watiti, and Ms. Salome Atim the Vice Chairperson of NAFOPHANU who represented the PLHIV Networks, Mrs. Enid Wamani, Director Partnerships Uganda AIDS Commission, and Dr. Daniel Byamukama, Head HIV Prevention- who represented the Director General of Uganda AIDS Commission - and.

In his remarks, the Chief Guest Hon. Kyofa emphasized the need to avoid complacency especially now that 2030 is in sight. He added that as we commemorate the Candlelight Memorial Day and light the candles, we should reflect on our personal behaviors and change those that predispose us to HIV infection. He also urged every person to light a Candle on the 17th of May in remembrance of our fellow Ugandans who had passed on due to AIDS and use the commemoration event to renew our efforts to end AIDS by 2030. In this spirit, the Chief Guest led the invited guests and journalists present into a Candle Lighting Ceremony in memory of those who have died of AIDS and as a sign of renewed efforts to fight and end AIDS by 2030.

The Press Conference got coverage in the form of News Bulletins on Radio, TV, online Newspapers and Social Media (see Annex 1 for links).

4.3 Talk shows and DJ Mentions on Radio Stations in Hoima City and Kampala

Radio Talk Shows and DJ mentions were utilized to further publicize the Candlelight Memorial Day. The Resident City Commissioner, Hoima City provided airtime of a One-Hour Radio Programme to the City officials and PLHIV representatives to publicize the event on Kabalega FM, Spice FM.

Social Behavior Change Activity (SBCA) gave 60 DJ Mentions on Liberty FM that urged the public to light a candle on 17th May in memory of their loved ones lost to AIDS. The mention also reminded members on the venue, date and Chief Guest.

UNOC gave us a One Hour Talkshow on Biiso FM. Ministry of ICT and National Guidance provided Airtime of One Hour on Prime Radio, Channel 44, Namirembe FM, Radio Bilal. For UBC Radio, the Airtime was for Two Hours while UNAIDS gave Airtime of One Hour on Family TV.

The day before the event, there was a Talk Show on Spice FM where the political Leaders-Minister for Bunyoro, His Worship the Mayor, City HIV Focal Person and UAC participated.

Many of the questions asked during the Radio Talk Shows were on the HIV Situation, how to prevent it, the drugs available to treat it, Myths surrounding HIV, the role of different stakeholders in ending HIV and AIDS, Candlelight Memorial Day-venue, date and Chief Guest.

4.4 Social Media Activations

UAC utilized Social Media, mainly X (formerly Twitter) to post e-Posters on the event, the Chief Guest, HIV prevention messages and short videos with HIV prevention messages and a reminder for people to light candles on 17th May 2024.

Ministry of ICT and NG supported the UAC team to post HIV prevention messages, share posters about the event and repost our messages.

UAC engaged a consultant who mobilized participants for an X space on HIV. The Panelists were HIV Activists; Dr Watiti, Gloria Nawanyanga and Dr Byamukama Daniel from UAC (Details are in the Annex).

4.5 Event Publicity

On the day of the event, Spice FM held a Live Radio Interview at the venue of the event. The purpose was to inform listeners that HIV still exists, the role of different stakeholders in HIV prevention. The Talk Show also helped to mobilize community members to participate in the

event physically by coming to the event or by lighting a candle in memory of their loved ones who died of AIDS. Other media houses included, Radio Hoima, UG Reports online, Liberty FM, Kabalega FM, Albertine Journal, NTV, NBS, and BBS TV. News coverage was received from all media who were present.

In the same spirit, the hired consultant supported with mobilizing corporate organizations to participate in the Candlelight Memorial Day. These mainly lit a candle on 17th May and posted their event on social media. These include Nation Media Group, Coca-Cola, Stanbic Bank, Comedy Store Uganda among others (Details are in the annex)

5.0 PRE-CANDLE LIGHT ENGAGEMENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

5.1 Ministries, Departments and Agencies

During the Candle Light preparation and commemorations, different Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) commemorated the CLM event within their offices and others participated at the National event in the Hoima. The MDAs that commemorated were Office of the Presidency, Uganda Registration Bureau, URA, Uganda Police, Uganda Peoples Defense Forces, State House, Uganda National Road Authority, Petroleum Authority, Uganda National Oil Company, Ministry of Water and Environment, Ethics and Integrity among others. During the commemoration event, health services were offered to general staff and those who found positive were linked for further care.



HIV Focal Point Persons from Government MDAs commemorating the Candle Light event in Office of the President



Police engagement in Masindi during the pre Candle Light Commemoration at Kabalye Training School. Engagement and dissemination of HIV messages is key in ending AIDS by 2030

5.2 Community engagement HIV and AIDS awareness in Local Governments



UNOC conducting the HIV awareness with the communities in Bulisa District, HIV awareness focusing on ABC approach by stakeholders will help to improve the HIV information to reduce the HIV infections among the communities



Directorate of Ethics and Integrity commemorating the Candle Light in Kampala. The Hon Minister called upon staff and generate community to increase advocacy and test themselves to know their status in all health matters

5.3 Book launch for Ageing gracefully with HIV in office of the President

As part of the pre Candle Light event, UAC in collaboration with Office of the President coordinated stakeholders to attend the launch of the book Ageing Gracefully with HIV by Dr. Stephen Watiti. The launch took place on 11th May 2024 at the Office of the President Conference Hall with 250 participants in attendance. UAC developed the E-invitations, E-poster to publicize the event and the dummy book for signing on to symbolize the launch. The Chief Guest was Ms. Dorothy Kisaka, Executive Director, KCCA, who thanked Dr Watiti for taking the time to write the book. She mentioned that the book though titled Ageing Gracefully with HIV, it speaks to all population regardless of someone's HIV status. She urged every one present to take time and write a book because it is the legacy that they will leave behind. Also present was the Secretary, office of the President who urged all members present to reflect on the legacy they are leaving behind. At the end of the function, members lit a candle in memory of those who died of AIDS. Coverage of the event was received through newspaper, radio, TV and online media platforms



The Executive Director, Kampla Capital City Authority launches a book “Ageing Gracefully with HIV authored by Dr Stephen Watiti

5.4 Regional PFTI engagement in Hoima

The UAC, Hoima City, Hoima District and Baylor (USG Implementing Partner for Bunyoro and Rwenzori Regions), MDAs, PLHIV, media, 9 district leaderships comprising of Chief Administrative Officers, District Health Officers, HIV Focal Point persons organized a regional stakeholder meeting to review performance of implementation of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative (PFTI). The meeting was held on the 16th May 2024 at the Hoima District Headquarters. During the opening ceremony, Hon Jennifer Namuyangu Kacha, Minister for Bunyoro Affairs, recognized the contribution of HE the President of Uganda in the fight against HIV and AIDS. She urged the country to continue implementing the Presidential Fast track Initiative to End AIDS as a public health threat. She also lit a symbolic candle in memory of those we have lost to AIDS. In the following panel discussion, one of the panelists, Leilah Bbale who works with Spice FM, presented the challenges of media in HIV reporting.



