



UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



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FOREWORD

Uganda has made remarkable strides in addressing the HIV epidemic, reducing new infections, and improving access to treatment. This progress is a testament to the relentless efforts of government agencies, development partners, civil society organizations, and the resilience of individuals living with HIV. The fight against HIV/AIDS remains one of the most critical public health challenges of our time. Since 2022 the Uganda AIDS Commission has been organizing annual National HIV and AIDS Symposiums to reflect on the progress made in meeting national and global targets against the epidemic. The Symposium also provides an opportunity to share findings from research and studies on HIV.

The 2024 annual National HIV and AIDS Symposium, brought together diverse stakeholders to review progress, share innovations, and identify strategies for achieving an AIDS-free generation under the theme *“Accelerating Interventions Towards Ending AIDS by 2030,”*.

This report captures the highlights and key outcomes of the symposium, including the National Financing Dialogue, the presentation of the Annual Joint AIDS Review Report, the Partnership Forum and the commemoration of the Philly Lutaaya Memorial. These events showcased Uganda’s continued commitment to combating HIV and AIDS through scientific research, community engagement, and sustainable financing mechanisms.

As we move into the final year of the Third National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (2020/21–2024/25), this report underscores the importance of partnerships and the need to address critical gaps, such as stigma, youth-targeted interventions, and financial sustainability. It also serves as a call to action for all stakeholders to redouble their efforts in support of the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all participants and contributors who made the symposium a success. Your dedication and collaboration are vital as we work together to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Together, let us build on these achievements and continue the journey toward a healthier, more equitable future for all.

For God and my country.



Canon Dr. Ruth Senyonyi
CHAIRPERSON, UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The 2024 National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium served as a vital platform for the nation to evaluate its progress toward achieving the 95-95-95 targets outlined in the National Strategic Plan, as well as the ambitious goal of ending AIDS by 2030. This Symposium featured four major components: the dissemination of the annual Joint AIDS Review Report, the Scientific Meeting, a Financing Dialogue, and the Philly Lutaaya Memorial. These activities provided an opportunity to reflect on accomplishments, share scientific advancements, and explore sustainable financing solutions to accelerate the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The success of the 2024 National HIV and AIDS Symposium is a testament to the collective efforts of numerous individuals and organizations. On behalf of the Commission and on my own behalf I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed their time, expertise, and resources to make this endeavor possible.

My deepest appreciation goes to the Organizing Committee and the Secretariat at the Uganda AIDS Commission for organizing the symposium and fostering a collaborative platform to advance Uganda's HIV response. Special thanks to the Office of the President for hosting the symposium and providing unwavering support throughout its planning and execution. I would like to thank the Ministries of Health, Education, Gender, Labor and Social Development for your participation during the entire process of the Symposium.

We are grateful to our development partners, including PEPFAR, UNAIDS, UNFPA, Quality Chemical and other stakeholders, for their generous financial and technical support. Your commitment to the cause has been instrumental in achieving the goals of this event.

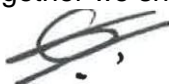
To the dignitaries, keynote speakers, panelists, researchers, and presenters, we extend our deepest appreciation for sharing your knowledge, insights, and innovative solutions. Your contributions have enriched the discussions and provided actionable recommendations for future interventions.

A special thanks to the various committees, whose dedication and meticulous planning ensured the smooth running of the symposium. Your tireless efforts are deeply valued.

Finally, we acknowledge the participants, including representatives from civil society organizations, government ministries, local governments, academia, and people living with HIV. Your active engagement and input have been pivotal in shaping the outcomes of this event.

As we strive towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, we remain inspired by the spirit of collaboration demonstrated during this symposium.

Together we shall end AIDS as a public health problem by 2030



Dr. Nelson Musoba
DIRECTOR GENERAL, UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) annually organizes the National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium, a platform that brings together institutions, organizations, and stakeholders to review progress, share achievements, explore innovations, and address challenges in the national HIV response. The 2024 symposium featured two pivotal events; the Financing Dialogue held on November 12th and the Scientific Symposium conducted on November 13th. This year marks the fourth year of implementing the Third National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (2020/21–2024/25). The Symposium was held under the theme **“Accelerating Interventions Towards Ending AIDS by 2030.”**

The symposium brought together different experts, including HIV specialists, scientists, economists, industrialists, and political leaders. Participants evaluated progress toward national and global HIV commitments and developed strategies to expedite epidemic control while sustaining the gains achieved. The Financing Dialogue emphasized the urgent need for financial sustainability in HIV treatment, particularly for antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and rapid diagnostic tests, as Uganda advances efforts to establish a national roadmap for HIV response sustainability beyond 2030. Meanwhile, the Scientific Symposium focused on identifying bottlenecks in achieving epidemic control and addressing gaps in the HIV response.

The event also included the presentation of the annual Joint AIDS Review report, which highlighted achievements and challenges. Additionally, a scientific meeting was held where research findings were shared, showcasing innovations that could inform future HIV response interventions. The event also featured the Philly Lutaaya Memorial where a key note address was made in eulogizing the Late Philly Lutaaya as one of the first pioneers in fighting HIV stigma and discrimination. During the event the Partnership Forum received and adopted the Aide Memoire that highlighted interventions to be undertaken in the final year of the national HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan.

Presentations made during the Symposium can be found in the following link <https://nhas2024.uac.go.ug/index.php/mega/powerful-features/bootstrap-4>.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Uganda has made significant progress in its HIV response, reducing HIV prevalence, new infections, and AIDS-related deaths. This progress is attributed to a multisectoral approach and strong support from development partners. However, challenges persist, including unacceptably high rates of new infections, particularly among young people. The country's HIV response funding heavily relies on development partners, who contribute approximately 80% of the total funding.

Uganda is now in the fourth year of its Third National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan, which aims to achieve the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. Each year, UAC conducts a Joint AIDS Review to assess the plan's implementation and identify priority interventions for the subsequent year through an aide-mémoire.

The Commission also leads the annual commemoration of the Philly Lutaaya Memorial, honoring the late Philly Lutaaya, one of the first public figures in Uganda to disclose their HIV-positive status. Additionally, promoting and supporting HIV-related research is a key mandate of the Commission. Scientific research plays a vital role in informing policy and programming for the HIV response. Several studies conducted in Uganda have significantly shaped strategies and policies. The Commission held its first scientific symposium in 2022 bringing together scientists and researchers to showcase their findings and innovations.

To enhance the impact of the Scientific Symposium, the UAC has integrated other key events, including the dissemination of the Joint AIDS Review report, the Philly Lutaaya Memorial, the Partnership Forum, and the Financing Dialogue. This year marks the third edition of the integrated National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium, which has successfully fostered collaboration and enriched discussions to advance Uganda's HIV response.

