



# *REPORT OF THE EMTCT CAMPAIGN*

## **Teso Region**



**31<sup>st</sup> July 2015**

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## **Acronyms**

AMMICAL	Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV AND AIDS in Africa, Uganda Chapter
ARV	Anti Retroviral
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
DHO	District Health Officer
EMTCT	Elimination of Mother To Child Transmission
HCT	HIV and AIDS Counseling and Testing
MOH	Ministry of Health
MTCT	Mother To Child Transmission
OAFLA	Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV AND AIDS
VHTs	Village Health Teams

## 1.0 Background to the EMTCT Campaign

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 U). OAFLA is committed to contributing to efforts towards an AIDS free Africa.

The 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.

### 1.1 Origins of the EMTCT Campaigns

The First Lady of Uganda was nominated the National EMTCT Champion in August 2012, thereafter she embarked on Regional Campaigns to create awareness about EMTCT. These Campaigns are organised and coordinated by OAFLA Uganda 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 under the theme *“Stand Out, Participate and be Counted – Towards an HIV Free Generation”*, 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 Option B plus and scaling up the availability of commodities in the regions' reached.

This is a report of the Teso Region EMTCT Campaign held on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015; the ninth in a series of Campaigns to create awareness about EMTCT and the need for Male Involvement in the Reproductive Health of their wives. The Campaign covered Soroti, Kaberamaido, Kumi, Serere, Katakwi, Amuria, Bukedea and Ngora Districts. In this region the Campaign was run under the sub theme: *Keeping Families in Care*.

## 1.2 Activities organised to mark the Regional Campaign

The following activities were organised as part of the Regional Campaign:

- **Media Campaigns:** The Campaign witnessed the Orientation of the Media and over two months of radio messages on EMTCT/ HIV and AIDS awareness.
- **Enhanced Service Delivery:** The MOH and IPs in the Region scaled up service delivery. Open air sites for HCT and other related services were set up to promote additional access to services during the Campaign period.
- **The Religious and Cultural Leaders Dialogue:** OAFLA Uganda organised a Dialogue for Religious and Cultural Leaders to create awareness about EMTCT and to address key issues of concern regarding practices that hinder the response.
- **Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting and the Public Rally:** A Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting was held at the Soroti State Lodge, which was followed by a Public Rally at the Sports Grounds, Soroti.
- **Commissioning of the Renovation of Health Center IVs in the Teso Region:** The Minister of State for Primary Health Care commissioned the renovation of Princess Diana Health Center IV; the first renovation in a series of refurbishments of Health Center IVs in the Teso Region by Baylor Uganda. The Health Center was also provided with new equipment to support the "Keeping Babies Alive" Programme.
- **Testimony of a Father on his role in the birth of his HIV Free baby girl:** A man living with HIV shared a story of how he supported his wife to give birth to an HIV negative baby.
- **Our Mothers, Our Heroes - Testimonies by children born HIV Free Hero:** Over 50 young children born HIV Free were presented to the National EMTCT Champion at the Public Rally where they shared their testimony.

## 1.3 Outcomes of the EMTCT Regional Campaign in Soroti

The concerted effort on awareness creation, HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT) outreach programmes and media campaigns characterized the Teso Region Campaign for two months. Service delivery was scaled up enabling a wider coverage of the population. Several media platforms were used for information sharing thus increasing the number of expectant mothers and their families as well as communities reached. The Campaign also provided a platform for awareness creation amongst religious leaders on issues of HIV and AIDS as well as EMTCT. Discussions were held



on their role in mobilising communities and the need for them to address areas of stigma, discrimination and other hindrances of access to health services.

## 2.0 The Stakeholders Consultative Meeting



The Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting was held at the Soroti State Lodge, in attendance were: Ministers, the representative of the US Ambassador to Uganda, the UN Family, Development Partners, IPs and officials from the MOH. Also in attendance were key stakeholders from the eight Districts of the Teso Region including: the district leadership, religious and cultural leaders and CSOs.



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.
- ☐ To discuss the challenge of retention; *Keeping Families in Care* and to share strategies to address the issue.