Hon Minister for State Bunyoro Hon. Jennifer Namuyangu Kacha Affairs officiating the opening Regional Stakeholders Engagement in Hoima district on the progress of the PFTI objectives

5.5 Private Sector engagements

The Private Sector Secretariat carried out HIV awareness and sensitization campaigns in 6 companies in Bunyoro region including; Kinyara Sugar Masindi, Bwenerwo Diaries, Albertine Water Hoima, Hoima Sugar, Butema Brick factory and Bugembe tea estate. More than 1000 workers were reached with HIV prevention messages, more than 10,000 condoms distributed, and demand for HIV services created.



HIV awareness campaign at Kinyara Sugar factory with workers. Such interventions are needed to improve the knowledge of workers in HIV awareness

5.6 Cultural engagements

Cultural Institutions were engaged to share messages on HIV during the pre- and post-Candle Light. As part of pre-event, UAC supported Buganda Kingdom with provision of integrated health services reaching 223 people on HIV, syphilis testing, Body Mass Index, Sickle cells with 11 people's results reacting positive and linked to care and creating HIV awareness, HIV prevention messages and fighting HIV related stigma and discrimination to more than 100,000 participants during the Kabaka Run event on 7th April 2024.

Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom participated in the Candle Light Event at Boma Grounds and the Prime Minister Byakutaga Ateenyi through Hon Francis Mugerwa the Spokesperson of Bunyoro

Kingdom appreciated H.E the President for his fight against HIV AIDS. He recognized the role of partners like UAC, Baylor Uganda, Red Cross, Hoima City, the District and others for their strategic role in the fight against HIV and support to the Kingdom against HIV/AIDS. He sent a strong message inviting all his subjects in the kingdom to take the HIV test and once found positive to start on HIV treatment. He observed that the infrastructural developments in the region like the Masindi road construction had contributed to the risks of catching HIV by Key population like Truck Drivers, Sex Workers had increased and put the young people at risk. The Prime Minister announced that the Queen Mother Margaret Karunga Adyeri had organized a Health Camp to provide services to the Subjects to contribute to closing the tap of new infections. The Kingdom further encouraged marriage to one partner and being faithful to avoid catching the HIV virus.



Dissemination of HIV prevention messages using IEC materials during the Kabaka birthday run Lubiri Mengo 7th April 2024 where over 1 million were reached with the messages

5.7 Youth engagement

Young people formed huge population and are highly affected with HIV, to address the HIV burden among young people in school and out of schools, UAC and multi-sectorial team engaged young people with HIV messages on prevention and care at national and subnational levels. HIV awareness and sensitization sessions were held in schools and communities. Debates and poetry were conducted in 43 schools and more than 12,000 students were reached in 4 regions of Bunyoro, Western Uganda, Central 1 and 2



Executive Secretary for UNSA Toskin Cherukut with NEC and young positives during the commemoration of Candle Light event: Young people were reached with HIV messages focusing on ABC approach

6.0 NATIONAL COMMEMORATION EVENT IN HOIMA CITY AND PRESENTATIONS BY GUESTS

The commemoration of national Candlelight 2024 took place in Hoima, City, Boma Grounds on 17th May 2024. The event was presided over by the Minister in Charge of the Presidency Hon.

Babirye Milly Babalanda representing the Rt. Hon Prime Minister of Uganda, Robinah Nabbanja. Approximately 5000 people attended the commemoration at Boma Grounds Hoima City. The participants were drawn from Government MDAs, District Local Governments, AIDS Development Partners, Implementing Partners, Civil Society, PLHIV, Religious Leaders, Cultural Leaders, Private Sector, Media, Drama Groups, Primary, Secondary and tertiary students, and Staff of Uganda AIDS Commission.

6.1 Remarks, Speeches and Statements

6.1.1 Remarks by the Chief Guest Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Uganda



Chief Guest Hon. Milly Babalanda Babirye, Minister for the Presidency delivering the speech on behalf of the Rt. Hon Prime Minister during the Candle Light Commemoration in Hoima Boma grounds in Hoima City on 17th May 2024

The Hon Minister for the Presidency on behalf of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister appreciated the opportunity to officiate at the important occasion marking the International Candle Light Commemoration event which happens globally on 3rd Sunday in May every year. As a Country, Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate this candle light day, with the theme of: **Ending AIDS by 2030: Keeping Communities at the Center.** In her speech she noted:

- I. That it was a very important day in the history of Uganda as we remembered all Ugandans and the rest of the world who had lost their dear ones to the HIV scourge, and therefore, stood in solidarity with the families on that day.

- II. The Hon Minister thanked His Excellency the President for being at forefront in leading the country in the fight against HIV and other diseases in the country like Corona 19. She also thanked all the leaders who had made commitments in the fight against HIV and further supported the vulnerable communities in the country.
- III. The Hon minister recognized the great progress in the coordination and implementation of the Global target of Ending AIDS by 2030 in Uganda. She observed that Government, we placed social economic Development at all fronts in ensuring HIV and AIDS was mainstreamed in all development programmes, for Uganda to have a healthy and productive population.
- IV. She reminded the congregation about the approach of the National Resistance Movement of implementing all the 10 points programmes. However, the leadership realized later when HIV was diagnosed in early 1990s, it had killed many Ugandans and there were no Anti-Retro-Viral (ARVs) Drugs to treat our people at that time, as part of long-term strategy, Government and Development Partners introduced ARVs to provide life savings interventions to all people living with HIV.
- V. She was also glad to know that about 1.2 million Ugandans were accessing the ARVs and few are not accessing this, because of stigma and majority were men. The Hon minister encouraged all persons living with HIV to get enrolled in ARVs responsibility to live productive lives.
- VI. Despite the HIV burden and challenges the Country faced over the years, the Hon Minister stressed that the government of Uganda would continue taking HIV pandemic serious and prioritize the HIV response in the Country. Government was aware of the donor dwindling support in all sectors, therefore, as a country, needed to develop resilience and support the HIV interventions in our society. She called upon Ugandans to maximize the opportunities as leaders to guide young people and generate a population shielded from acquiring new HIV infections. She encouraged all those living with HIV to enroll early on ART and women to deliver at health facilities
- VII. As Government under the leadership of H.E the President and National Resistance Government (NRM) considered Health for all Ugandans, under the National Development Plan III, HIV was considered and Government will ensure HIV is mainstreamed in the forthcoming NDP IV, this would ensure sustainability and efficiency in Government to plan and budget for the interventions. She therefore, urged all sectors to ensure HIV and AIDS was integrated in all sub programmes.
- VIII. **HIV Communication and Messages to the country:** The Hon Minister, called upon all actors in the country, starting from the families, schools, churches, communities to talk about the HIV messages with children church followers and students. She applauded Uganda AIDS Commission for developing HIV messages that needed to be disseminated widely across the country using all channels. She called upon all cabinet colleagues to ensure that all Government Radios and TV stations including the Privately owned Radio and TV stations air out the HIV messages once every day. This would

enable the social construction obligations for all in educating the masses and increasing awareness of the population about the National Target to End AIDS as a Public Health Threat by 2030. The Ministry of Information, Communication and National Guidance called upon to support this directive. She urged all Religious Leaders and Cultural Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, the Academia to join the fight and ensure in all forums, HIV messages would always be mentioned.