2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL HIV AND AIDS SYMPOSIUM

Purpose

The main purpose of the Symposium was to share achievements made in the attainment of the country's targets towards HIV epidemic control and the 2030 goal of Ending AIDS as a Public Health threat.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze and discuss critical factors and processes for achieving sustainable HIV financing in Uganda
2. To review performance during the fourth year of the National Strategic Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 including dissemination of progress on implementation of undertakings of the Aide Memoire, JAR 2023

3. To provide a platform for scientists and other stakeholders in the HIV programming to share promising or breakthrough HIV implementation science
4. Showcase the HIV and AIDS coordination services and share best practices
5. Commemorate Philly Lutaaya Day for HIV increased awareness
6. Undertake the Partnership forum to agree on undertakings for implementation in FY 2024/25.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The two events were organized in a conference format, ensuring an engaging and inclusive experience for the participants. The Finance Dialogue took place in an outdoor setting under a spacious tent, accommodating both in-person and virtual participants. Presentations and speeches were delivered in a plenary session, followed by a question-and-answer segment to foster interaction and feedback. A panel discussion featuring a diverse group of experts, including scientists, policymakers, civil society representatives, and development partners, explored the funding landscape for the HIV response in Uganda.

The Scientific Symposium was conducted in an auditorium within the Office of the Presidency, accommodating both physical and online participants. The event featured several plenary presentations by speakers who shared insights and findings relevant to the national HIV response. A panel discussion provided a deeper analysis of the annual Joint AIDS Review report, complemented by question-and-answer sessions throughout the program to encourage active audience engagement.

The Philly Lutaaya Memorial incorporated artistic and cultural elements to eulogize emotionally with the audience. Musical performances and poetry were conducted by various artists and entertainers creating memories and legacy of the Late Philly Lutaaya. Additionally, video clips featuring HIV awareness messages and personal testimonies were showcased to reinforce the key themes of the memorial and inspire continued commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

3.0 THE NATIONAL FINANCING DIALOGUE

This year's Financing Dialogue was the third and was held on 12th November at the Quality Chemical Industries Limited in Luzira Kampala and was co-hosted by Uganda AIDS Commission and Uganda Quality Chemical Limited. The dialogue brought together experts from government, development partners, civil society, and the private sector to analyze and discuss critical factors and processes for achieving sustainable HIV financing in Uganda. This dialogue emphasized the urgent need to address the financial sustainability of HIV treatment commodities, particularly antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and rapid diagnostic tests, as the country advances efforts to develop a national roadmap for HIV response sustainability beyond 2030 and beyond. The event comes at a pivotal moment as Uganda navigates the transition from donor-led to domestically funded and government-led management of the HIV response. The HIV Financing Dialogue, co-hosted by the Uganda AIDS Commission and Quality Chemical Industries Limited (QCIL), provided a platform for stakeholders to deliberate on strategies for sustaining Uganda's HIV response. The event featured keynote speeches, presentations, and panel discussions that addressed critical issues, including local manufacturing, sustainable financing, and the development of high-level outcomes.



Panelists at the National HIV Financing Dialogue

The Dialogue was attended by a total of 126 participants from the private sector, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Civil Society and the HIV response program beneficiaries.

3.1 OPENING REMARKS

The dialogue commenced with opening remarks from Dr. Vincent Bagambe, representing the Director General of the Uganda AIDS Commission. Dr. Bagambe provided a comprehensive overview of Uganda's progress in combating HIV/AIDS and outlined the objectives and expected outcomes of the dialogue. These included policy recommendations, high-level supply chain outcomes, and priorities for the National Strategic Plan (NSP) development. He highlighted Uganda's significant achievements in reducing HIV infections and increasing access to treatment, while underscoring the urgent need for sustained financing to preserve these gains.

In the same spirit, Dr. Ruth Ssenyonyi, Chairperson of the Uganda AIDS Commission Board, reinforced these points in her remarks, calling for uninterrupted treatment for People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and prioritizing access to affordable HIV commodities.

3.2 KEYNOTE ADDRESS

A keynote address was delivered by Mr. George Baguma, Co-founder of Quality Chemical Industries Limited (Qcil), focusing on HIV and AIDS investment projections. Mr. Baguma highlighted some of Qcil's milestones so far, including obtaining World Health Organization prequalification, which allows the company to supply HIV drugs (ARVs) to 13 African countries, and the development of four (4) new manufacturing plants, including one for long acting injectables. He outlined the challenges faced by local manufacturers, such as low economies of scale, regulatory hurdles, limited technology transfer, and market dumping. Despite these challenges, Qcil has made notable contributions, including training pharmacists to address knowledge gaps through three-month internship placements and a one-year graduate trainee program that attracts 20 participants annually. Additionally, Qcil has introduced cost-sharing models in collaboration with the Global Fund to enhance affordability and accessibility of essential medicines specifically for the malaria drugs.

Mr. Baguma recommended several strategies to finance Uganda's HIV response, including facilitating smooth donor transitions, introducing sin taxes on alcohol and cigarettes, establishing a national health insurance scheme, and strengthening partnerships with private sector manufacturers.

3.3 THE HIV RESPONSE SUSTAINABILITY ROADMAP

The facilitators spearheading the development of the HIV Response Sustainability Roadmap delivered a comprehensive presentation detailing high-level outcomes (HLOs) and pathways for

sustainable financing. The presentation addressed key areas, including financing for health technologies, procurement and supply chain systems, and laboratory services, categorized under the domain of services and solutions. Additionally, it highlighted the financing aspects within the systems domain and the equitable and sustainable financing domain. A key takeaway emphasized the urgent need to explore innovative funding mechanisms to sustain and enhance the progress achieved in Uganda's HIV response.



Participants at the Financing Dialogue

The panel discussion examined the conditions and requirements necessary for local manufacturers to thrive and scale up the production of HIV commodities. These commodities would not only serve the needs of the People Living with HIV (PLHIV) community but also include other products that could benefit the broader population and potentially reach international markets. Panelists examined best practices, lessons learned, and policy recommendations to foster a conducive environment for local production.

The Executive Director Qcil, Mr. Ajay Kumar, shared their experience of maintaining uninterrupted drug supply during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the critical role of local manufacturing in ensuring resilience. Some of the challenges he highlighted included a lack of enabling environment, inadequate financing ecosystems, and restrictive export/import policies. Some of the proposed solutions included training clinical pharmacists, fostering collaborations with regional entities, and attracting equity investments to reduce production costs and diversify manufacturing capacity.

