



Office of the First Lady

OAFLA Uganda Annual Report 2014

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Acronyms

ADPs	AIDS Development Partners
ARV	Anti Retroviral
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
DHO	District Health Officer
EMTCT	Elimination of Mother To Child Transmission
MOH	Ministry of Health
MTCT	Mother To Child Transmission
OAFLA	Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV and AIDS
SMS	Safe Male Circumcision
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendants
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 OAFLA Uganda Chapter 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.

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 created general awareness about effective HIV/EMTCT service delivery and specifically the need for leadership involvement, starting with male involvement in family reproductive health.

Some of the successes registered through these Campaigns are:

- Increased HIV/EMTCT service delivery and uptake as a result of engaging key high level stakeholders in consultations around a comprehensive four pronged approach to EMTCT, including: primary prevention, family planning, antenatal care, Option B+ and care for those infected and affected by the scourge;
- The recognition and motivation of high performing community based initiatives through visits by the Champion;
- Community-based sensitization rallies and one-on-one meetings with various stakeholders and;
- The dissemination of sensitization messages through Information Education and Communication (IEC) channels including the media, brochures, fact sheets etc.

This Report highlights key aspects of these Regional Campaigns detailing activities held in the Regions and their outcomes.

1.1 Overall Objectives of the Regional Campaigns

The objectives of the Campaigns are to:

- ☐ Provide a strategic platform for stakeholder engagement and mutual accountability to ensure effective EMTCT service delivery.
- ☐ Contribute to increased access to EMTCT services through community mobilisation and sensitization.
- ☐ Promote EMTCT best practices through the demonstration and show casing of HIV, prevention, care and treatment interventions.

The objectives were achieved in all the regions resulting in scaled up service delivery and uptake by the majority of Ugandans.

2.0 The Public Rallies and Consultative Meetings

The EMTCT Regional Campaigns were held on the following dates:

- ☐ Kampala Region – Kampala 2nd March 2014
- ☐ West Nile Region – Arua District 13th June 2014
- ☐ Busoga Region – Jinja District 4th December 2014

The following activities were conducted during the Campaigns:

a) Public Rally and Media Campaigns:

In all the Regions, the Campaigns culminated in Mass Public Rallies with over 3,000 – 5,000 members of the public and key stakeholders from the various districts in attendance. During the Rallies the First Lady and EMTCT Champion visited stalls exhibiting work carried out by different organizations and institutions involved in the HIV response. The Champion also presented the key note message at all the rallies, while other messages were delivered by Ministers, MPs, dignitaries, Development Partners and leaders from the region.

The Rallies were preceded by intensive media campaigns with messages on: HIV and AIDS awareness, the significance of Testing for HIV as couples and male involvement in reproductive health. Additionally, Implementing Partners, district leaders and

Village Health Teams (VHTs) mobilised communities to attend the Rallies. The radio stations in the Regions also aired a Statement on EMTCT by the First Lady.

b) Consultative Meetings with Key Stakeholders:

Consultative Meetings were organized in each region to provide a forum for stakeholders to build synergies and engage on key issues. The Meetings were attended by Cabinet Ministers, MPs, Diplomats, UN agencies, Development Partners and officials from the UAC and the MOH. National and regional actors from the health sector, key stakeholders from the Region, political leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and cultural and religious leaders were also in attendance.

- **Kampala Region:** The focus in Kampala District was on: *Assessing and enhancing EMTCT service delivery in Kampala*
- **West Nile Region:** The focus in Arua District was on: *Addressing cross boarder concerns in HIV/AIDS Response in the Region.*
- **Busoga Region:** The focus in Jinja District was on: *Addressing the drivers of Teenage Pregnancies in the Busoga Region.*

c) Other HIV and AIDS/EMTCT Activities conducted

In all the Regions the Campaigns were preceded by mass publicity and sensitization programmes.