- IX. **National Policy, Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting:** To sustain the HIV gains made over the years, she called upon all stakeholders present to ensure they implemented all government policies integrating HIV and TB interventions. She emphasized that the office of the Prime Minister would take serious considerations when reviewing the Government performance of all its plans, policies and all interventions. Therefore, on Quarterly basis, the OPM required all state and non-state actors to report the progress made in the integration of HIV and TB to OPM and Office of the President.
- X. The Hon Minister thanked the Development Partners for the support provided in the HIV and health response, which support would continue to be based on mutual respect and principle for the preservation of culture and diversity. She emphasized mutual co-existence between the Partners and the government. On behalf of Government of Uganda, she pledged the commitments of Government in working with and cooperating with all development partners to achieve one goal to serve humanity in our diversity
- XI. Furthermore, with the MDAs and the Private Sector working in the Oil and Gas and other players, were called upon by the government to put in place robust social safeguards interventions to protect the communities in the sub-region. This would address HIV Prevention, Care and Support to affected persons. She implored all stakeholders in Hoima to work with district leadership to ensure the communities were brought on board and protected from hazardous issues and social interaction that would predispose people to HIV and TB.
- XII. Once again, she reiterated Government commitment to Ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat in Uganda by 2030. Therefore, the Government of Uganda assured all Ugandans and people living with HIV, that;
- a) the drugs would be made available all the facilities and nobody would be denied services
 - b) A call was made to the men to test and know their status to have a population free of HIV
 - c) Religious, Cultural Leaders and Civil Society, were called upon to support government to reach the communities with HIV messages across the country
 - d) All MDAs were called upon to ensure HIV and TB were integrated into all the development plans and reported on.

The Chief thanked all invited guests who turned up and those commemorating the National Candle Light 2024 across the country at their homes and workplaces as a beacon of hope that HIV would be defeated and Uganda free of AIDS by 2030

6.1.2 Inter-Faith Prayer and Statement by the Religious Leaders



Religious Leaders at the Candle Light Memorial at Boma Grounds - Hoima

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda participated in this year's National Candle Light Memorial by leading the Inter Faith Prayer and also presenting the IRCU Statement. The IRCU Statement was read by Sheikh Musa Babanja District Kadhi Bunyoro Muslim District.

In the IRCU Statement, it was observed that finding ways to honor and remember the people that passed on due to AIDS was a significant part of the healing process in our African cultures. Inter Religious Council of Uganda, thanked the Government through Uganda AIDS Commission for always providing the sacred space annually for the Religious Leaders to come together as stakeholders, family and friends to share memories, express their feelings, and celebrate the life of their departed loved ones who died of AIDS. As Religious Leaders, they joined the government of Uganda, Partners and Civil Society Organizations in memory of their loved ones, and celebrated the love and connections that endured beyond their physical presence.

The theme for the year's Candle Light Memorial event – “Ending AIDS by 2030: Keeping Communities at the Center” signified the centrality of the community in Uganda's national response. With more than three decades of experience, evidence had shown that communities

were at the center of efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat. Lessons learnt from the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of communities in navigating difficult and rapidly changing environments, and in reaching affected communities with essential services, such as COVID-19 testing and vaccination and HIV prevention, testing and treatment and other health and social services.

While emphasizing the centrality of communities in ending AIDS, they recognized the urgent need to build a strong and resilient health system, which integrated and people-centered. This would help Uganda sustain the gains made in the HIV response in the past years. Religious Leaders therefore, called for innovative and sustainable health and HIV financing mechanisms to eliminate the high costs on the vulnerable households tailored differentiated service delivery models to meet the different needs of the target communities. In order to keep communities at the center, there was a call to all to ensure we empower and strengthen peer-led initiatives that put a human face to the HIV and AIDS response. This would allow for identification of key barriers to the delivery of quality services and to hold duty bearers accountable when communities take the lead.

They pointed out that out of pocket expenditure borne by Ugandans was still unacceptably high. The passing of the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill (2021) had been welcomed and was believed to strengthen the health insurance scheme to absorb the basic health cost via pooling of risks. IRCU believed that once passed into law, the scheme would cushion Ugandans against the high cost of healthcare offered by private health-care providers.

The IRCU recognized putting the communities and their networks at the center of the response, was paramount if Uganda wants to end the AIDS epidemic. However, this would require having

The IRCU called for boldness, brevity and readiness to tackle the formidable obstacles that stand in the way of providing HIV and AIDS services to those who need them most. These were qualities abundantly demonstrated by some of key partners in the HIV response, such as PEPFAR, UNFPA, UNAIDS, Global Fund and many others. The leaders of these great organizations were appreciated for consistently standing with communities, the government and the people living with HIV and the affected populations in Uganda.

In conclusion, IRCU appealed to all our development partners, civil society and faith-based organizations, to continue supporting the Government of Uganda in the campaign to end AIDS as a public health threat. A call was made to the Government of Uganda to increase its commitment to the anti-HIV campaign to achieve our national goals under the Presidential Fast Track Initiative Religious Leaders committed to avail their leadership, resources and structures at both national and sub-national levels. Further, IRCU stressed the need to work together to eliminate societal and structural barriers that constrain the fight against the HIV epidemic in Uganda. They committed to continued collaboration and partnership with every stakeholder

working for the interest of People Living with and affected by HIV and ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat by 2030.

6.1.3 Remarks by His Worship the Mayor Hoima City

His Worship the City Mayor, observed that Hoima City had an HIV prevalence of 6.6%, higher than the national prevalence at 5.1% but was glad to note that AIDS services were being offered starting from the district to facility and community level and particularly the City alone had 7 Health facilities at the level of Health Center III and II which all offered HIV and AIDS services. Access to these centers had been favored by good infrastructure and support from the Lead Implementing Partner Baylor Uganda.

He noted challenges as massive influx of people due to emerging opportunities in the oil and gas sector that was contributing to the high prevalence rates. He called upon all the leaders to lead by example by taking their HIV test to know their status.

He commended the city leadership to continue ensuring all infrastructural development is well monitored and contractors given guidelines and safety measures to safe guard the young people in the communities.

6.1.4 Remarks by Resident City Commissioners

The Resident City Commissioner Mr Badru Mugabi indicated that the City had tried to implement the PFTI targets especially Pillar Number 5 on Ensuring Institutional Effectiveness. The City had committed to ensuring all government programs are implemented including supporting the PLHIV networks.



RCC Banduri making the remarks on behalf of the RDCs in the mobilization and monitoring of the HIV interventions across the country

6.1.5 Statement from a Representative of People Living with HIV

The NAFOPHANU leadership

appreciated the Global theme which was *“Together we remember, together we heal, through love and solidarity!”* which a call to strengthening support systems for PLHIV and affected individuals in the HIV response in a holistic manner. Similarly, the country theme *“Ending AIDS by 2030: keeping communities at the centre”* pointed to a commitment to ending all sorts of obstacles hindering community engagement and participation as part of epidemic control.