Dr. Medard Bitekyerezo, Chairperson of the National Drug Authority (NDA), detailed strategies being implemented by the NDA to support local manufacturers. Some of them include streamlining registration processes, waiving fees for the initial three production batches (free marketing), raising importation fees to safeguard local producers, and conducting joint Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) inspections within the East African Community to ensure compliance and foster regional collaboration.

Ms. Jacqueline Makokha, the UNAIDS Country Director, underscored the critical role of prioritizing local manufacturing in Uganda's HIV sustainability roadmap. She highlighted the opportunity to leverage Uganda's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to advocate for regional manufacturing initiatives and foster collaborations at both regional and international levels. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of creating demand for locally produced drugs and engaging PEPFAR to procure commodities from regional manufacturers.

The Executive Director, Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI), Prof. Pontiano Kaleebu, underscored the role of global collaborations in accessing advanced technology and skills, as well as the importance of advocacy and community pressure in influencing policy changes. He also highlighted the need for regional cooperation to facilitate market access and regulatory efficiency.

Ms. Mary Bourghman, Coordinator of PEPFAR in Uganda, outlined the program's initiatives to bolster local manufacturing across Africa. She highlighted PEPFAR's commitment to assisting regional manufacturers in obtaining FDA certification, a critical requirement for manufacturers supplying drugs procured by the United States Government. This strategic support aims to increase demand for locally produced commodities, particularly HIV and AIDS-related products. She also provided a preview of PEPFAR's future plans, emphasizing continued efforts to strengthen regional manufacturing capacity through regulatory support and certification processes.

And last but not least, Ms. Lillian Mwolekwo of International Community of Women living with HIV in Eastern Africa (ICWEA) emphasized the power of advocacy in shaping HIV-related policies and called for sustained community engagement to ensure equitable access to services.

3.4 CLOSING REMARKS AT THE FINANCING DIALOGUE

The dialogue concluded with remarks from Dr. Ssenyonjo, Chairperson of the Uganda AIDS Commission Board, who expressed gratitude to all participants and QCIL for hosting the event. She highlighted the need for regional collaborations and comprehensive policies to support local manufacturers. Dr. Ssenyonjo concluded the event on an optimistic note, stating, ***"We are moving forward, and hopefully all of you will be moving with us."***

4.0 THE NATIONAL HIV SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM

The third National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium was held on 13th November at the President's Office Auditorium with the main aim of sharing achievements made in the attainment of the country's targets towards HIV epidemic control and the 2030 goal of Ending AIDS as a Public Health threat. The Symposium which was attended by 350 in person participants and 50 online provided a forum for sharing research findings, innovations in vaccine development, and strategies for effective HIV management and it involved the following events;

1. Dissemination of the 2024 Annual Joint AIDS Review (JAR) Report.
2. Scientific paper presentations.
3. Philly Lutaaya commemoration
4. The Partnership Forum

Additionally, the Symposium showcased poster presentations and exhibitions by various organizations, highlighting their contributions to the HIV response.

For the first time, the Symposium was held in an indoor setting offered by the Office of the Presidency, unlike the previous ones held in outdoor venues. This was one of the measures of minimizing costs for hosting the symposium. The Symposium attracted a diverse audience, with over 350 participants attending physically and over 50 joining online. The participants represented a wide range of stakeholders including Government ministries, Departments, and Agencies, Civil society organizations, Development and Implementing Partners, People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Research Institutions and Local governments among others.



Hajji Yunus Kakande making opening remarks at the Symposium

The event emphasized the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing in addressing the HIV epidemic. Presentations from the Symposium are available on the Uganda AIDS Commission website for further review and dissemination.

5.0 OPENING CEREMONY

The ceremony began with a prayer from Prof. Canon Gideon Byamugisha, a renowned HIV activist, setting a reflective and inspiring tone for the event. Dr. Vincent Bagambe, the Director of Planning and Strategic Information at the Uganda AIDS Commission, extended a warm welcome to all participants on behalf of the Director General. Dr. Bagambe emphasized the significance of the symposium and outlined its purpose and objectives.

5.1 OFFICIAL OPENING

The Symposium was officially opened by Hajji Yunus Kakande, the Secretary in the Office of the President. In his remarks, Hajji Kakande highlighted the critical role of the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC), which was established under the President's Office to spearhead the country's HIV response. He acknowledged the UAC's pivotal contributions in reducing HIV prevalence from 18% to 5.1%, reflecting the success of Uganda's multi-sectoral approach.

He provided a historical overview of Uganda's HIV epidemic, tracing its origins to Rakai and recounting the government's swift response under the leadership of H.E. the President, which culminated in the formation of the AIDS Commission. He commended the Commission's consistent efforts in achieving significant milestones and thanked development partners for their unwavering support.

Tribute to Philly Lutaaya

Hajji Kakande paid homage to the late Philly Lutaaya, one of Uganda's most prominent musicians of the 1970s and 1980s, and among the first Ugandans to publicly declare his HIV-positive status. He reflected on the courage of Philly Lutaaya in breaking the silence around HIV/AIDS, which paved the way for the country to confront stigma and discrimination head-on.

Call to Action

Hajji Kakande congratulated stakeholders on their achievements thus far and highlighted the essential role of researchers in introducing transformative innovations in HIV/AIDS services. He urged participants to remain steadfast in their commitment and dedication to ending the epidemic and officially declared the symposium open.

6.0 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL 2023/2024 JOINT AIDS REVIEW REPORT



Dr. Vincent Bagambe, the Director Planning and Strategic Information presenting the annual Joint AIDS Review Report

The Annual Joint AIDS Review (JAR) Report was presented by Dr. Vincent Bagambe, Director of Planning and Strategic Information, Uganda AIDS Commission. The report provided an overview of progress, achievements, and challenges in the fourth year of implementing the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (NSP). It also highlighted the status of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative (PFTI) and the undertakings outlined in the previous year's Aide Memoire. The full report can be accessed on the Uganda AIDS Commission website.

6.1 PANEL DISCUSSION

A Team of panelists was invited to analyze and give their expert opinion of the report based on the four thematic areas of Prevention, Care and Treatment, Social Support, and Systems Strengthening.

Mr. Gerald Pande, Ministry of Health

He focused his discussion on the prevention section of the report and these were his insights:

- The Ministry of Health has developed policies and guidelines to provide services to Key Populations (KPs) despite challenges posed by the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA).
- The Ministry has also built the capacity of health workers to provide services to the KPs.
- Services have also been provided to KPs through specific facilities including DICs.
- The Ministry of Health came up with the adaptation strategy and has scaled up peer support with support from GF, PEPFAR etc.