## 2.1 Opening Remarks



### Remarks by the Executive Director OAFLA Uganda

The Executive Director OAFLA Uganda Mrs. Beat Bisangwa welcomed the stakeholders to the Consultative Meeting and gave a background to the EMTCT Regional Campaigns and in particular the Stakeholders Consultative Meeting, which she said is a key activity in the Campaign. She explained that at every Campaign the Meeting receives the EMTCT Regional Status Report and discusses key issues pertaining to the HIV/EMTCT Response, while proposing

strategies to address these concerns.

She applauded the Leaders for braving the journey that began in August 2012 with the nomination of the First Lady as the National EMTCT Champion, and that has seen nine campaigns implemented across Uganda. She explained that the Region's sub theme is: Keeping Families in Care; which brought the focus of the Campaign to the issue of retention. Mrs. Bisangwa talked about the activities that characterized the Teso Region Campaign. She shared highlights of the dialogue held with the religious and cultural leaders, pointing out that there are still a number of cultural practices and religious beliefs that hinder the EMTCT response.

She thanked all the stakeholders for their tireless efforts that have resulted in the success of the Campaign and wished them fruitful deliberations.

## 2.2 Discussion on the issues hindering retention in the Region and strategies to address them

Group work was conducted on the theme: Keeping Families in Care. The participants were required to discuss the issues hindering the realization of retention and the promotion of male involvement in the EMTCT response as well as strategies to address these issues.



### Factors hindering the realization of retention and the promotion of male involvement

1. Male involvement is not adhered to especially by the elite men who are reluctant to attend ANC and Partner Follow-up Programmes.
2. Low staffing in hospitals and the lack of motivation by health workers affects service delivery and hinders mothers from seeking health care.
3. Cultural norms such as: the preference of delivery with the help of TBAs and herbal treatment, as well as widow inheritance affect EMTCT. There is also an increase in cesarean sections that causes fear of delivering at the health facilities.
4. The privacy and secrecy surrounding sex and sexuality, hinders sex education and the proper use of condoms.
5. Literacy is still low and this impacts on how information is passed on to communities. There is also a “low risk perception” amongst mothers and families because of lack of information.
6. The lack of health packages for men when they escort their wives to the health facilities



7. The high level of teenage pregnancies and the resultant fear of stigma by young girls, who hide instead of attending antenatal clinics. The young girls also lack family support because of their status.
8. Access is facility based and yet health facilities are long distances from the communities; making it difficult for mothers to travel to health centers without family support.
9. Alcoholism is a real issue in the Region. The men take alcohol (Ajono) from morning to evening and neglect their families. Alcoholism also depletes family resources.
10. Stigma is high in the communities and affects access to health care

#### **Strategies that could be used to address these challenges:**

The following are the strategies proposed to address these issues:

1. Religious and cultural leaders should be equipped to sensitise communities. There is need for continuous dialogue to enable information sharing.
2. Motivate health workers and ensure community based access to health care.
3. Health facilities must be brought nearer to the people and there should be improved transportation and infrastructure.
4. Provide for health services when the men escort their wives to the ANC.
5. Men should be sensitized to consider pregnancy a family issue. The focus should turn to peer sensitisation.
6. Train TBAs so that they refer the mothers to the health services.
7. Promote abstinence and faithfulness. Encourage couples to test for HIV.

#### **Strategies in support of the EMTCT Campaign and challenges faced in the HIV and AIDS Response presented by Religious and Cultural leaders:**

The Religious and Cultural leaders explained that they participated in an interesting dialogue organised by OAFLA Uganda, in which they discussed views on their role in the EMTCT Response as highlighted below:

#### **Strategies adopted in promoting EMTCT:**

1. Couples are encouraged to test together and support each other.
2. The basis of the campaign messages is to promote prevention through: abstinence for the youth and faithfulness amongst couples.

3. The condom is not promoted amongst the youth but can only be used amongst couples that are discordant or infected in order to prevent re-infection.

### Challenges faced in promoting EMTCT:

1. Low male involvement that requires sensitisation.
2. Concerns over the campaign on SMC, which has caused the false impression that it provides a 100% cover from contracting HIV and AIDS.
3. The inconsistent and incorrect use of condoms; consequently the reluctance to promote them.
4. Lack of skills and knowledge about EMTCT. There is need for religious and cultural leaders to be equipped with skills to sensitise the people.



### 2.3 Status Report on EMTCT in the Teso Region

The DHO Serere Dr. Francis Odeke provided a background to the Region, pointing out the available health facilities in the different districts. He also shared the strategies put in place to scale up service delivery in the 2 months of the Campaign. These were the: targeted out reaches focusing on the Most At Risk Populations (MARPS) and special groups, the scale up of cervical cancer screening as well as SMC at community level, orientation of health workers and VHTS on EMTCT, intensified monitoring of stock status of HIV commodities and the monitored ANC uptake through the weekly Option B+ short messages (SMS) reports.

He highlighted some of the achievements of the Campaign as:

- There was a 21% increase in the numbers of people tested for HIV in April to June compared to January to March 2015.
- ANC attendance increased by 11% with respect to October to December 2014 baseline.
- Couple testing increased by 5% from the baseline and family planning increased by 18% from the baseline.
- The men circumcised increased by 29.4% from the baseline

In the spirit of promoting *Families in Care* a number of strategies were put in place some of those mentioned were: strengthening the use of the appointment register, the use of

pre-loaded health facility fixed telephones for follow up, and the roll out of family support at 80 health facilities.

He concluded his presentation by making a number of recommendations to enhance the Campaign and carry it forward in the future, these were:

- Intensify treatment preparation at initiation and reinforce adherence counseling at follow up.
- Involve expert clients and peer mothers in addressing disclosure.
- Re-equip midwives and ART counselors with counseling skills.
- Strengthen the use of appointment diaries and follow up by phone and VHT visits.

Dr. Odeke thanked all the IPs, development partners as well as the district and national leadership who gave direction during the Campaign and provided the necessary technical and financial support towards its success. He thanked OAFLA Uganda and the National EMTCT Champion for staying the course for the last nine Campaigns saying that without their participation the success on EMTCT in Uganda would never have been realized.

## 2.4 Remarks by Stakeholders and Government Leaders



### a) Remarks by the Director General Health Services Ministry of Health

The Director General Health Services MOH, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng welcomed the stakeholders to the Consultative Meeting and thanked them for making the time to attend. She addressed some of the concerns raised in the group work pointing out that Cesarean Section surgeries, at the Health Centers are at times a result of the fact that young girls get pregnant when their bodies are not developed. To address this issue in 2015 the MOH launched a campaign against teenage pregnancy in eastern

Uganda where the rate of teenage pregnancies was highest. The other challenge is that most mothers are malnourished early in life and grow up stunted, thus they get complications in child birth.

She applauded men who have set the example of male involvement by forming Male Action Groups and pointed out that the MOH has developed a Male Involvement Strategy to guide and promote male involvement in the reproductive health of their spouses. There is also the challenge of cervical cancer which is transmitted by the Human Papilloma Virus that is sexually transmitted. The MOH has now secured a vaccine to support women country wide. The vaccine will mainly be administered to young girls who are between 9-13 years of age, consequently they must be sensitised not to engage in sex at an early age. She then called upon Dr. Alex Opio the Commissioner National Disease Control to share information about SMC.

Dr. Alex Opio explained the following about SMC and Condoms:

- ☐ SMC is one of the effective HIV prevention tools. It reduces the risk of acquisition of HIV by 60%. The surgery must be done by a properly trained medical worker using appropriate tools.
- ☐ SMC reduces the risk of STDs and penile cancer.
- ☐ Once circumcised every man is expected to employ other preventive methods including condom use.
- ☐ SMC does not reduce the sexual performance of men neither does it cause prostate cancer.
- ☐ The partner of the circumcised person cannot easily acquire cancer of the cervix.
- ☐ The first line of prevention of the spread of HIV and AIDS is abstinence from sex, being faithful is the second and the third is condom use, because there are always those who will not be faithful.
- ☐ Condoms must be used properly and stored according to the prescribed guidelines in order for them to be effective.

Dr. Ruth Aceng then concluded her remarks by recognizing the contribution made by Dr. Esiru the former National PMTCT Coordinator to the EMTCT campaign in Uganda. She explained that Dr. Esiru was recently appointed the Senior Technical Advisor on HIV and AIDS Services under the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), as a result of his outstanding contribution to the EMTCT response in Uganda. He currently supports 13 African nations to streamline Option B plus.

## b) Remarks by the Representative of the US Ambassador



The Acting Director Center for Disease Control, Ms. Theresa Wingate represented the US Ambassador. In her remarks she pointed out the fact that epidemic control of HIV is a global challenge and it cannot happen without protecting mothers and babies from being infected. The Government of Uganda must be applauded for the strides it has taken to provide leadership in this noble cause and for taking this Campaign to the communities. She however noted that while there has been a lot to learn and share, there is still a lot more that can be done to ensure that no baby is born with the Virus again.

She expressed her gratitude to all the Development Partners and the IPs that have taken on this initiative and thanked the people of Soroti for their hospitality.

## c) Remarks by the Representative of the UN Family



The Country Director UNAIDS, Mr. Musa Bungudu speaking on behalf of the UN Family, acknowledged the great strides Uganda has achieved in the EMTCT, pointing out that the number of babies born HIV positive are now 9,500 a drop from 15,000 in 2013. There is also a lot of positive news regarding the progress made by Uganda in reducing the number of people dying from HIV; this is attributed to the scale up in service delivery. He appreciated the technical support from the MOH and other partners and thanked the President and First Lady Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni, for their tireless efforts.

He noted nevertheless that there are areas in which there is need to do more. "If 90% of Ugandans were to test for HIV today there would be 500,000 to 700,000 people on treatment and the Government would not be able to support all of them with ARVs. This should not be the case since the Ugandan Government is credit worthy and Quality Chemicals should be able to supply these drugs, to save Ugandans. We must do what it takes to put these babies on treatment together with their mothers", he said.

Mr. Bungudu pointed out the following strategies that would go a long way in supporting the EMTCT campaign:



- ❑ Adolescents both boys and girls, should be provided with information and services to promote awareness on HIV and AIDS, as well as EMTCT.
- ❑ Development partners should address the issue of the limited human resource in the MOH, which is characterized by medical workers leaving the country for better pay and good working conditions. Uganda has lost credible well educated individuals because they went without salary for long periods.
- ❑ The focus of the Ministry of Education must change and move onto working with and reaching young people on issues of HIV and AIDS.
- ❑ Cultural and religious leaders must engage more with health workers and build linkages between them and their communities.

He concluded his remarks by urging the Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV AND AIDS in Africa, Uganda Chapter (AMMICAL), to provide the linkages between the medical workers and high risk groups such as the adolescents, Commercial Sex Workers and fishing communities. He urged the media to continue the good work they are doing and commended the National EMTCT Champion for choosing to place the health of women high on Government's Agenda.



#### **d) Remarks by the Minister of State for Teso Region**

The Minister of State for Teso Region Hon. Christine Aporu expressed her gratitude to the MOH and OAFLA for choosing to bring the Campaign to the Teso Region. She pointed out the need for Health Center IV's to be upgraded to hospitals in the districts of Bukedea, Serere and Amuria which do not have hospitals. Currently the policy is that the Health Center II's should be phased out and upgraded to Health Center III.

She thanked the MOH for a well thought out Campaign sub theme "*Keeping families in care*", since the family is the core unit of society and women need support from the family as they play their reproductive roles. She urged men to support their wives and to stand with them as they go through child birth. Hon. Aporu applauded Government for rolling out the Hepatitis B vaccine in the Eastern Region and urged the community leaders to share this information with their people.

She concluded her remarks by thanking the UN Family, the American Government, the Development Partners, the District Leadership, IPs, Religious and Cultural Leaders and all stakeholders for their involvement in promoting an HIV Free Generation. She expressed gratitude to OAFLA Uganda, the National EMTCT Champion and the MOH for

supporting the mothers of the nation and for giving children the hope of living life free of HIV and AIDS.



**e) Remarks by the Minister of State for Primary Health Care – Representing the First Lady and National EMTCT Champion Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni**

Hon. Sarah Opendi the Minister of State for Primary Health Care, welcomed the stakeholders to Soroti and gave the genesis of the EMTCT. So far the prevalence rate has dropped from 15,000 children infected at birth in 2013 to 9,500 currently. She noted that while this achievement is impressive the total elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT) will not be achieved until every Ugandan considers this cause an issue of personal responsibility. The responsibility to ensure that: one does not contract the disease, the responsibility to personally pass on EMTCT messages to others and the responsibility to support women to access health services, during their time of pregnancy and child birth. She noted that because of lack of male support many women who attend the first ANC do not return, thus making retention very difficult. She cited the story she had heard that morning on her way to the event, of a woman who had just lost her life at a health center in her constituency. The woman was a victim of the delays in taking women to health centers that is characteristic of rural families. She lamented that this woman would not have died had her husband taken personal responsibility to accompany her to the health center in time.

Hon. Opendi confirmed the fact that Government intends to upgrade all the Health Center II's to Health Center III's in order to bring services closer to the people. She said it is important to encourage everyone to test for HIV and get to know their status. Religious leaders should talk to those who want to get married and encourage them to know their status. These messages should be shared at all events. The MOH goal for EMTCT is to ensure elimination by 2020; with 90% of people living with HIV aware of their HIV status, 90% of people who know their status accessing HIV treatment and

90% of people on HIV treatment achieving viral suppression. Testing and treatment is very important if Uganda is going to reduce new infection.

Hon. Opendi expressed concern over CSOs that frustrate HCT programmes in schools where parental consent has not been attained when testing children. She pointed out that while there is no policy on this issue it would be important for the child not to miss the opportunity once health workers have counseled them and they are old enough to understand its importance. She urged the leaders present to warn the public against alcoholism and promoting child marriages that result in teenage pregnancies.

“Those who are negative should remain negative and those who are positive please stick to the drugs. Do not skip treatment because of improvement in your health, since lack of adherence causes resistance” she concluded.

### 3.0 Commissioning of the Renovation of Health Center IVs in the Teso Region:

The Minister of State for Primary Health Care Hon. Sarah Opendi commissioned the renovation of Princess Diana Health Center IV; the first renovation in series of refurbishments of Health Center IVs in the Teso Region by Baylor Uganda with support from CDC. The Health Center was also provided with new equipment to support the “Keeping Babies Alive” Programme. The event was witnessed by Development Partners, District Officials and representatives of various IPs.





#### 4.0 The Public Rally

The Public Rally was held at the Soroti Sports Grounds and was attended by the people of the Teso Region, who were joined by the dignitaries who had earlier on participated at the Stakeholders Consultative Meeting. The Rally was characterized by: exhibitions from various NGOs and stakeholders operating in the HIV and AIDS Response, messages on EMTCT, cultural dances and entertainment from key artists in the Region.



#### **4.1 Opening Remarks**

##### **a) Remarks by the LC I Chairman**

The LC 1 Chairman Mr. Opejo Atansilus welcomed the gathering to Soroti and thanked them for supporting the EMTCT Campaign. He pointed out that the District was happy to host the Campaign and thanked all the IPs for scaling up service delivery and reaching communities during the last 2 months. He appreciated the First Lady for her efforts in the fight against HIV and AIDs in Uganda and wished everyone a fruitful day.

##### **a) Remarks by the representative of the LC V Chairman Soroti District**

Mr. William Tukei the LC V Bukedea District represented the LC V Chairman Soroti District. He thanked the people of Teso for participating in the event to launch EMTCT in the Teso Region and for heeding to the messages in the two months Campaign. He appealed to the people of Teso to take the EMTCT message seriously and to continue the Campaign even after the Launch. He expressed gratitude to Baylor Uganda for the good work done and for the plans to face lift the Health Center IVs that began with Princess Diana Health Center IV.

He concluded his remarks by making an appeal for the Health Center IVs to be upgraded to hospitals and for those facilities that do not have ambulances to acquire them.

##### **b) Remarks by the Emorimor the Cultural Leader of Teso Region**

His Highness the Emorimor of Teso welcomed the First Lady and National Champion EMTCT to Teso pointing out that all the eight districts of Teso were present at the Public Rally. He said the people of Teso lacked information about HIV and AIDS and how it is transmitted to the children, but with the coming of the EMTCT programme; the Campaign had helped the people to get to know how to prevent MTCT. He pointed out that they had also witnessed Testimonies of children born HIV free; a strong message that EMTCT would soon be a reality. He encouraged husbands to test together with their wives and to support them through their pregnancy and at the time of delivery.

On behalf of the people of the Teso Region, the Emorimor thanked the Government and H.E the President, the UN family and all partners supporting the health care of his people and wished them all the best in the future Campaigns.



“No one wants to have a sick child; they want to have HIV free children so use the opportunity to protect your family from HIV and AIDS: he said.

#### 4.2 High Lights of the EMTCT Launch

**a) Testimony by children born free from HIV - “Our Mothers, our Heroes”**

Over 50 young children born HIV Free and their families were presented to the National EMTCT Champion, with whom they shared heartwarming testimonies of how their mothers had made the effort to give birth to HIV Free babies. They ended their testimonies with the phrase “My mother is my hero and because of her I am HIV negative!!

**b) Testimony from a married man living with HIV and AIDS**

A husband living with HIV shared his story, stating how he supported his wife to give birth to an HIV negative baby. He now participates in the peer education for other HIV positive couples in his community. The following is an abridged version of his testimony:

*“I am here with my wife and we welcome you. My wife and I went to the health facility. We were counseled on how to care for the pregnancy and we took the drugs. After 3 weeks, we went back to the health facility the child was given the drug Septrin. The child was breast feed until 6months and after that we gave her cow’s milk.*

*After 1 year we stopped breast feeding, we took her for review and she was negative and after 6months the child was declared free from HIV. We were given a certificate. Now we work hard to ensure children are born free of HIV. We have been able to counsel other couples in our community”.*

### 4.3 Remarks by Government Officials and Development Partners

#### a) Remarks by the Director General of Services in the Ministry of Health

*“Keep up the momentum of the Campaign and ensure that the messages on HCT and spousal support during pregnancy and child birth are carried on throughout the Region”*

The Director General  
Health Services  
(MOH)

The Director General of Services in the MOH, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng thanked the district leadership for the warm welcome and for hosting the Campaign. She traced the origins of the EMTCT Campaigns pointing out that there have been nine Campaigns accomplished successfully; with two more to realize in Masaka and Kiruhura Districts.

She expressed gratitude to the National EMTCT Champion who braved a number of circumstances in order to keep her commitment to officiate at the Public Rally in Soroti District; thus expressing her love for the people of the Region. She noted that while a lot of progress has been made, a lot more still needs to be done. She told the people of Soroti and the Teso Region in general to carry on with the Campaign. “Keep up the momentum of the Campaign and ensure that the messages on HCT and spousal support during pregnancy and child birth are

carried on throughout the Region” she urged.

She acknowledged the work done by Baylor Uganda and applauded the Organisation for the vision they have to renovate Health Center IVs in various parts of the region. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng thanked the Development Partners for their support and in particular the US Government for the funding that goes through Baylor Uganda. She applauded OAFLA Uganda, the AIDS Control Programme, the UAC and the MOH for the work done in all the nine Campaigns nationwide.

#### b) Remarks by the Chairperson AIDS Development Partners

The Chairperson of the AIDS Development Partners Ms. Flora Banage recognized the great strides Uganda has made in promoting EMTCT country wide. She however noted that the 9,500 babies that are still infected is high and unacceptable. “Today there is no reason why a baby should be born with HIV, since the spread of the virus has been almost eliminated in most countries” she said.

She pointed out that the Eastern Region Campaign marks the beginning of yet another period of renewed commitment to achieving the ultimate goal of an HIV Free generation. She informed the gathering that the Stakeholders Meeting had earlier addressed issues of access to health services by women and the importance of delivering in health facilities. She therefore urged the men who are part of the Family Health Groups to use their platform to support other men to help their wives during their time of pregnancy. “It is only by working together at the national and regional level that we will truly realize the goal of a generation free of the Virus” she said.

#### **b) Representative of the UN Resident Coordinator**

The Country Director UNAIDS Mr. Musa Bungudu spoke on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator. He congratulated the Mayor of Soroti for his election as Vice President of the Alliance for World Mayors a nomination he attained while on a UN sponsored visit to Accra Ghana, where 400 Mayors had convened at a Conference.

The UN fraternity in Uganda is happy that the nation is making good progress and putting more people on treatment every year. He encouraged the people of Teso region not to be fearful of being tested for HIV, urging those who are found to be positive to adhere to their treatment so as to live fulfilled lives.

He expressed concern over the number of children who are still unable to access treatment pointing out that these represent 60-67% of children who are HIV positive. He urged Government to explore how schools can be used to reach out and provide HCT services for children, pointing out that sports activities are a good avenue to reach children and their families with messages. He appreciated the effort of the National EMTCT Champion and the President for their continued leadership and support.

#### **c) Minister of State for Teso**

The Minister of State for Teso Region Hon. Christine Aporu thanked the National EMTCT Champion for coming to Teso and for her heart for the people of the Region. She commended the people of Teso for responding positively to the EMTCT campaign pointing out that a large number of people had been registered as having participated in HCT, the SMC and ANC programmes of the Campaign.

She made special mention of the positive response from the Emorimor who personally mobilised the people to respond to the EMTCT messages through the media. She thanked him for his wise counsel and leadership as well as his commitment to supporting Government programmes. Hon. Aporu urged the people not to break the momentum of the Campaign stating that they must urge all the men to get involved in the

reproductive health of their wives by testing together and seeking treatment together where necessary.

She highlighted some of the challenges in the implementation of EMTCT programme as the high level of teenage pregnancies, men who undermine the campaign on SMC and the poor attendance at the ANC. She appealed to the public: “Join hands with Government to fight the HIV and AIDS scourge to ensure Uganda realizes a generation free of HIV” she said.

#### **d) Remarks by The Minister of State for Primary Health Care**

The Minister of State for Primary Health Care, Hon Sarah Opendi thanked the people for turning up in big numbers to meet the National EMTCT Champion and she welcomed her to Teso Region.

*“We will not achieve an HIV Free generation if you are not tested to know your status. The fight against HIV begins with you”*

Minister of State for  
Primary Health

She explained that there are a number of achievements that have been registered ever since Option B+ was rolled out nationwide. There has been a synergistic scale up of ART as per the new treatment guidelines and because of this the number of deaths due to HIV has reduced. Data received under the EMTCT programmes indicate that fewer babies are born with HIV infection. In 2013 15,000 babies were born infected compared to 28,000 babies in 2008. In December 2014 the number of babies born with the Virus had further reduced to 9,500. While the number is still high the statistics are an indication that there is hope for EMTCT to succeed.

She reported the outcomes of the Stakeholders Meeting held in the morning pointing out that the various leaders at the meeting are all committed to ensuring that the impact of the Campaign continues even after the end of the launch. She warned religious and cultural leaders who discourage the people from accessing health care saying that they risk being arrested by the Police.

Hon. Sarah Opendi urged expectant mothers to go to the health facilities for testing and where they find they are HIV positive to immediately go on to the treatment and care programmes. “Most importantly I want to appeal to the people of Teso that ...we will not achieve an HIV Free generation if you are not tested to know your status. The fight against HIV begins with you” she said.

She thanked the Development Partners and all the stakeholders as well as the National EMTCT Champion for their tireless efforts in all the 9 Regional Campaigns, without whom the Campaigns would never have succeeded. She wished them a safe travel to their homes.



#### e) Remarks by the First Lady and National Champion EMTCT Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni

The First Lady and National EMTCT Champion Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni expressed greetings from H.E the President who she said wanted the people of Teso Region to know that he is with them in the struggle against the spread of HIV and AIDS. She expressed her gratitude to the team of leaders who have been moving with her to promote the EMTCT cause all over the country.

In regard to the testimonies shared Hon. Janet Museveni pointed out that “the children we all heard testify that because of their parents they were born HIV free, make our day if anything else’.

She explained that the Campaign was put together to galvanise the people of Uganda and to remind the fathers in every family they have a duty to their wives and the children they bring into the world. We have been appealing to men to walk together on the 9 months journey of pregnancy with their wives and to hold hands with them so as to enable them bring forth children who are free of HIV. The beautiful testimony from the children in their own words is evidence that it is possible to defeat HIV and AIDS by having a generation free of HIV and AIDs.

She reminded talk about the fact that it is necessary for people to protect themselves from catching HIV and AIDS in the first place, urging every Ugandan to become a Champion to take the messages to their areas of influence. She urged women and men to ensure they are well

*“We must continue to work together as we build a better world for our children.*

*Please know that we value what you have done to bring to the world children that are HIV free; because you are all their heroes.*

*May God bless you all”*

National EMTCT  
Champion  
stakeholders



informed about the different family planning methods before adopting them and to ensure they space their children adequately.

The National EMTCT Champion thanked the Development Partners, the MOH, the cultural and religious leaders and the IPs for truly holding hands with Ugandans on this journey. We must continue to work together as we build a better world for our children. “Please know that we value what you have done to bring to the world children that are HIV free; because you are all their heroes. May God bless you all” she concluded.