



The DISPATCH

2023, QUARTER 4

**MAKERERE UNIVERSITY
WALTER REED PROJECT**

☎ 0312-330-400

✉ muwrp@muwrp.org

🌐 www.muwrp.org



MESSAGE

FROM THE MUWRP PEPFAR PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

We have successfully concluded the Financial year 2022/23. This past year has been incredibly active, characterized by heightened efforts in identifying individuals living with HIV, initiating them on treatment, and ensuring they get quality care and are retained in care.



With the generous support and funding from PEPFAR through DOD/WRAIR, MUWRP has been able to focus on implementing a comprehensive program aimed at improving the quality of life for all individuals under our care and closing all gaps that could lead to new infections early identification of HIV positive individuals, and initiation on treatment and provision of prevention programs across the different subpopulations.

In line with the government of Uganda's strategy to digitize the healthcare system in the country, MUWRP successfully achieved 100% roll out of electronic medical records (EMR) systems in all of its supported ART health facilities. This significant milestone will lead to improved quality of program data collected and reported.

In addition to the annual accomplishments, we also successfully transitioned the Orphans and Vulnerable Program to MUCOBADI, USAID/ICARE PEPFAR supported initiative.

We are looking forward to an active FY23/24, where we anticipate a wide range of opportunities to enhance the quality of service we provide to our valued clients.
Aluta Continua!!!

Dr. Fred Magala

Director - MUWRP-PEPFAR Program



CONTENTS

1-2	MUWRP closes out the orphans and vulnerable program.
3-4	MUWRP donated a brand-new Film Van to the UPDF Chieftaincy of Medical Services
5	DREAMS performance hits a record 158% achievement in enrolment in financial year 2023.
6	Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP) collaborates with Kayunga District leadership for the roll out of the DREAMS program.
7	Students from USA on a study visit in Uganda
8	MUWRP COP 22 Innovations: Social Network Testing
9	MUWRP -DOD WRAIR conduct Viral Load Service quality assessment in seven facilities in Kayunga and Mukono districts.
10-11	EMR Utilization and Health systems strengthening in COP 22
12	Data Clerks refresher training
12	Col. Julie Ake's visit to the DIC and Kimmi
13	Improving collection and use of data
13	Deputy Chief of us mission visits Koome as PEPFAR marks 20years of impacting lives

MUWRP CLOSES OUT THE ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE PROGRAM.

Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP) closed out the Orphans and Vulnerable program (OVC) and handed over the program to a new implementing partner USAID/ICARE

Multi-Community Based Development Initiative (MUCOBADI), a local community-based organization under USAID/ ICARE activity is running the program in the three districts of Buikwe, Mukono and Kayunga.

Speaking at the close out ceremony, the Associate Director of HIV prevention at DOD/WRAIR, Dr. Neha Sha noted that the program had achieved great community and clinical results citing an example of viral load suppression trends that improved from 50% to over 90% in the past four years.

“Who can say this program has not made impact? This is amazing success, this program started without this large collaboration, the community-based organizations, district officers, the MUWRP team, thank you to all of you who have been working to create this impact for the last 16 years”. Dr. Neha said.

In his opening remarks, the Director MUWRP - President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS’ Relief (PEPFAR) program Dr. Fred Magala said the 16 years of OVC have been a success looking at where the program started in Kayunga and the expansion to more districts with interventions targeting improving the quality of life for the orphans and vulnerable children



