

OAFLA UG

*REPORT of THE EMTCT
CAMPAIGN*

West Nile Region

13th June 2014

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Acronyms

AMMICAL	Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV AND AIDS in Africa, Uganda Chapter
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DHO	District Health Officer
EMTCT	Elimination of Mother To Child Transmission
HCT	HIV and AIDS Counseling and Testing
MNH	Maternal and Neonatal Health
MOH	Ministry of Health
MTCT	Mother To Child Transmission
NMS	National Medical Stores
OAFLA	Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV AND AIDS
SMS	Safe Male Circumcision
UAC	Uganda AIDS Commission
VHTs	Village Health Teams

1.0 Background

The HIV Programme of the First Lady's Office in Uganda operates as the Uganda Chapter of the Organisation of African First Ladies against HIV and AIDS in Africa (OAFLA). OAFLA is committed to contributing to efforts towards an AIDS free Africa.

The Uganda Chapter (OAFLA UG) is guided by the following Vision and Mission:

Vision: Zero new infections leading to an HIV Free Generation by 2020.

Mission: To provide political leadership and a strategic platform for stakeholder engagement and community mobilization, to ensure an effective HIV and AIDS response; towards an HIV free generation.

1.1 Origins of the EMTCT Campaigns

The First Lady was nominated the National EMTCT Champion in August 2012 and thereafter she embarked on Regional Campaigns to create awareness about EMTCT. These Campaigns are organised and coordinated by OAFLA UG in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC), HIV/EMTCT stakeholders and the political leadership at all levels of society.

The Campaigns have created general awareness about effective HIV/EMTCT service delivery and specifically the need for leadership involvement, starting with male involvement in the family reproductive health. They have succeeded in: engaging key stakeholders in consultations around EMTCT, creating awareness about the Option B plus and stepping up the availability of commodities in the regions' reached.

This is a report of the West Nile Region EMTCT Campaign held on 13th June 2014; the sixth in a series of Campaigns to create awareness about the need for Male Involvement in the Reproductive Health of their wives.

1.2 Activities organised to mark the West Nile Regional Campaign

A number of activities were organised as part of the Regional Campaign, some of which are detailed below:

- **Media Campaigns:** The Media in the entire West Nile Region was highly engaged throughout the Campaign period. Radio and television messages on EMTCT were aired and key opinion leaders hosted on different media programmes to share about the Campaign activities as well as HIV and AIDS awareness in general.

- **HIV and AIDS /EMTCT Services:** In order to encourage the population to test for HIV and spouses to attend ANC together, Health Centers and other Health facilities were well stocked with commodities to meet the demand. Monitoring reports indicated that unlike in the other regional campaigns the Region did not experience any stock out of commodities during the Campaign period.
- **The EMTCT Champion Mothers Pageant:** A unique feature of the Campaign was the EMTCT Champion Mother's Pageant in which pregnant mothers were engaged in a competition to assess their knowledge regarding EMTCT, Antenatal Care awareness and their ability to share this information. The Contests which ran throughout the Region continued after the Launch and received an overwhelming response, especially from young couples. The Grand Finale is scheduled for 21st June 2014 in Arua.
- **Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting and the Public Rally:** A Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting was held at the Presidential Lodge Arua, at which Stakeholders from the national level and across the Region, discussed the West Nile EMTCT Status Report. This was followed by a Public Rally at the Arua Hill Primary School Grounds.
- **Launching of the Motorbike Ambulance and the Maternal and Neonatal Health Convergence Programme:** The EMTCT Champion launched the Motorbike Ambulance Service and the MNH Convergence Programme at the Public Rally Grounds. The Ambulance service is supported by UNFPA to transport expectant mothers to health facilities.
- **Recognition of the Best Performing District:** The First Lady presented Certificates of Recognition to the Best Performing District and health facility as assessed by Baylor Uganda.

