

# Regional Campaigns on the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission Report



*... Stand out, Participate, Be counted ...*

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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 |
| SMC   | Safe Male Circumcision                                    |
| TBA   | Traditional Birth Attendants                              |
| UAC   | Uganda AIDS Commission                                    |
| VHTs  | Village Health Teams                                      |

## Foreword

The EMTCT Regional Campaigns were rolled out in March 2013 and have since been conducted in five regions of Uganda. The Campaigns have registered success in demonstrating Governments political will in the fight against HIV.

A unique aspect of these Campaigns is that beyond the popular mobilisation of Ugandans, it promotes a targeted two-pronged approach namely:

- a demand driven prong i.e. empowering communities to seek services and
- the supply driven prong in which the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders ensure scale up of services to match and sustain the growing demand.

In bringing together stakeholders across the board to rally around a common cause, the Campaigns have demonstrated the power of focus, synergy and collaboration, akin to a magnifying glass drawing energy to one point resulting into lighting a fire. Indeed it has been a rewarding 10 months of witnessing stakeholders, leaders, communities and individuals responding to the call:

*Stand up, Participate and Be Counted!*

Sincerely,



Beat Bisangwa (Mrs.)  
Executive Director, OAFLA UG

## 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.

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.

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 learning consultations around a comprehensive four pronged approach to EMTCT, including: primary prevention, family planning, antenatal care, sharing about the importance of 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:

- South Western Region – Ntungamo District 22nd March 2013
- Northern Region – Lira District 28th June 2013
- Eastern Region – Tororo District 16th August 2013
- Karamoja Region – Napak District 16th September 2013
- Kampala Region – Kampala 28th February 2014
- West Nile Region - Arua District 13th June 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 between 4,000 – 20,000 and key stakeholders from the various districts. 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. Hon. Janet Museveni also provided the key note message at all the rallies, while other messages were

delivered by Ministers, MPs, dignitaries, Development Partners and local leaders.

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. Implementing partners, the district leadership and Village Health Teams (VHTs) also played a big role in mobilising communities to attend the Rallies.

### 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. Also in attendance were national and regional actors from the health sector, key stakeholders from the Region, political leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and cultural and religious leaders.

The Consultative Meetings covered the following issues:

- **South Western Region:** The Meeting

was held in Ntungamo District where the focus was on Enhanced Networking and Collaboration of Stakeholders.

- **Northern Region:** The Meeting was held in Lira District with the focus on The Role of Village Health Teams as well as Cultural and Religious Leaders in promoting EMTCT.
- **Eastern Region:** The Meeting was held in Tororo District with a focus on the Role of the Youth and Fathers in promoting EMTCT.
- **Karamoja Region:** The Meeting was held in Napak District with a focus on Re- engaging the District Leadership in the EMTCT response and HIV and AIDS Awareness Campaigns.
- **Kampala Region:** The focus in Kampala District was on Assessing and enhancing EMTCT service delivery in Kampala in light of the effects of urbanisation.
- **West Nile Region:** The focus in Arua District was on: Addressing cross boarder concerns in HIV/AIDS Response in the Region.

### c. Other HIV and AIDS/EMTCT Activities conducted

In all the Regions the Campaigns were preceded by mass publicity and sensitization programmes. Messages were developed, recorded and disseminated through Information Education and Communication (IEC) channels including the media, brochures, fact sheets etc.



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



## A summary table of the activities held during the Campaigns

| Region               | Key Activities   |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>South Western</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launching Option B+</li> <li>• Testimony from a couple living with HIV and AIDS</li> <li>• Statement on EMTCT by the First Lady on Radio</li> <li>• Media Campaigns on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Northern</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue for Village Health Teams</li> <li>• Dialogue for Cultural and Religious Leaders</li> <li>• Presentations of Statements of Commitment to support EMTCT by VHTs, Cultural Leaders and Religious Leaders</li> <li>• Statement on EMTCT by the First Lady on Radio</li> <li>• Media Campaigns on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Eastern</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life Skills Workshop for the Youth</li> <li>• Presentation by the Youth of their commitment to EMTCT</li> <li>• Presentation of a Statement of commitment to male involvement in reproductive health by a Father</li> <li>• Art exhibition on HIV and AIDS by the youth</li> <li>• Statement on EMTCT by the First Lady on Radio</li> <li>• Media Campaigns on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Karamoja</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to a Health Center in Napak District</li> <li>• Testimonies by mothers using Option B+ who have successfully delivered HIV negative babies</li> <li>• Award giving ceremony in honor of the Executive Director UNAIDS and the Country Director UNAIDS</li> <li>• Statement on EMTCT by the First Lady on Radio</li> <li>• Media Campaigns on EMTCT and HIV and AIDS</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Kampala</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public HIV Testing by H.E the President of Uganda, the First Lady and national leaders</li> <li>• Dialogue on EMTCT for Cultural and Religious Leaders at the National level</li> <li>• Meritorious Award giving ceremony in recognition of the Champion's efforts in the HIV Response by Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV and AIDS in Africa, Uganda Chapter (AMICAALL)</li> <li>• Testimony by a young mother who successfully delivered an HIV negative baby after taking Option B+</li> <li>• Engaging Performing Artists to share EMTCT messages to attract young people</li> </ul> |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>West Nile</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testimony by a young person born with HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The Champion launched the Motorbike Ambulance Service and the MNH Convergence Programme to support expectant mothers.</li> <li>• Certificates of Recognition were presented by the Champion to the Best Performing District and health facility.</li> </ul> |
|------------------|--|