As People Living with HIV, they recognized that they had moved a long way in reducing AIDS related deaths and increasing the number of PLHIV accessing lifesaving treatment. They recognised that they had remained at the centre to curb new HIV transmissions and promote positive living towards an HIV free generation. They appreciated Government, AIDS Development Partners and other community stake holders and all people who had supported and worked with them.

PLHIV were recognized for they had contributed tremendously to the HIV&AIDS response in various ways; as peers at health facility and community levels as expert clients, contributed to advocacy efforts for the promotion and protection of rights of PLHIV through representation at all levels, through psycho social support initiatives, greatly reduced Transmission of Mother to Child and AIDS deaths.

PLHIV individually confronted the barriers like stigma and discrimination and promoted positive living, they had continued to provide evidence through surveys and in development of policies and guidelines to support our community and national work and had formed coordination structures of PLHIV up to community level that ease networking and collaboration, cohorts of young people, men, women, PWD, teachers, armed personnel, religious as well district forums throughout Uganda.

Despite these achievements, they raised a number of barriers that remained in the way of epidemic control such as stigma, low treatment literacy levels that continue to affect adherence and retention in care, prevailing co-morbidities such as TB and Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), socio-economic challenges that continued to expose young people to new HIV infections. They also noted that the mass awareness campaigns that used to rally people to the HIV prevention efforts had greatly dwindled, the country was experiencing stock out of ARVs and other essential drugs. They were equally concerned that with the coming of oil there were likely increased exposure of young people to HIV in the Albertine region. They emphasized the need to get back to the drawing board for a more effective community engagement in the response.

Following the theme of ‘Ending AIDS by 2030: Keeping Communities at the Centre’, the community of PLHIV requested for more effort in;

- I. Concerted effort to stigma reduction through empowerment programmes
- II. Economic empowerment to reduce vulnerabilities of PLHIV
- III. Integration of co-morbidities as we age gracefully with HIV
- IV. Increased domestic funding as external funding continues to reduce
- V. Strengthening community structures of different groups of PLHIV at different levels.
- VI. Adopting and investing in short course regimens for TB prevention and treatment
- VII. Commodity security to eliminate all forms of stock outs

As Uganda got to epidemic control, the PLHIV indicated that they confronting all the barriers that are rendering it difficult they committed to stand as one fostering compassion and resilience in the face of adversity, and championing love and solidarity for a future where every person living with HIV enjoys their right to a healthy and dignified life, free from stigma and discrimination taking charge at various fronts to ensure that AIDS is no longer a public health threat. They committed to work with all the partners, state and non-state, to eliminate AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. **Together for a Positive Difference!**

6.1.6 Remarks from the US Government: PEPFAR Coordinator Mary Borgman



The Country PEPFAR Coordinator Mary Borgman recognized the achievement of Uganda Government in the fight against HIV and for the gains attained. She shared her experience with some of the community groups like grandmother taking care of their orphans, the challenges and experiences they went through, the YAPs program that encouraged their peer to take HIV test and when found positive enroll on treatment. She recognized that the YAPs had played a key role in reaching Young People Living with HIV with ARVs, psychosocial support and helping them to improve their financial stability and provide for their families through small scale projects. This inspires Ugandans to focus on the communities, come up with faster innovations to enable the country sustain the HIV response.

She observed that by 2022, 39m people globally were infected by HIV with the largest burden was in Sub-Saharan Africa at about 53% HIV prevalence. She related this with Uganda's prevalence at 5.1% with higher prevalence among the young people especially young women. She called upon Ugandans to tap into the power of community, reinvigorate all efforts to reduce stigma and global access to healthcare.

She further emphasized promotion of health equity for key and priority populations, called upon all leaders to align their words and actions address unresolved issues to close gaps and eliminate discrimination.

She called upon the government to address the Anti Homosexuality Act to promote human rights since every person has a right to live healthy lives. She emphasized that such laws undermine the health rights for people and welfare of all individuals to achieve healthy equity by 2030. She emphasized that the constitutional court decision was small step but not sufficient to promote the rights of the most marginalized. She also reiterated that the restrictions by the US government were not intended to hinder service delivery, the commitment of US government to Ugandan people was to provide support and leverage on the bilateral relationship with Uganda to provide more prosperity and security. US government committed to continue serving Ugandans without discrimination. She stressed the vulnerable groups like Sex Workers, people who inject with drugs, Prisoners and others still felt discriminated against and it hindered access to life saving treatment and care.

She emphasized that promoting community leadership was key in ensuring all people are served and PEPFAR had invested heavily in community Led monitoring and community focused approaches. She recognized all partners and Local government efforts to serve the people and emphasized local ownership. PEPFAR would continue to supporting testing, treatment and other essential interventions to the population of Uganda.

6.1.7 Remarks from the UN Resident Coordinator Her Excellence Susan Ngongi Namondo



UN resident Country Coordinator delivering the message to the participants, she called upon the country to embrace programmes that impact the Adolescents Girls and enrollment of young people in schools

I. The UN Country Director expressed her gratitude to be part of the Candle Light Memorial event in Hoima City and emphasized that Candle Light Memorial provided an opportunity for reflecting on the efforts to ending AIDS and reaffirm our commitment for Uganda to be free of HIV.

II. She recognized very profoundly the historical leadership of His Excellence the President of the Republic of Uganda and the role he played in the struggle against HIV. She recognized that adolescent pregnancy, HIV infections, AIDS related death had gone down and she congratulated Uganda.

III. She refocused Ugandans to a country and future we all look forward to having AIDS free Uganda and called for doing more, making sure we turn off the tap of new infections undermining progress of the country.

IV. She reflected that new infections were becoming more rampant among adolescent girls and young women, about 4/5 adolescent girls, teen pregnancy conceiving and giving birth to babies while not on treatment. She emphasized the need to protect the young girls, prevent a young child giving birth to a child. “A child who gets a child is not human capital that we need”.

V. While focusing on prevention, she called upon leaders to put in place mechanisms of reaching people with the right messages and support. She noted that 4/5 infected with HIV are young girls who are not easy to find but every effort was necessary to find these girls. She called upon leaders to be very intentional since when following her up since she is under a lot of influence from all corners.

VI. She called upon all leaders to reach out to all positive and negative young people, ensure they are given basic facts about HIV and AIDS in languages they best understand. She added that the biggest protection to give a girl child is to keep her in school, as she’s influenced by a lot of peer groups, different platforms and messages that cannot change or be diverted from them.

VII. In addition, she noted that since Hoima City is growing and destined for greatness, a lot was going on, new bars, brothels, coming up, road construction and oil and gas activities, a lot of money, there are many risks that could propel new infections and a lot of effort is needed to add up for change in fighting against HIV.

VIII. She called upon all leadership and stakeholders in Hoima to put in place what is necessary to support the communities and eliminate exclusion. More messages, more services more information were necessary to ensure the population is engaging to enable reach the end we need. She cautioned that having an influx of more people, more workers could also lead to trafficking, she called upon the security agencies to ensure all criminal activities that lead us to more HIV infections are really stopped.

IX. She called upon to do more and giving attention to the Anti Homo Sexuality Act which was likely to lead people into the shadows and every effort would be made to ensure it does not happen.

X. In conclusion, she recognized much had been done and much more needed to be done to ensure more effective prevention to close fueling the disease, work more on stigma and contribute to the socio-economic transformation as desired. She emphasized commitment by the UN family to work with the government of Uganda and all stakeholders to attain Uganda that is free of HIV.

6.1.8 Remarks from Chairperson HIV Committee of Parliament



Chairperson HIV Committee Hon Sarah Natasalire Kayagi delivering the messages on behalf of the HIV Committee, she called up for greater involvement of men in the HIV fight and strengthening the Multisectorial Approach to achieve the PFTI Objectives

Dr. Ruyonga Joseph the Area Member of Parliament remarks

I. In his remarks he appreciated His Excellence the President of the Republic of Uganda for being the champion in fighting HIV/AIDS in the country.

II. He observed that Hoima City has a prevalence of 6.7%, and urged implementing partners to have targeted interventions so as to reduce on this high prevalence rates in the region. He

requested young girls to be vigilant about HIV/AIDS, by having an HIV test, being faithful and those on treatment to adhere on ART.

III. He further noted that as a country, Candle light was a great day to celebrate our heroes and reflect on how to manage and treat HIV/AIDS as the country focused on zero new infections towards Ending AIDS by 2030.

6.1.9 Remarks by Sarah Kayagi, Chair Parliamentary AIDS Committee

I. Hon Sarah Kayagi the Chairperson HIV Parliamentary Committee recognized the importance of the Candle Light Memorial day, and the efforts of the National Forum for People Living with HIV in Uganda (NAFOPHANU), Dr Watiti and others as heroes that had helped to educate other Ugandans that it is possible to age gracefully and live productive lives.

II. She called upon the religious leaders to utilize their Pastoral Letter to reach their congregants which practice they had stopped. She recognized their pivotal role and platforms they have and requested for the Pastoral letter to be returned to the sanctuaries.

IV. She appealed for increase of financial support to Uganda AIDS Commission, she emphasized that the money was being put in the budget but Uganda AIDS Commission was not receiving it. She requested the guest of Honor to make recommendations that money given to Uganda AIDS Commission to be accessed was actually not seen on paper, so that they could implement their work and be appreciated.

V. She further urged all district CAOs and Town Clerks to allocate the 0.1% of their total budget to HIV/AIDS to facilitate implementation of mainstreaming guidelines.

VII. Appreciated the ADPs for the support they had rendered to Uganda in the fight against HIV and appealed them to continue supporting Ugandans with support. She emphasized that there is no law that was enacted to prevent any Ugandan from accessing services and the commitment to serve Ugandans as enshrined in the constitution was emphasized.

VIII. She finally made an appeal to parents who she said had given up their parental roles and turned the girls into providers for the family by selling themselves and appealed to them to ensure they provided and kept their children in school as one of the safest ways of HIV prevention by keeping safe from things that lure them into catching HIV.

IX. She called upon the population to take the HIV test to know their status, enroll if one is positive, adhere to treatment to reach the undetectable levels. The call was more to the men who had been hiding too much and called upon them to go and test and know their status since statistics has shown they were dying more.

XI. She and her team pledged to the vision of ending HIV/AIDS by 2030 through HIV testing, care and treatment, adherence to treatment, viral load suppression, Ending stigma and Discrimination.

6.1.10 Speech from Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocerro Minister of Health

Dr. Robert Mutumba the Program Manager for AIDS Control Program at Ministry of Health represented the Minister of Health Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng and read her speech as follows;

Dr. Ruth noted that the Candle Light reminded Ugandans of the lives lost to the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS and each flicker of light represented a story, a memory, a loved one dearly missed.

She stressed that the Candle Light Day was meant to reignite the flame of hope that would guide relentless efforts that one day AIDS would be no more, those effected and the infected would persevere, and that discrimination against HIV positive individuals would be eradicated and child headed families torn apart by HIV AIDS would find solace and support and that no more children would be left orphans to the epidemic.

She noted Uganda had Joined hands with the global community in remembrance with the theme pointing to Ending AIDS by 2030 Keeping communities at the Center being a commitment and a call to action to end AIDS.

She observed that Uganda had made good progress in the fight against AIDS. 81% of the PLHIV knew their status which was a crucial step to care and treatment, 94% of those were aware of their status were on ARVs, improving their quality of life. She also noted that the country had witnessed a decline in new HIV infections and HIV related deaths over the years although we had not all reached our 2025 global UNAIDS targets.

The Hon. Minister noted that Uganda's prevention approach continued to be steadfast as we continued to prioritize primary intervention, expanding HIV testing services, promoting behavior change, safe male circumcision, condom promotion and ARVS based intervention such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. Care and treatment interventions were being integrated into the broad health care system addressing Non Communicable Diseases, mental health, metabolic disorders alongside advanced disease.

She noted that despite the efforts about 1.45m people were living with HIV despite all our efforts but government remained undeterred in our commitment to provide prevention services such as Adolescent young girls and women, Key populations, dedicated clinics and drop in centers had been put to serve young people and vulnerable populations.

PMTCT remained our priority for all mothers and children. Success had been seen in mother high testing rates, attending antenatal care, enrollment of treatment for pregnant mothers and reduced positivity rates among the babies. More individuals were being enrolled on ART regiments.

It was also noted that over 1.3 million people living with HIV were not on treatment and were failing to suppress their viral load. The government was rolling out integrated service care ensuring reaching individuals in need of HIV services. The Ministry of Health was preparing for the upcoming national UPHIA 2024/25 that would provide findings to guide efforts to combat the epidemic effectively by 2030.

In this endeavor people living with HIV were the champions and engaging them through planning meetings and activities harnessed their voices to mobilize communities, through platforms like peer groups, TV, social media they share their stories promoting awareness and defeating stigma.

She appreciated holding of the Candle Light in Hoima city that is at the center of Bunyoro sub-region whose HIV prevalence rate was at 6.7% above the national average. She noted that Bunyoro faced unique challenges as a result of the rapid transformation through economic transformation driven by infrastructural development and migration that posed a risk of new HIV infections, emergency of hot spots, misleading messages from certain religious and cultural beliefs that further complicated government efforts.

The Hon Minister appreciated the leadership given by His Excellence the President of Uganda General Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for his remarkable leadership and Rt Hon Prime Minister in the fight against HIV in Uganda. The Partners PEPFAR, Global Fund, UN Agencies and others were greatly appreciated for their unwavering support that had fueled Uganda's resolve.

She appreciated each stakeholder for their effort and support in the fight together for an HIV free Uganda a world where HIV would be a distant memory.

6.1.11 Speech by Hon. Jennifer Namuyangu Kacha State Minister Bunyoro Affairs



The Hon Minister for Bunyoro Affairs appreciated the 3 days she had spent in the Region at the Radio, Regional Workshop where she spoke about the issues affecting the region including HIV and AIDS prevalence that was about the National Average.

