Getting HIV/AIDS cases closer to zero in Uganda

The fight against HIV/AIDS is still high on the agenda in many countries, despite the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because HIV/AIDS remains a core problem to date. Aidah Nakanjako serves as a UN Volunteer HIV/AIDS and Human Rights Coordinator with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Uganda. She promotes human rights for people living with HIV/AIDS and supports vulnerable populations affected by HIV/AIDS who may be forgotten, particularly now with most attention largely diverted to COVID-19.

Over the years, UNDP Uganda has been central in supporting national HIV/AIDS management activities and events in Uganda, such as participating in the development of the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan 2020-2025, integrating HIV and human rights in the National Development Plan 2020-2025 and convening HIV/AIDS awareness events, for example on World AIDS Day, International Candle Light Day and Philly Lutaaya Day. UNDP Uganda’s engagement in these spaces has emphasized human
rights programming within the HIV fight.

As a focal point for HIV/AIDS and Human Rights issues, I have been supporting the Uganda AIDS Commission, government ministries, people living with HIV and key populations, the private sector and other partners to prevent and control HIV/AIDS through a human rights-based approach.

Uganda is facing dwindling HIV/AIDS financing as a result of the numerous competing health-related demands. As COVID-19 is taxing our systems, it is important to mobilize our energies and resources to help the most vulnerable first. --Aidah Nakanjako, UN Volunteer HIV/AIDS and Human Rights Coordinator

In this difficult financial situation, UNDP, in partnership with UAC, conducted an analytical study on HIV and gender-based violence financing in order to generate sustainable HIV financing in Uganda. The study was aimed at identifying where most government expenditure was and how to effectively tap into existing resources.

After finalizing the study, capital infrastructure sectors agreed to invest funds in HIV/AIDS. I was happy to see that it contributed to the increased implementation and realization of the National HIV and AIDS Mainstreaming Strategy. I believe that we need more studies on new financing strategies that we can leverage to support vulnerable populations, such as people living with HIV/AIDS.

The One Dollar Initiative (ODI) is another financing vehicle pursued by UNDP Uganda. This financing mechanism is aimed at complementing and sustaining potential government and development partner’s responses to HIV/AIDS in the country, through effective mobilization of members of the private sector and resource mobilization through individual and corporate contribution.

The initiative appeals to and encourages members of the public to voluntarily contribute one dollar per month towards the fund. In 2019, for instance, UNDP supported the ODI in organizing a private sector corporate dinner concert which brought in UGX 920 million (or US $250 thousand) through cash and pledges.

During my time at UNDP Uganda, I have represented UNDP at the National Task Force for health emergencies and the Risk Communication Sub-committee at the Ministry of Health. I have also worked with other partners at the Ministry of Health during the Ebola and COVID-19 outbreaks; supporting the development of national preparedness and response plans.
Additionally, I represent UNDP at the Joint UN Health Emergencies team set up by the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team. My participation and contribution to all these processes have increased UNDP’s engagement in the health sector, as well as highlighting the nexus between health and development.

“Most importantly, I have been on the frontline of advocating for human rights protection of people living with HIV and key populations and increasing the availability of HIV prevention, care and treatment services. Every day, I work towards getting the HIV/AIDS cases in Uganda closer to zero. --Aidah Nakanjako

- HIV/aids
- COVID-19
- Coronavirus
- United Nations Development Programme

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals