



**INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA  
STATEMENT ON THE RISING HIV INFECTIONS IN  
THE COUNTRY**

**VENUE: IRCU SECRETARAIT**

**DATE: 9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2024**

***‘A Call to Change the Tide’***

Fellow citizens and well-wishers,

We are again faced with a serious challenge of the rising HIV infections in the country that calls for our concerted effort.

Historically, Uganda was one of the first sub-Saharan African countries to experience an AIDS epidemic and also one of the first to demonstrate a sustained decline in HIV and AIDS prevalence rates from a devastating 18% in the early 1990s to a low of 4% by the early 2000s. This success was largely attributed to a robust public health campaign that was led by H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda, with support from development partners, and all sectors of society, including religious leaders who played a pivotal role in promoting social behaviour change aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS.

The government has continued to provide strong political leadership in the fight against HIV through its multisectoral framework.

However, although the country's response to the epidemic has been impressive, current evidence demonstrate that the challenge still remains, particularly in rural areas. With the national HIV prevalence rate currently standing at 5.1%, Ministry of Health and Uganda AIDS Commission estimates indicate that 105 people are newly infected with HIV everyday and 54 die daily due to AIDS related infections.

We have noted with concern a sudden spike in HIV prevalence in various districts, Cities and urban areas across the country, a trend that is likely to negatively affect the realization of our national target of ending AIDS as a Public Health threat by 2030. For example, according to Uganda AIDS Commission, Mbarara City recorded over 1,000 new infections in just six months bringing the HIV prevalence to 8.1% above the national average of 5.1%. Sadly, the report further revealed that young girls between 16 to 28 years are increasingly getting HIV in Mbarara city and district with the prevalence rate standing at 8.4% and 14% respectively. Other affected Cities and districts include Fort Portal (620), Masaka, Jinja (430), Kampala (2,550), Soroti (360), Mbale (410), and Arua (260).

We have also noted that the key drivers of these HIV infections especially among young people are: Engaging in early sex at a young age; Alcohol and drug abuse, peer influence to engage in risky sexual behaviours, Stigma and discrimination, Sexual Gender based violence and transactional sex.

Fellow citizens, these devastating statistics demonstrate that the country will not meet its ambitious target of closing the taps and reduce the new HIV infections to zero thereby risking to erode our hard-worn gains. We therefore need to adopt for a whole of population response with a public health approach, that focuses on both prevention and treatment, including promotion of behavioral change and effective ways to combat the challenges of stigma and discrimination.

As IRCU, we express deep concerned about these developments and the alarming surge in HIV infections, especially among the teenagers, across the country.


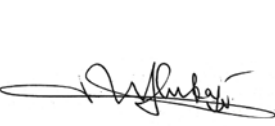
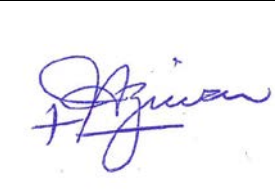
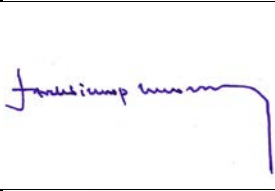


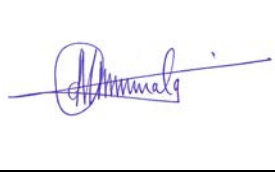

## **Call to action**

1. Religious leaders under IRCU urge the government and development partners to recognize that combating HIV requires a multi-sectoral approach. Scientific advancements alone will not suffice; there must be a concerted effort that involves all stakeholders, including religious and community leaders. We emphasize the importance of integrating cultural and faith-based approaches into HIV prevention and treatment strategies.
2. We call on parents to guide and talk to their children about how to live a responsible life and encourage them to abstain from premarital sex.
3. We also urge the adolescents and young people to practice abstinence as the most effective means of preventing HIV.
4. Those who are not yet married should undergo HIV testing before marriage, and married couples should remain faithful to their spouses.
5. Individuals diagnosed with HIV should seek services from accredited health facilities and start treatment immediately while ensuring adherence.
6. Religious leaders must continue their vital role in counseling and preaching against risky behaviors, promoting behavioral change as a key strategy in preventing HIV infections.
7. Health facilities should be adequately equipped with HIV test kits, antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), and sufficient qualified staff to meet the needs of clients and patients.
8. Let's all fight stigma and discrimination in all its various forms and provide the necessary support and care to our brothers and sisters living with and affected by HIV.

We commit to utilize our platforms and existing resources to create the necessary awareness and mobilize communities towards a common goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat. Together, we believe we can once again work towards a future free from HIV in Uganda.

## **FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY!**

Signed this 9<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2024 for and on behalf of the faith fraternity in Uganda.

NO	NAME AND DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
1.	The Most Rev. Dr. Stephen Samuel Kaziimba Mugalu, Archbishop, Province of the Church of Uganda, Chair, Council of Presidents	
2.	His Eminence Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje, Grand Mufti of Uganda, Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
3.	Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa Bishop Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese Chairman Uganda Episcopal Conference Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
4.	His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos Muzeeyi Archbishop Uganda Orthodox Church Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
5.	Pr. Dr. Moses Maka Ndimukika Archbishop Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
6.	Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda Presiding Apostle Born-Again Faith in Uganda Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
7.	Bishop Joshua Lwere General Overseer, Alliance of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches in Uganda, Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
8.	Msgr. Charles Kasibante Vicar General Archdiocese of Kampala Chairperson Inter-Religious Council of Uganda Board	
9.	Joshua Kitakule Secretary General, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda/Council Secretary	