She also recognized that Bunyoro had got a lot of developments like drilling of oil in Bulisa and Kikuube and an International Airport, hosting AFCON in 2026 were all good developments but they come with challenges.

She called for support from ADPs to continue supporting Bunyoro to overcome HIV challenge, called upon all leaders to always utilize every opportunity to remind the people that HIV was still a problem.

She called upon leaders to emulate the example of the President who did not look at HIV as a shame like other countries. She appreciated and recognized the Champions for their relentless efforts to sensitize the communities and enabled to understand that we can defeat HIV and AIDS in Uganda.

6.1.12 Remarks by Director General Uganda AIDS Commission



Ag. Director General Dr. Vincent Bagambe making remarks during the Candle Light Commemoration in Hoima City at Boma Grounds. He called upon all the stakeholders to consolidate and strengthen the PFTI implementation to achieve the epidemic control by 2030 in Uganda.

The Ag. Director General appreciated all the invited guests and participants for presiding and attending the Candle Light Commemoration 2024. He thanked the leadership of Hoima City for accepting to host the event and all participants for supporting the preparations. He further gave the brief about Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) which was established by an Act of Parliament (Cap 208) with the mandate to oversee, plan and coordinate HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control interventions throughout Uganda. In June 2017, H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda launched the Presidential Fast Track Initiative (PFTI) towards ending AIDS

as a Public Health Threat by 2030. UAC has since been coordinating stakeholders to implement this Presidential Directive.

The Ag. Director General further mentioned the significant progress made by the country in the fight against HIV and AIDS, reducing the HIV prevalence from 18% in the 1990s to 5.1% today. Currently, about 90% of the 1.43 million people living with HIV in Uganda know their positive HIV status and of these, 94% are on the lifesaving ARVs. AIDS related deaths have declined by 60% from 56,000 in 2010 to 17,000, while new HIV infections declined by 45% from 94,000 to 52,000.

He mentioned that there are variations in the HIV burden born by different sub-population groups, across all the regions of the Country. It is unfair that the epidemic affects most especially adolescent girls and young women, and the less privileged members of society.

The Ag. DG stated that in 2023, about 6.8 million HIV tests were carried out in the country and the majority of those diagnosed HIV positive were linked to ART centres and are receiving treatment. Over 98% of HIV positive pregnant mothers receive ART, and 93% are virally suppressed.

He singled out the HIV burden in the Bunyoro region was not the highest in the country but given the unique circumstances and dynamics, the region requires special focus. Yesterday, we attended a regional stakeholders' meeting at the District Council Hall at which, many of the risk factors that are fuelling the epidemic in this region were well articulated. These are population dynamics occasioned by socio-economic development opportunities, and the related population migration dynamics (road construction works, Oil & Gas projects, plantation workers, fisher folks and refugees). All these, when looked at from the economic point of view, are good but if not well planned for and addressed early can cause societal pressures that indeed fuel the HIV epidemic. The stigma and discrimination, gender based violence and unequal access to economic opportunities were all well-articulated by different speakers. There was consensus between the leaders of local governments and the implementers on the priorities to focus on the available resources in order to End AIDS as a Public Health Threat.

In addition, he said Uganda has a set of cost-effective priority interventions well-articulated in the National HIV and AIDS strategic plan and to ensure that stakeholders align their activities to the national priorities, UAC has taken many approaches some of which deserve mention here;

- a. **HIV Prevention messages:** H.E the President has consistently tasked us as leaders to reach out to his Bazukkulu with HIV and AIDS prevention messages. On behalf of the Board and Director General of UAC, he called upon all the people present; cultural and religious leaders, district and city officials, the media, youths leaders to spread the message about HIV prevention, using all the platforms availed to help people acquire knowledge on HIV prevention and treatment services. He appealed to District leaders to ensure PLHIV access government programs fighting poverty.

- b. **Mainstreaming HIV in all MDAs and DLGs plans:** Hon Minister in line with PFTI Pillar #4, UAC has since June 2018 supported MDAs and DLGs to mainstream HIV in their development programs. Each year, MoFPED issues a BCC in which clear guidance is given to MDAs and DLGs to allocate 0.1% of their budget towards HIV Mainstreaming interventions. UAC is always available to support districts to ensure the allocated resources are well-utilized for interventions aligned to the NSP priorities.
- c. **Accreditation of Civil Society Organizations;** the UAC Regulations require that all NGOs and CBOs providing HIV services apply and get accredited by UAC. An online tool was developed and all districts have been sensitized to follow up and ensure that all CSOs serving in their areas of jurisdiction are accredited. **The purpose of this approach is to ensure that NGOs and CSOs implement activities prioritised in the NSP.** This financial year has been largely for sensitization (already over 30 CSOs have been accredited). FY 2024/25 will be for full implementation

7.0 HEALTH SERVICE PROVISION, EXHIBITIONS AND EDUTAINMENT

The UAC engaged different stakeholders during the Pre-event and on the Candle Light Memorial event, these were meant to amplify the HIV messages and offer services to the general population as we move towards ending AIDS by 2030.

Hoima City in partnership with Uganda AIDS Commission and Baylor Uganda the leading Implementing Partner in the region, organized a Health Camp from 15th – 17th May 2024. The Camp was held in the different regions of Hoima City including Kiswaza Sugar Plantation in Kikube district, Kigorobya in Hoima district, Kiryatete Bad Street, Duhaga Roundabout, Hoima Central Market in Hoima City. Among the services offered included: HIV Counselling and Testing, Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment, Condom Distribution and Programming, Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision, Blood Donation and Emergency services were readily available at the venue.

The health service providers who were mobilized both at National and subnational level included AIDS Information Centre, UPDF, Human Diagnostics Uganda, Baylor Uganda, TASO, Hoima City Health Workers, Red Cross and Hoima Blood Bank. Below is the summary of the services offered and numbers reached per service.

S/N	SERVICE	TOTAL NUMBER	FEMALE	MALE
	HIV TESTING AND COUNSELING	1,238	721	517
	POSITIVES	26	17	9
	KNOWN POSITIVES	8		
	NEW POSITIVES	18		

	CONDOMS DISTRIBUTED	1 CARTON
	BLOOD DONATION	178 UNITS

7.1 Exhibitions

This year’s Candlelight Commemoration was graced with different MDAs, CSOs and Private Sector Organizations who showcased and exhibited the different products, and IEC materials produced on HIV and AIDS. The MDAs showcased the different interventions, reports, and IEC materials that they have been able to implement and produce following the 0.1% allocation as a way of mainstreaming HIV and AIDS. Among the MDAs that participated included: Uganda AIDS Commission, Judicial Service Commission, Uganda Law Reform Commission, Uganda Registration Service Bureau, State House, Uganda National Roads Authority and National Water and Sewerage Corporation. In the same vein, the different CSOs and Private Sector showcased and exhibited the new innovations, interventions and IEC materials produced in a bid to end AIDS by 2030. They showcased different items that they produce from the different skilling programs that they offer to adolescents and other PLHIV networks for economic empowerment. The CSOs and Private sector organizations included AIC, TASO, Baylor Uganda, UGANET, ICWEA, FOCAGIFO, Barbara Kemigisha Foundation, Yambala 4me, RHU, Catholic Women Network, Devine Women Group, Bunyoro Women Development Network, Hoima Forum of PLHIV Network, Rowans Down Syndrome, Support for Integrated Health Care Initiative.