The region specific activities of the Campaigns are highlighted in the table below:

A summary table of the activities held during the Campaigns

Region	Key Activities
Kampala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performing Artists shared EMTCT messages in the Public Rally - National Level Dialogue on EMTCT for Cultural and Religious Leaders - Meritorious Award to the Champion by AMMICAL - Public HIV Testing by H.E the President of Uganda, the EMTCT Champion and national leaders - Testimony by a young mother on success with Option B+
West Nile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testimony by a young person born with HIV/AIDS - An EMTCT Champion Mother's Pageant was organised to engage pregnant mothers in a competition on their knowledge regarding EMTCT, Antenatal Care and information sharing. - The Champion launched the Motorbike Ambulance Service and the MNH Convergence Programme to support expectant mothers. - Certificates of Recognition were presented by the Champion to the Best Performing District and health facility.
Busoga Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitisation workshop for Cultural and Religious Leaders on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS - Briefing on the findings of the MPs Campaign against Teenage Pregnancies in the Busoga Region - Testimony of a Peer Educator from "Mothers to Mothers" Organisation - "Mothers our Heroes" Song: A young lady born with HIV's song in appreciation of Mothers who heed the call on EMTCT. - Presentation of gifts to the EMTCT Champion for her commitment to fighting the HIV and AIDS Epidemic

3.0 Emerging Issues from the Consultative Meetings

While a number of strategies to address EMTCT were discussed in each region, below are key issues deliberated upon in the different regions:

Kampala Region

- *Engaging health providers in the private sector:* Engage the private sector health facilities, to provide incentives for women to do the HIV test.
- *Provision for Waiting Shelters for expectant mothers:* Waiting shelters for women should be considered as a means of increasing accessibility to health care for women, nearing the time of delivery.
- *The increasing urban population challenge:* The urban population is increasing consequently, pressure on health facilities. A long term strategy should be established to address the population challenge with a focus on accessibility by the vulnerable women.
- *Appropriate packaging of messages on male involvement:* Revisit the packaging of messages on male involvement to provide information about what is required of spouses at the health centers.

West Nile Region

- *Promote the involvement of Religious leaders:* Cultural and Religious Leaders must be brought on board and given information to promote attitudinal change with regard to male involvement in reproductive health.
- *Promote male involvement by prioritizing services for men at the Health Centers:* Men should be served first at ANC and released to return to work since experience has shown that men require instant attention at the Health Centers.
- *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.
- *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.

Busoga Region

The Consultative Meeting deliberated on recommendations to address the drivers of Teenage Pregnancies in the Busoga Region as outlined below:

Sensitisation

- Focus HIV/AIDs messages on abstinence and not condom use, promote the empowerment of the girl child and sensitise parents on parenting skills.
- Provide continuous education on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and promote training on morals and life skills for the boy child
- Support the “Ekisakate” (training programmes for the youth on issues of culture) organised by the Kyabazinga to instill morals in the young people

Law Enforcement

- Scale up community policing to address issues of defilement and drug abuse
- Pass ordinances and by laws to strengthen law enforcement

Economic Interventions

- Address poverty mindsets and promote family income generating projects
- Ensure that men in cane production are allowed to live with their families
- Sensitisation on vocational training to ensure more youth acquire skills
- Promote the education of the girl child

4.0 A Birds eye view of the Regional Campaigns

Kampala Region

The Kampala Campaign consisted of several activities including the HIV Public Testing of H.E the President and other national leaders held in November 2013 at Kiswa Health Center IV. The event was organized to promote HIV testing for all Ugandans; this being a first step towards curbing the spread of the Virus and MTCT. In March 2014 the First Lady took an HIV Test with several dignitaries at the Kololo Airstrip during the Kampala Region EMTCT Campaign Public Rally.

A Dialogue on EMTCT for Cultural and Religious Leaders at the National level was held on 14th November 2013. The Leaders discussed their role in the EMTCT and HIV Response and the importance of integrating key messages in their work.