1.3 Outcomes of the EMTCT Regional Campaign in West Nile

The West Nile Region Campaign marked the longest and most innovative EMTCT Campaign experienced so far; the main activities having span over a period of several months. The Campaign registered an ongoing efficient and effective M and E, intensive local resource mobilisation and community ownership activities and a Champion Mother's EMTCT Contest that was used to mobilize young couples.

Throughout the Campaign period stakeholders in the Region and at the national level worked in partnership to scale up the provision of commodities as well as efficiency in service delivery and coordination of the campaign events. Indeed at the Campaign was a resounding success, with the whole region superseding most of its M and E targets by the time of the Official Launch.

2.0 Stakeholders Consultative Meeting

On the 13th June 2014 Ministers, MPs, Political leaders, UN Heads of Missions, Development Partners, CSOs, key actors in the health sector as well as cultural and religious leaders, congregated at the Presidential Lodge in Arua, to participate in the EMTCT Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting.

The Meeting which was a great success discussed the status of EMTCT in the Region and made recommendations on key issues regarding the publics' response to EMTCT services and HIV and AIDS in general. The objectives of the Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting were:

- To provide a Forum for key stakeholders in the EMTCT Response to share information regarding EMTCT and HIV AND AIDS in general; and
- To hold conversations on hindrances to Male Involvement in EMTCT and share recommendations to address them; and

Below is a brief account of the deliberations of the Meeting.

2.1 Remarks by the MP Ayivu County

The MP Ayivu County Hon. Atiku thanked the Stakeholders for their support throughout the Campaign. He observed that the Meeting is an effective forum for discussion on the Region peculiar challenges regarding the cross border, refugee and fishing communities that require unique strategies to reach and monitor them.

Hon. Atiku appreciated the OAFLA Team, MOH, UAC, the UN Family, the district leadership and institutions that participated in the preparatory meetings leading to the success of the Campaign.

2.2 Presentation of a Report on the Status of EMTCT in the West Nile Region

The DHO Moyo Dr. Jimmy Opiga presented the report of the West Nile Region. He gave a brief background to the Campaign that began in 2013 explaining that the preparatory committees had done a commendable job resulting in accelerated service delivery, enabling an increase in service utilization by 10% in most of the Health facilities in the region. Some of the achievements mentioned were:

- 98% of the set target for first attendance at ANC was realized by April 2014.
- 119% of the targeted pregnant women had received HCT by April 2014.

- 138% of the set target for HCT was achieved in March 2014
- Health facility deliveries registered 110% of the set target in April 2014.
- Male partner testing in ANC rose from 42% in March 2014 to 49% in April 2014.

Dr. Jimmy Opiga explained that the intensified demand creation was a result of: Bi weekly SMS reminders to the non reporting facilities, the step up in involvement and communication with DHOs and on site coaching on the typing and editing of the Option B + SMS. He cited the challenges faced in promoting male involvement in reproductive health as:

- The assumption and culture amongst men that ANC services are for women;
- The ANC service delivery hours that are incompatible with fishermen who rest during the day and work at night;
- Cross boarder movements in Nebbi, Arua, Koboko and Adjumani Districts contributing to loss of follow up and sometimes resulting in double testing;
- The low involvement of religious and cultural leaders in the mobilisation of communities; and
- Challenges in integrating Health Center II's in the National Medical Stores distribution lists.

He concluded his remarks by stating that these challenges have been overcome by among other things: stepping up male involvement advocacy and including male friendly services in ANC, revision of the population data for selected districts, enhancing interaction with the Inter Religious Council and mapping Health Center II's and their respective health sub districts to expedite the supply of test kits to HC II's as well as establishing default stock orders per health facility level.

Plenary Discussion

The plenary discussion evolved around the challenges in mobilizing men to participate in reproductive health. The participants made the following observations:

1. The prevailing culture and beliefs discourage men from taking part in issues of maternal health. Men who get involved are criticized and perceived as “unmanly”.
2. The Health Centers are not male friendly; men get bored and are not engaged when they accompany their wives for ANC.
3. Boda Boda riders are hired to impersonate husbands at the health centers.
4. Health facilities are under staffed, leaving Midwives overwhelmed by the numbers of the mothers seeking their attention.