Challenges:

- Insufficient capacity-building for health workers.
- Gaps in data collection and reporting as a result of the effects of the Anti-Homosexuality Act
- The AHA affected service delivery as per the JAR presentation stated a reduction of service uptake.
- Financial constraints affecting program implementation.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen peer-led approaches to enhance service delivery.
- Pilot digital models for improving access to services for KPs.

Dr. Mina Nakawuka, Ministry of Health

Dr. Mina focused her discussion on the Care and Treatment section of the report and these were her Insights:

- She observed that the children were lagging in the treatment cascade therefore requiring special attention.
- The Ministry has launched the “*Munoonye campaign*” to look out for the children and educate their care takers about the need to provide care and treatment to the children.
- The Ministry was also working with peers for adolescents both in and out of school to improve on the treatment uptake.

- The Ministry has expanded the Differentiated Service Delivery Model to include accredited pharmacies that open till late to enable men access treatment.
- Health workers are also engaging champions to encourage men seek and adhere to treatment.
- Audit tools have also been placed at site level to improve retention and uptake of NCD services that are causing AIDS-related deaths
- Improved data systems through the expansion of electronic medical records (EMRs).
- She highlighted the recent scientific findings in the HIV as game changers in the response. We look forward to the rolling out of the injectable.

Challenges

- Data quality from program data as reflected in 97% ART coverage in the general population and over 100% ART coverage among women was an indication of data issues.
- Finding and locating children under the DSDM especially the school going children
- Limited financing and capacity gaps for delivering services.

Recommendations:

- Integrate HIV services with NCD management to address AIDS-related deaths.
- Intensify peer-based interventions to ensure access for KPs and adolescents.
- Prepare for game-changing innovations, including injectable treatments.
- The Ministry of Health is engaging the Ministry of Education on how school children on ART can be supported.

Dr. Angella Nakafeero, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development)

Dr. Angella's discussion focused on social support section of the report and these were her Insights:

- Gender-based violence (GBV), such as rape and defilement, is a major driver of HIV among women and girls.
- Sexual abuse has doubled in the last 6 years. Focus should be placed on young girls who find themselves as child mothers with limited resources and skills.
- Socioeconomic empowerment programs for women are being scaled up through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Challenges:

- Poor coordination among implementing entities.
- Lack of focused efforts to address increasing cases of sexual abuse, which doubled from 16% in 2016 to 32% in 2024.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen multisectoral coordination for effective resource utilization.
- Conduct deeper analyses of HIV drivers across age groups to tailor interventions.
- Prioritize adolescent girls and young women in targeted programs.

Mr. Henry Semakula, Ministry of Education)

Mr. Semakula gave his insights from the education perspective as follows;

- Messaging on GBV, HIV, and mental health has been scaled up in schools.
- The Sexuality Education Framework, launched seven years ago, is under review to address concerns.
- Re-entry policies for pregnant girls have been implemented.

Recommendations:

- Organize regional life skills summits to holistically address health issues.
- Enhance strategies to engage men and boys in addressing challenges faced by adolescent girls and young women (AGYW).



The Panelists taking note of questions from the participants; R-L Dr. Mina Nakawuka, Gerald Pande, and Dr. Angella Nakafeero

Question and Answer Highlights

- Men and boys are empowered through our social norms however, they are misusing the power, privileges, and entitlements accorded.
- The Government through the Ministry of Education is implementing a strategy on managing teenage pregnancy however, due to limited funding the strategy is limited to high prevalent districts
- The Ministry of Education has policy guidelines on teenage pregnancy
- The next strategic plan should emphasize on the boy child and men.
- Adolescent Challenges: Strengthening policies to manage teenage pregnancies, with a focus on high-prevalence districts.
- Community Representation: Including People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in panels and decision-making processes.
- Improved Access: Developing strategies for night-time services to better reach KPs.



Participants reading through Posters and visiting exhibition stalls during the Symposium

7.0 SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This session was co-chaired by Dr. Andrew Kazibwe from TASO and Dr. Simon Muhumuza from Makerere School of Public Health. It featured three key presentations addressing critical aspects of Uganda’s HIV response.

Scientific Presentations

1. Progress Towards Ending AIDS as a Public Health threat by 2030 and Improving the Quality of Life for PLHIV: The role of Ministry of Health- *Dr. Robert Mutumba, Program Manager, AIDS Control Program, Ministry of Health*

Highlights:

- Uganda is yet to achieve epidemic control, requiring intensified efforts to reduce new HIV infections. Equity must underpin these interventions.
- Introduction of single-dose ARVs for children to enhance adherence and reduce pill burden, supported by PEPFAR and GF.

Key focus areas:

- Targeting men who are not suppressing viral loads.
- Promoting community treatment literacy and addressing barriers to care.
- Expanding interventions to achieve 100% coverage.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen interventions targeting underserved populations and barriers to care.
- Enhance equity-focused programming for high-risk groups.

2. The COVID-19 Epidemic and Increased Vulnerability to HIV among Urban Poor Women in Uganda: Lessons for On-going and Future HIV Programming During and After Health Emergencies- *Dr. Susan Babirye, Makerere University School of Public Health*

Study Focus:

The study examined the increased vulnerability of urban poor women to HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on research conducted in Kampala and Mbale.

Key Findings:

Pandemic measures led to:

- Loss of income and food insecurity.
- Family conflicts and disrupted education.
- Risky sexual behaviors, increasing HIV susceptibility.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Focus recovery efforts on urban poor communities and revise HIV prevention programs to meet their evolving needs.
- Implement measures to safely enable women in family welfare and food provision.
- Combine HIV prevention with social protection measures.
- Use lessons from the pandemic to preemptively address future emergencies.

3. Mortality Trends Among PLHIV in the Era of Antiretroviral Therapy- *Dr. Paul Lwevola and Dr. Yvonne Wanda, Makerere Joint AIDS Program*

Study Focus:

Compared mortality rates among PLHIV receiving care in a community-based program (East Central region) versus a hospital setting (Kiruddu National Referral Hospital).

Key Findings:

- Mortality in community programs is generally low but predominantly occurs outside health facilities.
- Leading causes of death include cardiovascular, renal, and metabolic diseases, as well as mental disorders.
- Verbal autopsies were beneficial but hindered by delays.

Recommendations:

- Train health workers to audit and report deaths comprehensively.
- Strengthen tertiary care within HIV programs, particularly for non-HIV comorbidities like cardiovascular disease and renal issues.
- Innovate community-based death surveillance and autopsy processes.