A key highlight of the Kampala Campaign was the Meritorious Award bestowed on the EMTCT Champion by AMMICAL at the Consultative Meeting in recognition of her efforts in the HIV Response. The Meeting among other things focused on:

strategies for accessing and enhancing service delivery, private sector partnerships and the importance of engaging health providers in the private sector to support EMTCT.

The EMTCT Champion called upon the Consultative Meeting to address the need to: integrate PMTCT services within the existing Mother and Child services, improve accessibility to services and provide a comprehensive package of services at Health Centres across the country. She urged the MOH to train health workers to ensure a conducive environment for women and men to utilize health facilities.

West Nile Region

A number of activities were organised as part of the West Nile Regional Campaign. In line with the previous Campaigns a Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting was held 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.

A unique feature of the Campaign was the organisation of an EMTCT Champion Mother's Pageant that was conducted in all the districts in the Region. Pregnant mothers were engaged in a competition to assess their knowledge regarding EMTCT, Antenatal Care awareness and their ability to share this information.

The EMTCT Champion launched the Motorbike Ambulance Service and the Maternal and Neonatal Health Convergence Programme at the Public Rally Grounds. This Ambulance service is supported by UNFPA to transport expectant mothers to health facilities. In addition the First Lady presented Certificates of Recognition to the Best Performing District and health facility as assessed by Baylor Uganda.

Busoga Region

In the Busoga Region the meetings held with selected interest groups re-laid messages on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS to communities. The Campaign also brought out the significance of involving Cultural and Religious Leaders as a means of addressing behavioral change; these leaders having done commendable work in mobilising their communities with messages on behavioral change.

The Consultative Meeting received a report on the findings of the MPs from the Parliamentary Forum on Population and Food Security, who conducted a Campaign against Teenage Pregnancies in the Region. The Report drew attention to the unique challenges the Region faces with regard to: child abuse, poverty, the reckless lifestyles of some of the employees of the Sugar Cane Industry and truck drivers on the transport corridor, all of which contribute to fueling the problem. Discussions were held on proposals to address these drivers of Teenage Pregnancies, with emphasis being laid on specific social, economic and law enforcement interventions.

At the Public Rally the people of Busoga listened to the heartrending testimony of a Peer Educator from “Mothers to Mothers” Organisation who talked about how she began her work as a woman confronted by HIV; having to fight the stigma and to support other women to do the same. In the same spirit, a young lady born with HIV moved the crowd to tears with her song “Mothers our Heroes” in appreciation of Mothers who heed the call on EMTCT.

In her address to the people of Busoga, the EMTCT Champion expressed concern over the high level of teenage pregnancies that affects the lives of young girls exposing them to: HIV, maternal deaths and robs them of their education, while increasing the rate of maternal mortality in the Region. She urged parents to provide sex education at home and not to abandon this responsibility to teachers. She called upon the Cultural and Religious Leaders to share messages on HIV and AIDS since God will hold them accountable for the people under their care and leadership.

5.0 Conclusion

The three EMTCT Regional Campaigns witnessed great success in heightening public awareness and building strong partnerships for the promotion of EMTCT across a wide spectrum of stakeholders. The Campaigns were also instrumental in: engaging key stakeholders in consultations around EMTCT and HIV and AIDS, sharing the importance of Option B plus and stepping up the availability of commodities.

Through these Campaigns the First Lady has effectively utilized her political platform to foster increased political will and to enhance an exceptional team spirit amongst stakeholders. In the same vein the public rallies and consultative meetings have stepped up the re-engagement of the political, cultural and religious leadership in the HIV and AIDS response.

The effective use of the mass media to disseminate the Campaign messages and the mobilization of the public, has increased the demand for commodities and in turn the accessibility of services countrywide.

OAFILA Uganda owes this success to the tireless efforts of the Uganda AIDS Commission, the Ministry of Health, Government and District officials, implementing partners, the development partners and the communities that have actively participated in the Campaigns country wide.

OAFILA expresses its deep appreciation to all these actors for their tireless efforts. We appeal for continued support as we all commit to:

Stand Out, Participate and Be Counted! – For an HIV Free Generation