5. The majority of patients at the health centers are from the border regions thus stretching resources planned for the existing population.

The meeting also discussed the impact the provisions of the HIV Bill on “disclosure of one’s HIV status by a medical personnel” and “compulsory testing”, will have on people living with HIV and AIDs and the EMTCT campaign in general. It was agreed that advocacy and information sharing should be conducted to address these concerns.

At the end of the deliberations the Stakeholders’ made the following resolutions:

Recommendations:

1. **District Leadership to ensure collaboration with Development Partners in order to promote improved EMTCT/MNH service delivery:** The District Leadership committed to take stock of the status of EMTCT/MNH in the post campaign period, set new targets and promote improved service delivery, while mobilizing support from Development Partners to work together to achieve results.
2. **Promote the involvement of Religious leaders:** Religious and cultural leaders must be brought on board and given information to promote attitudinal change with regard to male involvement in reproductive health.
3. **Mobilize local resources to support EMTCT:** Leaders across the region should be encouraged to promote local resource mobilisation. Leaders should emulate the AMMICAL so as to contribute to community mobilisation and other events.
4. **Strengthen the capacity of LC I and II to sensitise Communities:** The capacity of the LCs should be strengthened to ensure sensitisation of expectant mothers and to increase their ANC attendance, as opposed to using the Traditional Birth Attendants.
5. **Motivate attendance to the ANC by providing extra incentives:** Attendance in ANC should be promoted by popularizing the practice of providing soap and other incentives during the distribution of Mama Kits at the health centers. This practice was found to increase the number of women attending ANC.
6. **Promote male involvement by prioritizing services for men at the Health Centers:** Men should be served first at ANC and released to go back to their regular work since experience has shown that men require instant attention at the Health Centers.

- 7. Increase resources to manage the influx of expectant mothers from the border regions:** Increase resources such as Test Kits to address the challenge of increasing numbers of Expectant Mothers from neighboring countries at the Health Centers.
- 8. Increase remuneration for Midwives:** Increase the remuneration of Midwives so that they are motivated to do their work.
- 9. Promote the multi stakeholder approach to EMTCT:** The Multi stakeholder approach to EMTCT that was adopted during the Regional Campaign was very effective in reaching the pre – campaign targets that were set. It is important to continue promoting this approach at all levels.

2.3 Recognition of the EMTCT Champion Mothers'

The District Champions of the EMTCT Champion Mothers Pageant from Maracha, Yumbe and Arua Districts and their husbands were introduced to the Stakeholders by the Communications and Public Relations Officer Ms. Chemisto Masturah who gave a background to the Pageant. The Pageant involved women from 64 Health Facilities within the 8 districts of the Region. At the time of the Launch, five districts were eagerly awaiting their Contests, with the Grand finale scheduled for 21st June in Arua District.

During the Contest the expectant mothers' knowledge of EMTCT, Antenatal Care awareness and their ability to share this information was assessed. The Contests that received an overwhelming response, especially from young couples had proved to be an effective means of information sharing, addressing issues of Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) and attracting crowds to HCT services.

She appreciated the support of UNFPA, MOH, OAFLA, UAC, Communication for Healthy Communities (CHC), AMMICAAL, the Baylor team and the participating Midwives, expectant mothers and their spouses.

2.4 Remarks by the Executive Director OAFLA

The Executive Director OAFLA, Mrs. Beat Bisangwa welcomed the First Lady and EMTCT Champion to the Stakeholder's meeting. She shared highlights of what had transpired during the deliberations, detailing the recommendations made.

Mrs. Bisangwa also spoke of the unique aspects of the West Nile Region's EMTCT Campaign, stating that for the first time the Campaign witnessed: the mobilisation of local resources to support activities, an efficient and effective M and E which witnessed services scaled up to superseded the set target of 10%, the innovation of an EMTCT Champion Mother's Contest, the integration of MNH in the EMTCT Campaign and

support of the Campaign through a joint effort of the UN Family in Uganda spearheaded by the UNAIDS Country Director and the WHO Country Director.