7.1 DISCUSSIONS

- Align government programs with the current realities of HIV care and treatment.
- Strengthen networks of PLHIV for greater involvement in the response.
- Expand community-led monitoring and ensure results are widely disseminated.
- Mobilize men for advocacy and increased service uptake.
- Focus interventions at lower administrative levels (district, parish, and village) for tangible impact.
- Engage Traditional Birth Attendants to encourage HIV testing among pregnant mothers.

8.0 SESSION 3: PHILLY LUTAAYA COMMEMORATION

The Philly Lutaaya commemoration session, chaired by Hon. Robert Kasolo (representing Hon. Sarah Netalisire, Chairperson of the Committee on HIV and Related Matters), honored the legacy of the late Philly Lutaaya. This session featured performances, reflections, and calls to action, reinforcing his contributions to HIV awareness.

8.1 EDUTAINMENT IN MEMORY OF PHILLY LUTAAYA

The session included performances led by **Joanita Kawalya**, a celebrated artist who had collaborated with Philly Lutaaya. Joanita, along with a group of young artists, performed one of Lutaaya's iconic Christmas carols. The event also featured a spirited performance of "*Obangaina*" by Joanita Kawalya and Hon. Rachel Magoola, receiving enthusiastic applause.

Hon. Rachel Magoola, in her remarks, praised Philly Lutaaya as a hero who openly disclosed his HIV-positive status, breaking the stigma chains and encouraging open dialogue about the epidemic. She proposed constructing a statue or monument to celebrate his legacy.

8.2 PHILLY LUTAAYA KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Canon Ruth Senyonyi, Chairperson of the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) Board, delivered the keynote address. She shared a personal account of her father, the Late Bishop Kauma, during his final days with Philly Lutaaya, highlighting Lutaaya's role in giving HIV a human face and inspiring People Living with HIV (PLHIV) to speak out.

She emphasized Lutaaya's impact through music, particularly one of his songs that became an anthem for HIV awareness. Reflecting on stigma, she noted it is detrimental, affects one's self-esteem and mental health access as well as access to services.

Call to Action



Cannon Dr. Ruth Senyonyi, The Chairperson, Uganda AIDS Commission delivering the Philly Lutaaya Key Note address

Dr. Senyonyi urged all stakeholders to work collaboratively toward an AIDS-free generation by:

1. Scaling up HIV testing, treatment, and viral load monitoring.
2. Strengthening health systems and community mobilization.
3. Promoting equity in access to services.
4. Ensuring financial sustainability through innovative financing and resource mobilization.
5. Taking ownership of the HIV response at all levels, from national to community.
6. Eliminating mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) by encouraging men to support antenatal care (ANC).
7. Advocating for legal reforms to support the HIV response.
8. Crafting youth-targeted, precise messaging.
9. Revitalizing the ABC (Abstinence, Being faithful, Condom use) approach, which was highly effective in the early stages of the epidemic.

Conclusion

Together, we can achieve an AIDS-free generation. Drawing inspiration from Philly Lutaaya's life and music, we must continue working towards equitable, accessible, and comprehensive HIV services, with the goal of ending AIDS by 2030.

9.0 REMARKS FROM HON. JANE RUTH ACENG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH

The Minister expressed her gratitude to development partners, particularly PEPFAR, for their sustained support, which has significantly advanced Uganda's HIV response. She commended the Uganda AIDS Commission for its leadership in coordinating a multi-sectoral response.



The Minister for Health Hon. Jane Ruth Acheng stressing a point while making her remarks

The Minister observed that despite the commendable progress made against the epidemic, the New HIV infections remain unacceptably high, with 38,000 cases recorded in 2023. The 5% Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) rates are still high in this era which is undermining our efforts for an AIDS-free generation. Specific challenges in Gulu and Mbale stemmed from follow-up lapses in the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program.

The national HIV response budget of \$548 million presents a significant burden, particularly in comparison to other development priorities.

9.1 CALL TO ACTION

Hon. Aceng urged youth, men, and women to unite in ensuring that no child is born with HIV, emphasizing the need for intensified efforts to reduce new infections. She concluded by encouraging participants to reflect on their roles in making the 2030 goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat a reality, particularly as the nation prepares to commemorate World AIDS Day.

10.0 CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony of the symposium was chaired by Hon. Robert Kasolo, Member of Parliament for Iki-Iki County, representing Hon. Alex Byarugaba Bakunda, Chairperson of the Presidential Affairs Committee.

10.1 STATEMENT BY PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

Gimbo Shanura, a young activist living with HIV, delivered a heartfelt statement emphasizing the lack of youth representation in decision-making processes. Shanura highlighted the significant challenges faced by young people, particularly stigma and discrimination, which severely impact access to services for school-going children living with HIV.



Participants listening into the Statement by Gimbo Shanura on behalf of the People Living with HIV

10.2 REMARKS BY UNAIDS COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Jackeline Makhoha, the UNAIDS Country Director, commended the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) for fostering strong partnerships in the HIV response. She raised concerns about the persistence of stigma, which undermines progress. She also stressed the need to support local pharmaceutical manufacturers like CIPLA to ensure ARVs are accessible in domestic markets. She also introduced the UNFPA Country Director, and the current Chair of the AIDS Development Partners (ADPs).

10.3 REMARKS BY UNFPA COUNTRY DIRECTOR (CHAIR OF THE ADP GROUP)

The UNFPA Country Director, speaking on behalf of the AIDS Development Partners, recognized Uganda's leadership in the global fight against HIV and celebrated its significant achievements. However, he expressed concern about the high rate of new infections among young people and declining funding for the HIV response.

He called for strengthened multi-sectoral responses and increased community involvement. Interventions should be focused on young people, pregnant mothers, and Key Populations (KPs) to reduce the new HIV infections. He also called on the need to adopt game-changing strategies to meet the 95-95-95 targets by 2025.

10.4 REMARKS BY THE US AMBASSADOR

The US Ambassador to Uganda, H.E. William Pop, expressed appreciation for the 21-year partnership between Uganda and PEPFAR. PEPFAR has so far invested over 100 billion USD to the HIV response in Uganda and \$ 350 million this current year supporting 2,500 Health Facilities. This support has significantly contributed to the reduction in new HIV infections and

AIDS-related deaths in the country over time. However, he cautioned that Key Populations remain at high risk, requiring focused interventions to close treatment gaps. He stated that health programming gains are fragile, necessitating sustainable strategies.

The Ambassador emphasized PEPFAR's commitment to evidence-based, person-centered programming, calling for expanded interventions beyond the health sector.