7.2 Exhibition and Health Service Provision in Pictures



HIV counselling and testing, condom distribution on going at Kiryatete Bad Street and at Hoima City Market cell.



The Minister in charge of the Presidency, Rt. Hon. Milly Babirye Babalanda visiting a stall organized by Uganda AIDS Commission during the Candlelight Memorial Day Commemoration at Boma Grounds, Hoima City.



Minister in Charge of Presidency at Judicial Service Commission Exhibition Stall in Hoima. These exhibitions demonstrated the progress and work done by the stakeholders in the disseminating the HIV information and economic empowerment

7.3 Edutainment and People's space

In the Peoples Space, a poem on HIV was presented by Young Positive, she presented on how she overcame stigma and discrimination to be able and meaningfully indicating the myths around it, how it weakens the body yet was often mistaken to be witchcraft. She emphasized that the 2030 target of ending AIDS as a public health threat is a call to show love, to promote adherence for sustainability, being compassionate and ending HIV stigma. She stressed that commemoration of the Candle Memorial is a call to take HIV testing seriously, abstain, avoid risky behavior, alcohol, substance abuse and other risky behavior. She called upon raising the banner of communication and sharing of messages through Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) to effectively reach the young people.



Other groups that presented special messages through Music, Dance and drama during the commemoration were the Challengers, Barbara Kemigisa Foundation

8.0 BEST PRACTICES

1. Multi-sectoral team engagement at national and subnational levels executed the event successfully
2. Integration of the HIV and other services within the communities helped in the uptake of HIV testing
3. Use of the mass media in rallying the communities online and physically made the event successful
4. Social cooperate responsibilities from MDAs and Private Sector contributed and impacted on the event
5. Efficient and effective community structures to deliver on Candle Light message with little or no investment approach e.g Light the Candle approach.
6. The timely launch of the event at a ministerial level created great impact in publicity
7. A clear message that resonated with the audience
8. Committed team of stakeholders and associated agencies eg UNOC, UNRA, MICT and NG, Private Sector, Media etc etc

9.0 CHALLENGES

1. Stigma and discrimination among the communities still high
2. Limited funding to support the many planned activities
3. Media participation beyond Press Conference and at the event, it would have been good to have more Radio Spots to help create a vibe.
4. A campaign period to create awareness needs to be planned, 4 weeks in the public domain poses a risk. The message could be drowned by 'bigger news' case in point - the announcement of the new IGP on Friday 17th May 2024 diverted the potential coverage.
5. Low turn up of expected participants due to many conflicting engagements by MDAs and LGs and holiday program since schools had already closed.

10.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue employing the multisectoral approach at national and subnational levels to coordinate and execute the advocacy events
2. Scale up the pre-event activities and building up the robust high impact interventions that create publicity and awareness to the communities eg media, youth engagement, private engagements, reactivations of HIV services
3. Using different multiple media forums to disseminate and reach the communities with HIV prevention messages across the country

4. Scale up Media participation beyond Press Conference during the event and employ mechanisms like radio spots and DJ mentions to help create a vibe
5. Candle Light Memorial as an advocacy event increases visibility of the work that is done in the fight against HIV and should always be utilized to hype up and share information.
6. UAC has to bring on board key Media Influencers. A message from radio personalities in time could be very helpful in publicity.
7. Integration of the advocacy events with other events e.g the Rotary Cancer, TB and others
8. UAC to create links to the websites of organizations that participated in the Candle Light Memorial to access the report and other updates.

ANNEX 1. MEDIA FORUMS

1. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

1. https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/hoima-hosts-candle-light-memorial-day-NV_188216
2. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/nmg-commemorates-international-aids-candlelight-memorial-4626320>
3. <https://softpower.ug/hoima-to-host-international-candlelight-memorial-day/>
4. https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/dr-watiti-reflects-on-decades-long-battle-wit-NV_187831#google_vignette
5. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dorothykisaka1936_i-celebrate-my-dear-brother-dr-stephen-watiti-activity-7197668160005672960-7a3x
6. <https://www.freemannewsug.com/2024/05/lets-always-endeavor-to-give-help-to.html>
7. <https://mulengeranews.com/kccas-kisaka-challenges-fellow-elites-lets-write-books-lets-document-our-life-story/>
8. https://www.bukedde.co.ug/politics/NV_187831/dr-watiti-reflects-on-decades-long-battle-wit
9. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/medics-worry-over-low-uptake-of-arvs-4631714>
10. <https://www.watchdoguganda.com/news/20240508/168303/hoima-city-to-host-the-international-hiv-aids-candlelight-memorial-day.html>
11. <https://nilepost.co.ug/news/198635/kampala-has-highest-hiv-prevalence-in-uganda>
12. <https://nilepost.co.ug/health/198799/hoima-city-to-host-this-year-s-international-candlelight-memorial>
13. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/uncircumcised-divorced-men-contributors-of-new-hiv-infections-aids-commission-4616404>
14. https://www.bukedde.co.ug/celebrating-life/NV_187500/adolescents-former-marrieds-driving-hiv-infec
15. <https://poatvuganda.com/govt-calls-for-renewed-vigilance-and-solidarity-in-the-fight-against-hiv-aids>

2. TV News Links

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRbQ2Kqu3Fo>- The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial day (Kabalega TV)

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yifKKEpn0> HIV/AIDS Candlelight Memorial at MUST (EYIT TV)
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oOSdF5Wgpo> - Candlelight Memorial Day (May 17th 2024). Ending AIDS by (Family TV)
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBvsxDPjYBI-NTV> - Government tasks locals to continue fight against HIV (NTV)
5. https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FTpqwpV_nHU&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.newvision.co.ug%2F&feature=emb_imp_woyt- Agabuutikidde ABA UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION BALUMYE ...(Bukedde TV)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frhUy0055-c> - GIRLS LEAD IN NEW HIV INFECTIONS (BBEG TV)
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lyz17LXRnCI>- AIDS commission decries Bunyoro HIV infection rate (NTV)