She expressed her sincere gratitude to all the participants for enabling Uganda witness the 6th EMTCT Campaign and thanked the First Lady for her continued support and participation in these events.

2.5 Presentation of a Report on the Status of EMTCT in the West Nile Region

The DHO Moyo Dr. Jimmy Opiga presented a Status Report of EMTCT in the West Nile Region. For details of this presentation refer to section 2.2 of the Report.

2.6 Remarks by the Director General Uganda AIDS Commission

The Director General UAC Dr. Christine Ondoa recognized the Champion's contribution to reduction of new infections from 28,000 people in 2011 to 8,000 people in 2013. She observed that with 1.6 million Ugandans currently living with HIV and AIDS there is still a big responsibility to keep them on treatment, care and counseling.

Dr. Ondoa shared results from a recent survey that indicate higher levels of vulnerability of the youth to HIV and AIDS than had been witnessed in the recent past. She attributed this to the reckless life styles of the youth and the fact that positive parenting is still wanting in Uganda. Research has shown that 2 out of 5 Christian couples have extra marital relationships, with the majority preferring to discuss reproductive health and lifestyle issues with health workers as opposed to religious leaders. She urged the religious and cultural leaders to be mindful of the changing times and to get involved in the reproductive health of their flock.

Dr. Ondoa expressed her appreciation to all the stakeholders both at the national and regional levels for their collaboration and dedication to promoting EMTCT and to the success of the launch in the Region.

2.7 Remarks by the Country Director UNAIDS

The Country Director UNAIDS Mr. Musa Bungudu spoke on behalf of the AIDS Development Partners. He drew attention to the fact that with the changing dynamics of the disease require focused attention on the younger generation with Civil Society as well as religious and cultural leaders, as the vehicle to reach them. There is also need for an effective communication strategy to send EMTCT messages to the village level.

Mr. Bungudu pointed out that the success registered in the West Nile Region is testimony of the fact that the participation of the political and civic leaders is a key element in

EMTCT. He urged them to: build on the Campaign success, foster the spirit of local resource mobilisation and lobby for the review of the controversial issues in the HIV and AIDS Bill in order to sustain the Campaign efforts.

2.8 Remarks by the Hon. Minister of Health

The Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda appreciated the people of the West Nile Region for their ownership of the EMTCT Campaign and their support in ensuring communities are mobilized, pointing out that these energies should be harnessed to ensure sustainability.

He pointed out that the alarming statistics of the rise in new infections in young women is indicative of the fact that it is time to intensify messages on prevention and to reinvigorate the ABC strategy that proved to be effective in the 1980's. Dr. Rugunda was happy to note that clients have confidence in the Health workers and urged the medical personnel to reciprocate this confidence by providing efficient and effective services.

"It is good to know that our clients have confidence in us, let us reciprocate this confidence and ask them to be messengers of the EMTCT message" he said.

"The target of an HIV free generation is really close.

The rate at which we are moving, we may reach this target before 2020".

Dr. Ruhakana
Rugunda
Minister of
Health

Dr. Rugunda thanked the EMTCT Champion for proving to be in fatigable in her commitment to the Campaigns. He also appreciated H.E. the President for prioritizing HIV and AIDS in his "State of the Nation Address" stating that this gave prominence to Government's commitment towards a generation free of HIV and AIDS.

He expressed optimism that with a powerful coalition of various leaders and sectors of society, the nation would overcome the Virus, saying that "The target for an HIV free generation is really close. The rate at which we are moving we may reach this target before 2020".

2.8 Presentation of Certificates of Recognition

The EMTCT Champion awarded the Best Performing District and Health Facility in the Region with a *Certificate of Recognition* for their efforts in Comprehensive HIV Care and Treatment. The Nebbi District Team and Panyimur Health Center III in Nebbi District were identified as the best in the Region.

The selection criteria was based on weighting data collection and the quality of services provided, including the ANC coverage based on first ANC, testing in Antenatal care and the subsequent linkages to care and treatment.