H.E Ambassador William Pop (Left) being welcomed to the Symposium by the Ag. Director General, UAC Board Member Dr. Ahmed Ddungu and Ag. Director Partnership Tom Etii

10.5 REMARKS BY PROF. TARSIS KABWEGYERE

Prof. Tarsis Kabwegyere, an early advocate for Uganda's HIV multi-sectoral response, emphasized the importance of scaling up messaging and awareness campaigns. He called for the translation of HIV messages into local languages to ensure grassroots understanding and engagement of churches, mosques, and cultural institutions in disseminating information.

Prof. Kabwegyere expressed confidence that, with Uganda's extensive community structures, every citizen should be informed and aware of HIV within five years.

11.0 CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHIEF GUEST

Hon. Milly Babalanda, Minister for the Presidency, delivered the closing remarks. She commended the symposium's theme for its focus on accelerating progress. The Minister was however concerned with the continued high new HIV infections among the productive 15-24 age group and persistent mother-to-child transmission (MTCT), with 4,700 cases reported in 2023, despite available prevention measures. The AIDS-related deaths among men was still alarming and required targeted follow-ups to improve access to HIV services among the men.



Hon. Milly Babalanda, the Minister for the Presidency making closing remarks

Hon. Babalanda outlined government measures to strengthen Uganda's HIV response in the recent past as follows:

1. Through her office, all RDCs and RCCs were instructed to allocate airtime for the dissemination of HIV messages and awareness creation to the public.
2. Government allocated more funding to UAC establish additional zonal coordination offices for greater community outreach.
3. The Government through the Ministry of Finance instructed all Government MDAs to allocate 0.1% of their budgets to HIV mainstreaming programs.
4. An additional \$50 billion earmarked for ARV procurement.

She emphasized the importance of sustaining Uganda's position as a global HIV success story and maintaining leadership in HIV response efforts beyond 2030.

Concluding her closing remarks, the Minister reminded participants of the upcoming World AIDS Day celebration on December 1, 2024, in Buyende District. She encouraged everyone to support the Wear the Red Ribbon Campaign as a sign of solidarity with people living with HIV and in memory of those who have died from the epidemic.

12.0 KEY ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE SYMPOSIUM

1. Continued application of the adaptation plan to ensure uninterrupted access of HIV services by Key Populations
2. Engage Ministry of Education in fighting stigma and discrimination in schools
3. Strengthen coordination of interventions targeting the out school young people
4. Scale up science and research for prevention and treatment
5. Scale up policies that support teenage pregnancies among school going to retain the girl child
6. Identify interventions targeting the boy child in the next Strategic Plan
7. The need to refocus on community structures for a sustained service delivery to the grassroots.
8. Programming for the young population is not up to scale, therefore the new strategic Plan offers an opportunity to identify interventions which will reduce new infections and mitigate Stigma and discrimination amongst this population.
9. Uganda AIDS Commission to follow up and engage with MOH and MOFPED to concretize plans for local manufacturing of HIV medicines and commodities
10. The Government of Uganda, in collaboration with development partners and the private sector to initiate discussion with other EAC member states to consider taking concerted measures to protect and promote regional production of HIV medicines and commodities. Discussion should be undertaken for EAC to create a regional market for HIV medicines and commodities produced by member states.
11. The Government to develop and adopt a policy of restricting importation of all HIV related medicines and commodities that are produced locally to promote local production
12. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders to advocate for improving the ability and capacity of local manufacturers to produce HIV medicines and commodities
13. Government should provide, expand and streamline the incentives scheme, with preferential tariffs, joint R&D initiatives, to boost local production.
14. The Government to provide financial facilities to facilitate local production, and R&D
15. NDA to review approval processes to encourage the local manufacturing while also maintaining the robustness of the process to guarantee product quality
16. Government should seek the support of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other multilateral bodies to promote mutually beneficial partnerships between local and foreign manufacturers in order to acquire technological capacity for local producers.

13.0 EVALUATION OF THE SYMPOSIUM

An online survey was conducted to get feedback and comments from participants regarding the Symposium. A total of 63 participants responded, with 42% being at the Top Management level and 58% from Senior Management.

The primary channels through which participants learned about the event included direct invitations, referrals from colleagues, and social media platforms.

The overall feedback was positive, with the majority of respondents expressing satisfaction with the Symposium. Notably, 47% rated their experience 4 out of 5, while 14% were highly satisfied, awarding the event a perfect score of 5 out of 5.

This feedback underscores the Symposium's success in meeting participant expectations and highlights areas for future enhancement.

How satisfied were you with the event?