3. SOCIAL MEDIA

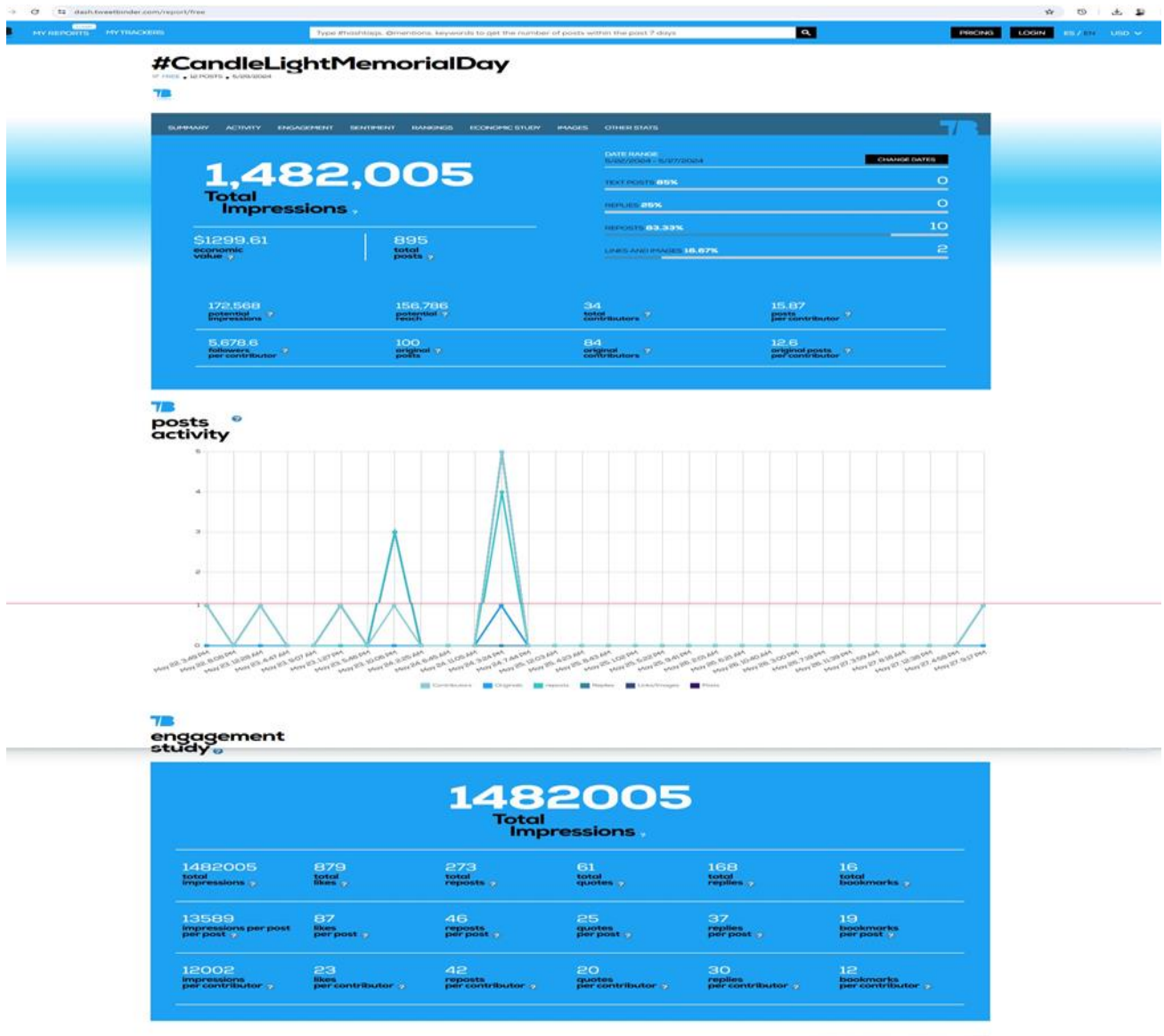
INTERNATIONAL CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL – SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS REPORT

LINK	NUMBER OF VIEWS	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS
1. https://x.com/TASOUganda/status/1791435568359829707	<u>644</u>	<u>5,530</u>
2. https://x.com/UNOC_UG/status/1791448227402617001	<u>2,466</u>	<u>25,900</u>
3. https://x.com/aronmwesigwa2/status/1791032494118039593	<u>3,771</u>	<u>11,300</u>
4. https://x.com/CocaColaBevUg/status/1791386742269837738	<u>835</u>	<u>22,800</u>
5. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1791393907898519623	<u>427</u>	<u>7,620</u>
6. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1791424035684798805	<u>805</u>	<u>7,620</u>
7. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1791470818154701126	<u>872</u>	<u>7,620</u>
8. https://x.com/ComedyStoreUG/status/1791471807221878816	<u>1,338</u>	<u>116,400</u>
9. https://x.com/WatitiStephen/status/1791369544134509000	<u>1,407</u>	<u>1,405</u>
10. https://x.com/UNYPA1/status/1790677420116148712	<u>863</u>	<u>11,100</u>
11. https://x.com/UNOC_UG/status/1790664560480788851	<u>5,541</u>	<u>25,900</u>

12. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1791029475590738153	<u>1,112</u>	<u>7,620</u>
13. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1788128964927467726	<u>1,789</u>	<u>7,620</u>
14. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1790311075503657135	<u>1,386</u>	<u>7,620</u>
15. https://x.com/aidscommission/status/1790619004828090852	<u>1,372</u>	<u>7,620</u>
16. <u>Century Bottling Company which has 22,800 Followers mainly young and trendsetting</u>		
17. https://x.com/CocaColaBevUg/status/179138674226983773		
18. <u>Private Sector Federation Uganda which has 20,400 Followers mainly corporates,</u>		<u>20,400</u>
19. <u>organizations, and SMEs in Uganda</u>		
20. https://x.com/PSF_Uganda/status/179137729712082140		
21. <u>Baylor Uganda has 2,350 Followers mainly in the Medical and HIV sector</u> https://x.com/bayloruganda/status/1791041486869418290		<u>2,350</u>
22. <u>Taso Uganda – which has followers is one of the leading HIV thought leaders</u> https://x.com/TASOUganda/status/1791435568359829707		<u>5,516</u>
23. <u>DFCU Bank with a following of 29,400 followers and the 5th largest Bank in the country strong on women empowerment</u> https://x.com/dfcugroup/status/1791451529821438203		<u>29,400</u>
24. <u>Uganda National Oil Company UNOC with 25,800 followers is the government agency</u>		<u>25,800</u>
25. <u>in charge of managing the operations at the oil fields in Uganda. Their account is</u>		
26. <u>followed by many local and global agencies</u>		
27. https://x.com/UNOC_UG/status/1792074533375242682		
28. <u>Umeme which has 324,600 followers has by the nature of their service an impact on our lives and has a diverse complement of followers</u>		<u>324,600</u>
29. https://x.com/UmemeLtd/status/1791486544387178772		
30. <u>Daily Monitor is a leading daily newspaper with 1,700,000 followers – policy leaders,</u>		
31. <u>corporate and educational readers and has over 20,000 daily sales reaching over 200,000</u>		<u>1,700,000</u>

32. readers not to mention the millions online

33. <https://x.com/DailyMonitor/status/1792499265228419313>





Engaging men at the place of work by Private Sector Secretariat in Bwendwero Dairy Farm Limited in Hoima



Pre-Candle Light Memorial support to the PLHIV Camp Fire with support from Kinyara Sugar Masindi

LIST OF ALL PARTNERS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE CANDLE LIGHT MEMORIAL MAY 2024