Remarks by the First Lady and EMTCT Champion

“The majority of Ugandans are still free of AIDs.

We cannot wait to train them on not passing it on. The message of prevention is therefore important for the young people”

*EMTCT Champion
Hon. Janet Museveni*

The EMTCT Champion thanked the people of West Nile and all the key stakeholders for putting together a well orchestrated and coordinated campaign. She pointed out that the achievement in meeting the targets of accelerated service delivery are commendable.

While referring to the effectiveness of future campaigns, the Champion urged the organizers to consider a one day as opposed to the current half day Stakeholders’ meeting to provide more time for the deliberations.

The EMTCT Champion observed that it is heart rending to hear that young girls are increasingly putting themselves at risk and urged the participants to step up messages on prevention to address this concern.

“People must be uncompromisingly informed that there is no cure for HIV and AIDS and that prevention is the most effective means of addressing its spread” she said.

She applauded the efforts made to integrate EMTCT in MNH noting that this collaboration would address the needs of mothers and their babies in a comprehensive manner. She however observed that while the health sector focuses on saving babies, leaders at all levels of society should not negate talking about prevention of HIV and AIDS in general.

“The majority of Ugandans are still free of AIDs and we cannot wait to train them on, not passing it on. The message of prevention is therefore important for the young people’ she said.

3.0 Public Rally and the Launch of the Motorbike Ambulance

3.1 Launching the Motorbike Ambulance and Flag off of the Maternal and Neonatal Health Convergence Programme

Not even the West Nile Region's mid afternoon scourging sun, could dull the joy, applause and ululations expressed by the crowds, as the EMTCT Champion launched the Motorbike Ambulance and flagged off the MNH Convergence Programme at the Arua Hills Primary School grounds. The Ambulances were generously provided for by the UNFPA to ease women's accessibility to health centers at the time of delivery.

3.2 Remarks by the LC V Chairman Arua District

The LC V Chairman Hon. Wadri Nyakua expressed gratitude to the people of the Region for responding to the EMTCT activities leading up to the Launch. He thanked the First Lady for choosing to launch the Campaign in Arua District, stating that the people in the Region had been longing to host her.

Hon. Wadri explained that 7 years ago the prevalence rate in Arua was 2.3% however it has now risen to 4.9% which is a worrying trend. He called for serious interventions to curb this trend. He regretted the fact that MSF France which for the last 12 years had been running an HIV clinic caring for over 8,000 people living with HIV, had left Arua leaving a big gap in service delivery. He further observed that the West Nile region faces challenges of sharing the limited health resources with people from the neighboring countries of Congo and the Sudan. He urged the MOH to increase the number of medical staff in the Regional Referral Hospital to compensate for these gaps.

He thanked the Development Partners, the UN Family and other stakeholders for their cooperation and support during the campaign period and pledge the District leadership's support to continued efforts on EMTCT in the District.

3.3 Remarks by the Director General Health of Services

The Director General of Health Services Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, observed that Uganda is still experiencing an enormous burden of HIV and AIDS epidemic. HIV prevalence nationally is higher among women at 8.3% than men at 6.3%. HIV prevalence increases with age until it peaks at the age of 35- 39 years of age for women (12%) and at the age of 40-44 for men (11%).

She explained that among other approaches the MOH continues to focus on behavioral interventions using the ABC approach and other biomedical interventions. She also

spoke about the other interventions the MOH has put in place with regard to Care and Treatment as well as EMTCT.

She concluded her remarks with a brief explanation about the Non Surgical Male Circumcision Pilot Programme rolled out by the MOH and which on its success, would be scaled up in 2015. She expressed the MOH's appreciation to the District Leadership in the region and all the stakeholders for their partnership and commitment to enhance HIV services in the West Nile Region.

