

UGANDA AIDS COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE 2003 WORLD AIDS CAMPAIGN/WORLD AIDS DAY

December 1 is globally recognized and commemorated as the World AIDS Day. The World AIDS Day is a climax of a year long World AIDS Campaign on a given theme. Both the campaign and the World AIDS Day aim to increase advocacy for scaling up prevention, care, support and mitigation strategies, activities and initiatives around HIV/AIDS related issues.

The theme for the years 2002 and 2003 has focused on **Stigma, Discrimination and Human Rights issues**. The slogan is “**Fight Stigma. Reach out to Positive people**”.

In these two years, the entire world and Uganda in particular has laid great emphasis and attempted to address two major questions:

1. **What is Stigma and Discrimination?**
2. **Why a campaign on Stigma, Discrimination and Human Rights?**

Stigma is described as a quality that significantly discredits an individual in any setting. It has important consequences on how people regard themselves and how others regard them.

Discrimination is a harmful action that results from stigma and leads to unfair treatment, making people feel ashamed, guilty and isolated.

“Stigma and discrimination undermine prevention, care and treatment efforts and increase impact of the epidemic on individuals, families, communities and nations”.

HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination prevail worldwide and are a reality in our country. People living with HIV/AIDS are stigmatized and discriminated against variously: at the workplace by health care providers and employers; in religious circles by religious leaders and members of the different faiths; in schools by teachers and fellow pupils; in the families by family members; etc.

Blaming and abusing people living with HIV/AIDS force the epidemic underground and create ideal conditions for HIV to spread. Consequently, stigma and discrimination lead to the violation of human rights of people infected and affected by the epidemic.

The campaign against Stigma and Discrimination is intended to replace shame with solidarity and fear with hope at the different levels and situations where stigma and discrimination occur. Uganda should maximize this opportunity to increase awareness of these phenomena so that the public addresses the issues for the eventual prevention, reduction and ultimate elimination of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination wherever it occurs and in all its forms. This campaign should further be used by every individual, sector and community to develop strategies to combat stigma and discrimination related to the AIDS epidemic.

World AIDS Day Venues and Dates

The 2003 AIDS Campaign and World AIDS Day are decentralized. Districts are mobilizing their partners i.e. networks of people living with HIV/AIDS, NGOs and CBOs, Faith Based organizations, the private sector as well as all the community members to carry out the relevant district-based activities and to commemorate the Day either on 1st December or any other day of their choice. Similarly, institutions like universities and communities could organize their local World AIDS Day observances.

In districts, communities or institutions, the role of people living with HIV/AIDS in the AIDS campaign is critical. They must be encouraged to play key and visible roles in the World AIDS Day commemoration programmes.

Kampala District plans to observe this year's World AIDS Day with a difference. The 12 Big Brother Housemates have been facilitated by UNAIDS and UNICEF to visit Uganda, each in company of a young person living with HIV/AIDS to come and share HIV/AIDS experiences with the Uganda youths and to learn more about HIV and AIDS using Uganda.

The Big Brother Housemates will arrive on 28 November and will participate in different programmes and activities. The Big Brother team will join in the World AIDS Day celebrations at Kololo Air Strip on December 1. Kampala District is finalizing the Big Brother Programme and will be released to the public in due course.

For more information on the World AIDS Campaign and World AIDS Day, please contact Uganda AIDS Commission at:

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