The next Public Rally will be held in Kampala District in February 2014. The following activities have been conducted in Kampala as a precursor to the Rally:

### Activities held in the Capital City Kampala

#### a. Public Testing of H.E the President and other National Leaders

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013, OAFILA UG, in an exclusive event, organized public testing by for the Head of State. The objective of the testing was role modeling by the top most leaders in the nation and to have them send advocacy messages on the need for testing by everyone. His Excellency the President and several dignitaries and Government officials tested. The President then made a passionate appeal to Ugandans to take the test in order to curb the spread of the virus and to provide mutual support for the wellbeing of the family as couples. This appeal has been running daily on radio stations throughout the nation and will go on for the duration of the Campaign.



## **b. Dialogue on EMTCT for Cultural and Religious Leaders at the National level**

In November 2013, a dialogue was held in Kampala for Cultural and Religious leaders at the national level, to share the challenge of HIV and AIDS and to appeal for their active involvement in influencing behavioral change. The Dialogue was a key aspect of the Kampala Campaign because cultural and religious leaders are very influential in the lives of the majority of Ugandans and thus they are a formidable force in the battle against HIV and AIDS. They are also an effective channel of communication for carrying interventions and messages on HIV and AIDS to the majority of Ugandans, right from the community level to individuals in the family setting.



During the Dialogue discussions were held on the key role cultural and religious leaders play in reaching Ugandans with information and messages on HIV and AIDS and the need to promote virtual EMTCT. This event brought to the forefront the importance of addressing the issue of discrimination and stigma, amongst congregations and communities.

The climax of the Kampala Campaign, in form of the Stakeholders' Consultative Meeting and the Public Rally are scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2014.



### 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:

#### South Western Region

- *Establishment of a Message Clearing House:* A clearing house for HIV and AIDS messages is required to ensure appropriate messages are sent out.
- *Enhanced Leadership involvement:* Leaders must speak out on HIV and AIDS and EMTCT to demonstrate Government's political will to fight this cause.
- *Advocacy to support human resource:* Advocacy is required for the development of appropriate policies to support the human resource in the field of HIV.
- *Improved accountability:* There is need for improved efficiency and accountability in service delivery.

#### Northern Region

- *Capacity building for leaders:* Religious and cultural leaders must be trained and equipped to talk about HIV and AIDS/ EMTCT from an informed point of view.
- *Motivation of VHTs:* The VHTs require motivation in terms of recognition of their successes and attention to their welfare.

- *Resources for Religious institutions:* Resources should be availed, including means of transport to enable religious leaders mobilise their communities.
- *The dissemination of messages on HIV and AIDS:* Appropriate and clear messages on the four prongs should be developed and disseminated; including primary prevention.

#### Eastern Region

- *Male Involvement Champions:* It is important to identify "Male Involvement Champions" in reproductive health to promote a positive response from men.
- *Enable the environment for male involvement:* Train health workers to adopt strategies to promote a positive environment tailored for men attending clinics with their spouses.
- *Promote youth friendly services:* Provide lifeskills and promote the involvement of youth in the response to HIV and AIDS.
- *Sensitize the Cultural and Religious leaders:* Ensure increased participation of Cultural and Religious Leaders in "Male Involvement" Campaigns.

## Karamoja Region

- *Re-engagement of the Political Leadership:* Political and Cultural leaders should be re-engaged to share messages on HIV and AIDS.
- *Karamoja Specific Interventions:* The HIV and AIDS interventions in the Karamoja region must address the unique socio- cultural issues of the region.
- *Data collection on stocking of commodities:* It is important that data is gathered and shared to inform stakeholders about the stocking of commodities.
- *Adopt culturally relevant IEC messages:* There should be strong advocacy on EMTCT in the local language and cultural entertainment to share messages.

## 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.
- Involvement of performing artists in EMTCT message dissemination.

## West Nile Region

- *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.
- *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.



## 4.0 A Birds eye view of the Regional Campaigns

### South Western Region



The South Western Region EMTCT Campaign, was the first in the series of campaigns nationwide. Consequently it was then that the symbolic national launch of the Option B+ strategy took place. The First Lady administered the appropriate ART tablet to an HIV Positive Couple at the Public Rally and encouraged them to observe adherence to their treatment. The First Lady also used this opportunity to appeal for male involvement in the reproductive health of their spouses, urging them to take up their God given responsibility as heads of families. She called for home grown culturally relevant and appropriate messages. She also appealed to all stakeholders to strengthen strategies on abstinence for young people and being faithful in marriage.



The Consultative Meeting reviewed the progress made on promoting EMTCT and the need for: appropriate messages, strengthened partnerships, accountability by service providers, accelerated efforts in promoting EMTCT and the strengthening of partnerships in the Response.

The media campaign involving: radio spots, talk shows and print media news supplements, slated prior to the Launch of Option B+ resulted in increased EMTCT service up take in health centers. There was also an increase in programs on HIV and AIDS by the media houses in the Region in the post launch period.

## Northern Region



The Campaign provided a platform for the VHTs together with the Religious and Cultural leaders from the Region, to interface with other actors in the HIV and AIDS Response. They shared about their work in promoting *Abstinence* and *Being Faithful* and strengthened their resolve to provide solutions to Uganda's health challenge.

The Consultative Meeting provided a platform for information sharing on the challenges and achievements registered by the MOH in the HIV and AIDS response and service delivery for the promotion of male involvement. Additionally an inspiring message was delivered by the Overseer of the National Fellowship of Born Again Christians Bishop Joshua Lwere, who



urged all the stakeholders to emulate the Lord Jesus Christ in sacrificing their time and energies towards the virtual EMTCT.

In line with her role, the First Lady of Uganda and the EMTCT Champion, made a passionate appeal to all the stakeholders to go back to the original strategy of eliminating HIV and AIDS, by adopting behavioral change in line with promoting sexual responsibility; *abstinence* and *being faithful* for the sake of the children of Uganda.



## Eastern Region



The Campaign provided the opportunity for community mobilization, information sharing and discussions with stakeholders across the spectrum, from the community to the national level, on issues of male involvement in reproductive health.

The Consultative Meeting identified key issues that must be addressed to improve access to health care services by husbands and wives, some of which were: the male ego, gender dynamics, structural aspects of the health facilities that affect attendance by men and the availability of commodities. The participants also heard presentations from two youth representatives who read a statement of their commitment towards an *HIV Free Generation*. In the same spirit a Father talked about his involvement in the reproductive health of his family.



The First Lady and Champion EMTCT pointed out that a strong and effective EMTCT program must involve all stakeholders including parents, communities, implementing partners and the funding agencies. She urged Ugandans to move away from cultural attitudes that tend to leave men out of the reproductive health process and to adopt creative approaches to male involvement.

*"We must unashamedly, unapologetically and frankly give the young people clear, appropriate, life saving messages, that abstinence from risky behavior including pre-marital sex, drug and alcohol abuse is the only way of not contracting HIV and AIDS"* Janet K. Museveni

## Karamoja Region



The Campaign provided space for stakeholders at the national and regional level to discuss the status of the HIV response in the Region, with a focus on leadership engagement. The Consultative Meeting acknowledged the need for an accelerated advocacy by a broad spectrum of leaders from the community to the district level, with a special emphasis on the Karamajong elders and opinion leaders, who command popular respect in their communities.

The Meeting was graced with the presence of the Executive Director UNAIDS Mr. Michael Sidibe who appreciated the Champion's efforts in promoting EMTCT, expressing optimism that Uganda would meet her Millennium Development Goal on reducing Mother to Child Transmission by 2015.



The First Lady and EMTCT Champion thanked all the stakeholders for supporting the Campaign which she said was a measure to halt the “runaway rise of HIV infection in Uganda” particularly among the new born babies. She pointed out that male involvement was absent in the Region due to the cultural attitudes that remove men from the reproductive process and yet men control the family resources. She therefore urged the leaders in the Region to reverse this trend by sharing appropriate life saving messages with their communities.

The First Lady crowned the event by presenting *Awards of Recognition* to the Executive Director UNAIDS Mr. Michel Sidibe and the UNAIDS Country Director Mr. Musa Bungudu, for their outstanding work in promoting an HIV Free Generation.



## 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.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The Four 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, 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.

OAFLA 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.

OAFLA therefore expresses 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! – Towards an HIV Free Generation***



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