3.4 Remarks by the Director General Uganda AIDS Commission

The Director General UAC Dr. Christine Ondoa expressed her dismay over the high HIV prevalence rate which she said had doubled. She noted that the two main drivers of the epidemic are known to be unfaithfulness amongst married couples and the compromising lifestyles of the Most At Risk Population (MARPS) which include the fishermen and prostitutes. A Study just concluded indicates a rise in prevalence amongst young people who have trans-generational sex.

"We are well able to reduce the HIV prevalence if all the stakeholders and the District leadership build on the successes registered during the Campaign"

*Dr. Ondoa
Director General UAC*

Dr. Ondoa advised the young people to desist from having sex before they are married and urged married couples to be faithful to their partners. She pointed out that there are ongoing efforts to reach the MARPS and urged the people of the West Nile Region to take the first step and get tested to ensure that they know their HIV status. She thanked them for their positive response to the Campaign stating that:

"We are well able to reduce the HIV prevalence if all stakeholders and the District Leadership build on the successes registered during the Campaign".

3.5 Remarks by the UN Resident Coordinator

The Country Director World Health Organisation Dr. Alemu Wondimagegnehu spoke on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator Mrs. Ahunna Eziakonwa. He expressed the UN's appreciation to the people of West Nile for their ownership of the EMTCT Programme.

He gave a background to the EMTCT and MNH Convergence programme as one of the areas that the UN in Uganda has prioritized in the spirit of Delivering as One. The UN has a specific focus and Action Plan for Northern Uganda because of its recovery and development challenges that are more pressing than in any other part of the country. The Convergence Programme provides a unique opportunity to critically analyse the link

between HIV and maternal and newborn health, to reflect on concrete actions required to accelerate the reduction of maternal and new born deaths and eliminate the transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies. He observed that:

“The challenge is enormous as we strive to meet the elimination targets by 2015, Uganda needs to increase domestic funding to take both maternal and new born health and HIV programmes to scale and ensure its sustainability”.

He thanked the First Lady and EMTCT Champion for her continued leadership and commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of mothers and their babies, which has lead to the outstanding performance of community mobilization in many districts.

3.5 Testimony by Drate Allan Oduka

Mr. Drate Allan Oduka shared a moving testimony (that brought many to tears), of how he found out about his HIV status as a child and the impact this has had on his life. He urged mothers to test for HIV during pregnancy and to follow the guidelines for treatment if found HIV positive, so as to prevent any other child from going through his unfortunate experience. Below are extracts of the Testimony in Allan’s own words.

“I was born in 1995; HIV positive and I soon contracted TB. My mother did not test for HIV during her pregnancy. She passed away in 2003 and I found out about my HIV status in 2008, from a Counselor after I had refused to take my medication.

I felt bad and I thought I was going to die as soon as possible. I was however told that I would not die. Good enough I am a courageous boy. I knew I had to tolerate who I was and I continued to take my drugs but life has been difficult for me.

I advise our dear mothers not to transmit the disease to their new born babies. There are facilities and ways to help prevent it. It is painful for a child to learn that they got the disease from the mother.

A child born free from HIV would be able to protect himself from the disease personally”.

3.6 Remarks by the Member of Parliament Ayivu County

The MP Ayivu County Hon. Atiku welcomed everyone to the West Nile Region and made a passionate appeal to the people in the Region to bring down the escalating rate of HIV transmission. He pointed out that it is everyone's duty to ensure that they do not contract the disease. He pledged the MPs from the Region's leadership in the EMTCT drive and thanked the Champion for her commitment to seeking a healthy and productive nation.

3.7 Remarks by a Representative of the Parliamentary Committee on HIV and AIDS

The Woman MP Abim Hon. Awuma spoke on behalf of the MPs who sit on the Parliamentary Committee on HIV and AIDS. She thanked the Champion for the tireless work she is doing traversing the nation, with messages to protect new born babies and communities in general from HIV and AIDS.

She shared highlights from the controversial HIV and AIDS Bill while explaining the challenges MPs faced in addressing concerns over the voluntary transmission of the virus and clauses on disclosure of the HIV test results, noting that a lot of sensitisation would have to be conducted to ensure that the public understand the spirit behind the legislation.