62 responses

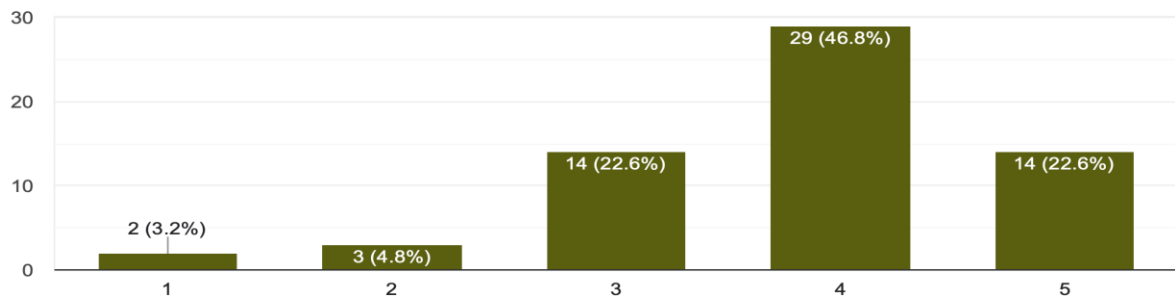


Fig. 1 Showing satisfaction by participants using a scale of 1 to 5

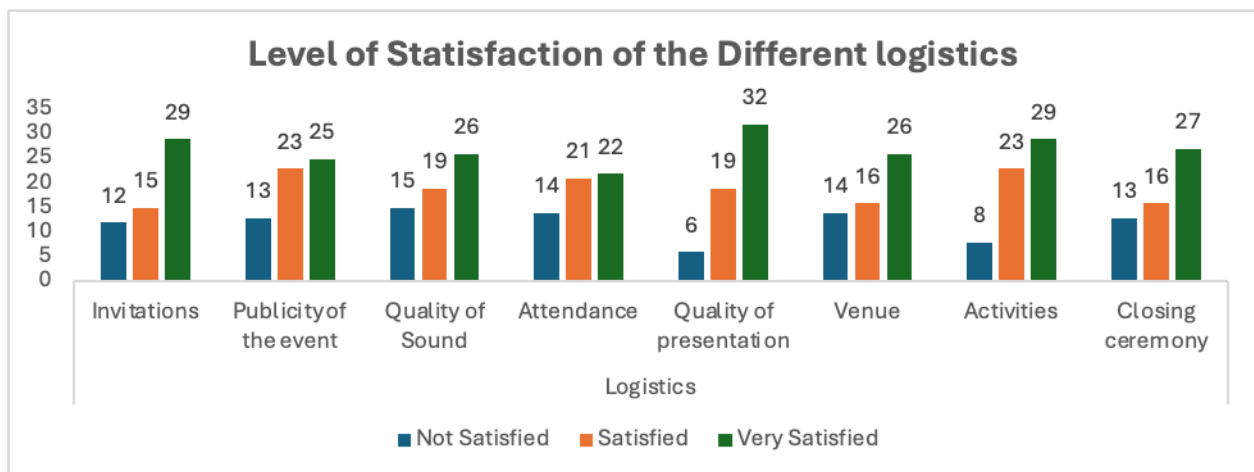


Fig.2 Showing level of satisfaction for the various logistics

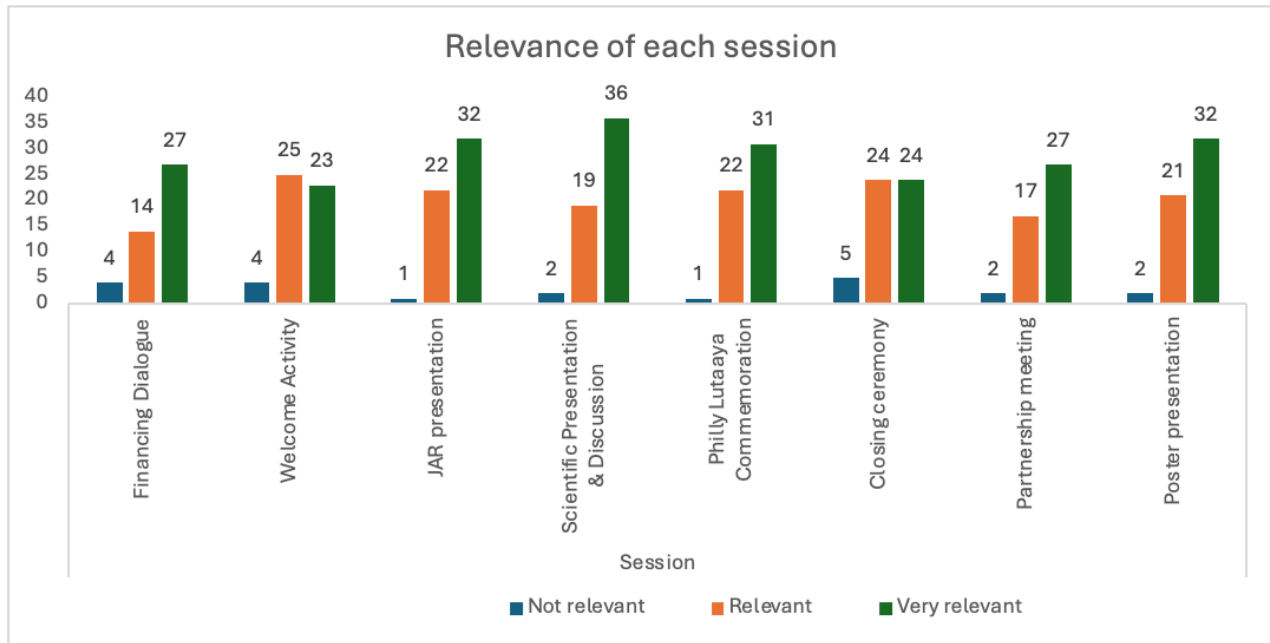


Fig. 3 Showing satisfaction for the different sessions

What went well

Organization- Overall organization and planning of the Symposium was meticulously done with events and activities being undertaken in an orderly manner

Venue- The venue provided a comfortable and spacious environment, with ample seating and excellent visibility for all attendees.

Attendance- The turnout was impressive, with most invited guests, including speakers, presenters, and panelists, in attendance.

Exhibitions and Poster presentations- The posters and exhibitors attracted significant interest from participants, indicating active engagement with the showcased products and services.

Audio-Visuals- The sound and visual setups were of high quality, ensuring smooth communication and an enhanced experience for all attendees.

Challenges

Access to the Venue- Access to the venue was challenging due to rigorous and time-consuming security checks.

Vehicle Parking Challenges- Parking space for vehicles was located far from the venue, with nearby places available at a cost.

Limited serving points for lunch and break tea- The service provider had insufficient serving points for tea breaks and lunch leading to long waiting times, disrupting the program schedule and affecting participant engagement.

Insufficient Time- The two-day schedule for the Financing Dialogue, JAR, Scientific Meeting and Philly Lutaaya was not adequate for the planned activities, restricting the number of scientific presentations and limiting participant contributions.

Support for Civil Society Organizations- Civil Society Organizations, particularly participants with disabilities, faced challenges due to insufficient facilitation and additional costs incurred for support staff for the deaf and blind

Insufficient Stationery- Notebooks and pens provided at the event were inadequate to meet the needs of all participants.

Online participation- Online participation was low for the Financing Dialogue and the Scientific Symposium

Conclusion

The third National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium was well conducted with satisfaction of the participants including the exhibitors. The one-day event was well attended by the targeted participants achieving its objectives. The presentations and reports shared were very relevant and informative to the participants. However, one day was not adequate to allow for more presentations and discussion among the participants. The rigorous security checks and difficulty in parking posed a challenge to the symposium. The Secretariat shall review comments and feedback from participants to improve on the next Symposium.

The Third National HIV and AIDS Scientific Symposium was successfully conducted, garnering positive feedback from participants and exhibitors alike. The well-attended one-day event effectively engaged its targeted audience and achieved its primary objectives. Participants found the presentations and reports highly relevant and informative.

However, the one-day program was packed and limited the opportunity for additional presentations and in-depth discussions among attendees. Challenges such as rigorous security checks and limited, packing limitations were noted as areas for improvement.

The Secretariat is committed to reviewing participant feedback and suggestions to enhance the planning and execution of future symposiums, ensuring an even more impactful and seamless experience.

Recommendations

- **Additional days for the Symposium-** Increase the event to multiple days to accommodate more scientific presentations and foster deeper discussions among participants.
- **Enhance Publicity-** Strengthen promotional activities to attract a larger and more diverse audience, ensuring broader participation.