Hon. Awuma reflected on the significance of the theme of the Campaign "Stand up, participate and be counted" urging the public to take personal responsibility to ensure that the spread of the virus ends with them.

3.8 Remarks by the Hon. Minister of Health

Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda gave a background to the HIV epidemic in Uganda pointing out that Uganda was "invaded" by HIV and AIDS 30 years ago and now every family is affected by AIDS. He expressed gratitude to H.E the President and the NRM Government for taking on the battle of reducing the prevalence rate from over 20% to 3% at that time. He however noted that the problem still remains and the Country still loses many people because of the complacency, ushered in by the availability of drugs.

He thanked the First Lady for choosing to spear head the new EMTCT campaign noting that Uganda has demonstrated that by focusing on information flow to the population and the emphasis of prevention through ABC, prevalence rates can be brought down.

He pointed out that the Government has built the capacity of the Health Centers III and IV to provide treatment and care, and urged the public to take advantage of these facilities. He called upon the health workers to do their work to help those affected by

HIV and to adopt the prevention strategy as the first line in promoting an HIV free generation.

3.9 Remarks from the EMTCT Champion and First Lady of Uganda

“Thank you for the warm welcome. I am happy to be visiting West Nile. The people of Uganda refer to me as Mama wherever I go. I ask you today: what mother sits down when the children in her home are sick and the whole family is affected by their poor state of health?”

The First Lady of Uganda and EMTCT Champion made a passionate appeal to the people of West Nile to heed to all the messages and information shared throughout the EMTCT Campaign Period. She observed that the high prevalence rate of HIV in Uganda will only end when Ugandans realize the need to hold hands across the nation and determine to defeat the disease.

“Every family must determine not to open their door to HIV and AIDS” she said.

The Champion alluded to the testimony of Allan Oduka, the young man who found himself born with HIV and the challenges he has had to face living with the Virus, stating that every parent must determine to protect their babies from contracting the HIV.

1.5 million Ugandan adults and 193,500 children are living with HIV. We have no cure for HIV and AIDS. The message we are coming with today is:

“Stand up and join your wife, go to the health center and be tested. First know your status. Do you have HIV or not? Both of you must go because women have had to struggle on their own for too long. If you have AIDS make sure that you have a healthy baby and that is a battle you must both fight together” she said.

“The people of Uganda refer to me as Mama wherever I go.

I ask you today: what mother sits down when the children in her home are sick and the whole family is affected by their poor state of health?”

*EMTCT Champion
Hon. Janet Museveni*

She urged parents to talk to their children and encourage them to live responsible lives, so as not to contract the disease. She observed that there are countries that have 0% HIV prevalence, where all the babies are born free of the Virus and it is possible to achieve the same in Uganda.

Hon. Janet Museveni thanked the UN for rolling out the EMTCT and MNH Convergence Programme in 11 districts in Northern Uganda and for standing with the people of the West Nile Region throughout the Campaign period. She also expressed her appreciation to the people of West Nile for their resounding response to the EMTCT

campaign and to all the stakeholders for their collaboration and commitment to ensuring an HIV Free Generation.

Conclusion

The official launch of the 6th EMTCT Regional Campaign saw communities from all the 8 districts of the West Nile Region converge in Arua District to focus on how to bring an end to the transmission of the HIV to newly born babies. This Campaign not only carried EMTCT messages and scaled up service delivery but also proved to be an effective means of mobilising the people of West Nile to commit their local resources, energies and time, thus resulting in total ownership of the Campaign.

The tireless efforts of the National and Local Organising Committees lead to the effective monitoring and evaluation of the main campaign period, the innovation of the EMTCT Champion Mother's Pageant as well as the launch of the EMTCT and MNH Convergence Programme.

Throughout the Campaign period stakeholders in the Region and at the national level worked in partnership to scale up: the provision of commodities, efficiency in service delivery and coordination of the campaign events. Indeed the Campaign was a resounding success with the whole region superseding most of its M and E targets by the time of the Official Launch.