- **Revitalize Philly Lutaaya Commemoration-** Shift the focus of the commemoration to a more engaging and entertaining format, celebrating his legacy through performances of his songs and creative storytelling, rather than lengthy speeches.
- **Select a better venue-** Choose a venue that is open, easily accessible, and convenient for attendees, addressing issues like parking and ample room.

ANNEX 1: PROGRAM FOR THE HIV FINANCING DIALOGUE-

12TH NOVEMBER, QUALITY CHEMICAL-LUZIRA

TIME	ACTIVITY/TOPIC	SPEAKERS	CHAIR
8:30 – 9:00	Arrival, Registration and Breakfast		
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Remarks	Chairman, UAC	Director
9:15 – 9:30	Overview, objectives and expected outcomes of the Symposium	Director General, UAC	General, MOH
9:30 – 10:00	Key note address: HIV & AIDS investment projections: Sustainability of Funding for HIV Treatment Services	George Baguma, Co-Founder of Quality Chemical Industries Ltd - QCIL	
10:00 – 10:30	Official Opening of the Dialogue	Chairperson, Uganda AIDS Commission	
10:30 – 11:00	Sustaining the HIV response beyond 2030 – Developing the HIV Response Sustainability Roadmap: – pathways for change	HIV Response Sustainability Experts – Dr. W. Kirungi / Prof. E. Ekirapa	
11:00 – 12:30	Panel Discussion		
	Regional manufacturing of HIV&AIDS tests and medicines from East African / Ugandan producers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What does it take ii. Sound financing instruments: Advocacy for Government to provide additional funding to QCIL to ARVs - Capital support for development iii. Regulatory systems, government policies - regional regulatory harmonization efforts iv. Required enabling ecosystem v. Procurement incentives vi. Favorable market for products vii. Aligning national and regional policies to support products viii. Stronger strategic partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders ix. Approvals for injectable – can QCIL take on this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ajay Kumar Pal, Executive Director, Qcil • Mr. Ramathan Ggoobi, PS/ST, MOFPED • Jacqueline Makokha, Country Director, UNAIDS • Professor Pontiano Kaleebu, ED, UVRI • Dr. Medard Bitekyerezo, Chairman, National Drug Authority • Ms. Lillian Mworeko, ED, ICWEA <p>Moderator: Dr. Fred Muhumuza, Senior Lecturer and Director, Economic Forum, Makerere University Business School (MUBS)</p>	
12:30 – 1:00	Q&A & Discussion		MOFPED
1:00 – 1:10	Wrap-up	Director General, UAC	
1:30	Closing Remarks	Chairperson, UAC	
DEPARTURE			

**ANNEX 2: PROGRAM FOR THE NATIONAL HIV AND AIDS SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM
13TH NOVEMBER-OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AUDITORIUM**

Time	Activity	Session Chair/Presenter
Session 1: Official Opening and JAR Presentation		
8:00AM-8:30 AM	Arrival and Registration, Viewing of Poster Presentations and Exhibitions	UAC Secretariat, Poster Presenters and Exhibitors
8:30AM-8:40AM	Prayer	Prof: Cannon Gideon Byamugisha
8:40AM-9:00AM	Objectives of the Symposium	Dr. Nelson Musoba , Director General UAC
9:00AM-9:30AM	Official opening	Hajji Yunus Kakande , Secretary Office of the President
9:30AM-10:15AM	Presentation of 2023/2024 Joint AIDS Review (JAR) Report	Dr. Vincent Bagambe , Director Planning and Strategic Information- UAC
10:15AM-11:00AM	Panel Discussions on the JAR report	PANELISTS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Mina Nakawuka 2. Dr. Peter Kyambadde 3. Dr. Hudson Baliddawa 4. Dr. Angela Nakafeero 5. Mr. Mulindwa Ismael 6. Mr. Pius Emojong(MoLG)
11:00AM-11:30AM	Health Break, Viewing of Poster Presentations and Exhibitions	All
Session 2: Scientific Presentations and Discussions		
		Chair: Dr. Andrew Kazibwe (TASO) Co-Chair: Dr. Simon Muhumuza (MakSPH)
11:30AM-11:50AM	Progress Towards Ending AIDS as a Public Health threat by 2030 and Improving the Quality of Life for PLHIV: The role of Ministry of Health.	Dr. Robert Mutumba , Program Manager, ACP
11:50AM-12:10PM	The COVID-19 Epidemic and Increased Vulnerability to HIV among Urban Poor Women in Uganda: Lessons for On-going and Future HIV Programming During and After Health Emergencies	Dr. Susan Babirye , Makerere School of Public Health
12:10PM-12:30PM	Mortality among persons with HIV in	Dr. Paul Lwevola , Makerere Joint AIDS AIDS

Time	Activity	Session Chair/Presenter
	the era of antiretroviral therapy	Program (MJAP) Dr. Yvonne Wanda, Makerere Joint AIDS Program (MJAP)
12:30PM–1:00PM	Discussion of scientific presentations	All
1:00PM–2:00PM	Lunch break, Viewing of Poster Presentations and Exhibitions	All
Session 3: Philly Lutaaya Commemoration		Chair: Hon. Sarah Netalisire Chair Person Committee on HIV/AIDS and Related Matters
2:00PM-2:15PM	Edutainment and Philly Legacy	Joanita Kawalya (Philly Lutaaya Renditions)
2:15PM–3:00PM	Philly Lutaaya Memorial Key Note Address	Canon Dr. Ruth Senyonyi – UAC Board Chairperson
Session 4: Closing Ceremony		Chair: Hon. Alex Byarugaba Bakunda, Chair of the Presidential Affairs Committee
3:00PM–3:10PM	Arrival of Chief Guest and Anthems	Session Chair
3:10PM – 3:50PM	Progress on JAR 23 undertakings and adoption of the 2024 Undertakings	Dr. Vincent Bagambe , DPSI, UAC
3:50PM – 4:00PM	Remarks from UAC	Canon Dr. Ruth Senyonyi – UAC Board Chairperson
4:00PM – 4:10PM	Statement by Person Living with HIV	Ms. Gimbo Shanura
4:10PM – 4:20PM	Remarks from ADPG	Ms. Jacqueline Makokha , UNAIDS Country Director
4:20PM – 4:30PM	Remarks from US Ambassador	H.E. William W. Popp , US Ambassador to Uganda
4:30PM – 4:40PM	Remarks from MoH	Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng , Hon Minister of Health
4:40PM – 5:00PM	Closing remarks by the Chief Guest	Hon. Babirye Milly Babalanda , Minister In charge of the Presidency

Link to the presentations: <https://nhas2024.uac.go.ug/index.php/mega/powerful-features/bootstrap-4>.