Dr. Neha addressing guests

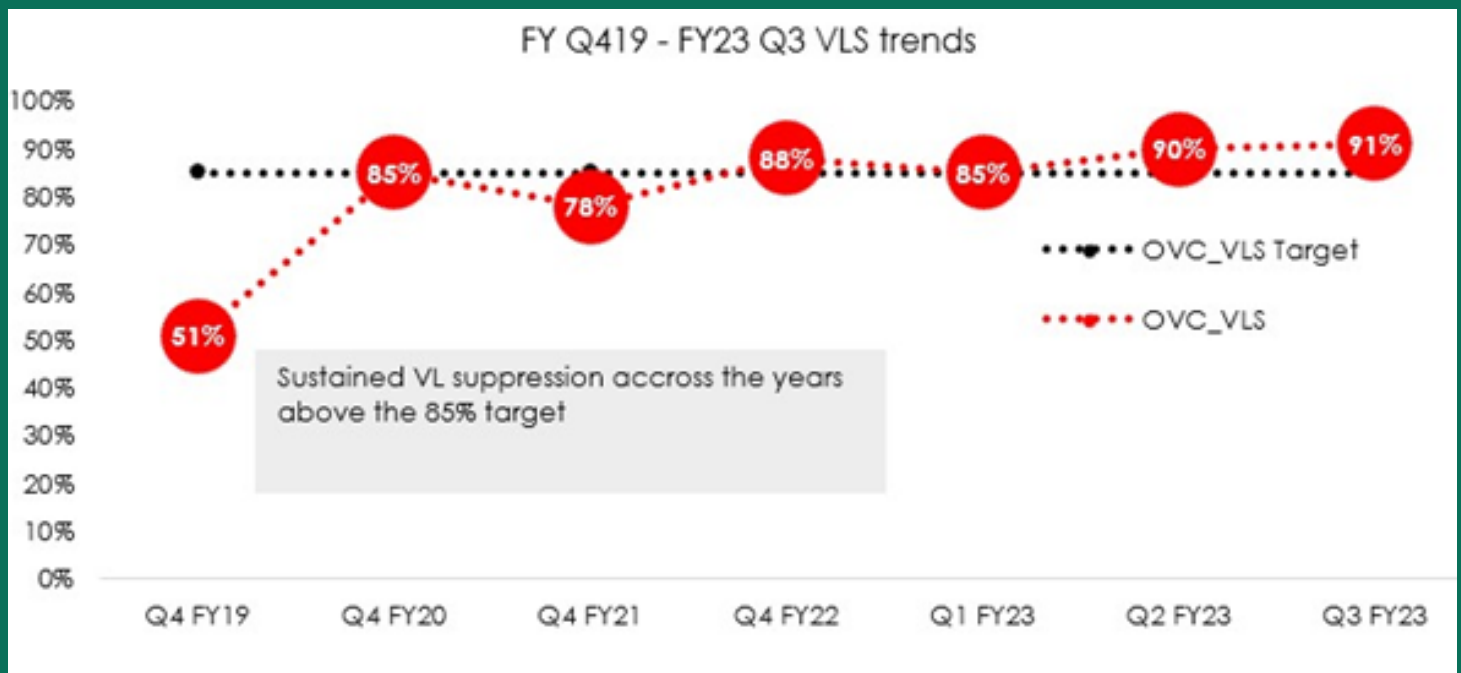


MUWRP-PEPFAR program manager and Director hand over files to MUCOBADI at close out event at Colline Hotel Mukono.

Different partners who included; CBOs, four MUWRP supported districts, outstanding staff, beneficiaries and several district leaders were rewarded at the colourful event.

Makerere University Walter Reed Project through community-based organizations has been implementing the orphans and vulnerable children program since 2007 with a focus on four core program areas that include: health and survival, care and protection, social economic strengthening and education support. Children and adolescents were supported through a range of interventions all geared at improving health outcomes and quality of life at household level.

A total of 26,160 beneficiaries have been supported with stable homes and experienced improved clinical outcomes. Viral load suppression among 0-17 years by Q4FY2023 stood at 93% from 51% as of quarter four of financial year 2019, with 2976 children suppressing out of the 3,181 who were eligible as of FY23 Q3; Innovations like the OVC EDEN farm has improved the financial stability of Households through training on modern farming methods and provision of farm products like livestock, and seedlings to the beneficiaries. Under the education sector, in fiscal year 2022 alone, 887 children and adolescents received school fees support and one of the beneficiaries has graduated with a Diploma in Clinical medicine. Another student is finalizing with the same course next year.



Suppression trends among OVCS.



Dr. Fred Magala handing over the keys of the Van to Brig. General Patrick Ocen

MUWRP donated a brand-new Film Van to the UPDF Chieftaincy of Medical Services

Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP), as part of its health systems strengthening mandate under the Presidential Emergency for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programme, has handed over a brand-new Film Van to Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) to facilitate field activities including but not limited to Health Education and Community mobilization while implementing the comprehensive HIV prevention, care and treatment services among the men and women in the Uniform.

Handing over the van on behalf of MUWRP, MUWRP's PEPFAR Programme Director, Dr. Fred Magala said that, without a healthy and strong army, the security of the country cannot be guaranteed and therefore pledged MUWRP's continued support to the forces to adequately manage the HIV/AIDS programme.

The ceremony was presided over by Brig. General Ocen Patrick who represented Gen. Musinguzi the Director of the Chieftaincy of Medical Services. Gen. Ocen thanked MUWRP for its commitment to support and sustain the continuity of UPDF's Directorate of HIV/AIDS services and prayed that this productive collaboration continues to yield greater results.

On this same occasion, the UPDF also launched a new 5-year HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan - 2023/2024 to 2028/2029 whose production was supported by MUWRP. As part of his remarks during the launch of the plan, Dr. Magala challenged the UPDF Directorate of HIV/AIDS service to establish a robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework that will track the effective implementation of the plan.



Dr. Fred Magala – MUWRP’s PEPFAR Programme Director (sky blue shirt in the middle) with the team that attended the launch of the HIV/AIDS Strategic plan and the handover of the Film Van

The delegation was welcomed by the Director of HIV and AIDS Services Lt. Col. Hon. Evelyn Asiimwe and was attended by a number of other dignitaries including; a team from the Ministry of Health, Uganda AIDS Commission, the Department of Defense – US Embassy.

MUWRP and the US Department of Defense (DoD) has had a long-term partnership that has not only developed the capacity of HIV and AIDS programming in Uganda but has also enabled the conduct of ground-breaking biomedical research programmes.



MUWRP offered support to the production of the UPDF HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan

DREAMS PERFORMANCE HITS A RECORD 158% ACHIEVEMENT IN ENROLMENT IN FINANCIAL YEAR 2023.

The DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS free, Mentored and Safe) program hit a record 158% achievement in FY23Q4 in enrolment of girls under the program.

Out of the 17,234 girls target set, by September 2023, 27,283 girls had been enrolled in Mukono district. By the semi-annual reporting period, the programme staggered at 64% but by close of FY23Q4, 158% enrolment had been registered. Out of the 11,107 adolescent girls expected to receive prevention packages, only 729 (7%) girls and young women had been reached. Recognizing that both service delivery and documentation were not going as planned, the prevention team conducted a root cause analysis for the poor performance that pointed to significant gaps that included; delayed data entry to the different source documents and UDOTS system, as well as delays in delivery of tools to subgrantees. Additionally, there were few curriculum trainers who could not accommodate the high number of girls.

The program used findings from the root cause analysis to address gaps and guide the surge process to increase enrolment of AGYW.

Additional interventions employed through the financial year 2023 to improve performance at both enrolment level and provision of age appropriate packages include;

- Joint meetings conducted on enrolment and development of a daily enrolment tracker.
- Surging for enrolment by engaging all stakeholders and subgrantees.
- Conducted training sessions to bolster the number of trainers for curriculum packages that experienced a shortage. Organized specific trainings at the island settings to increase the number of trainers in that area.
- Developed performance improvement templates for subgrantees to facilitate weekly reporting.
- Conducted weekly meetings that were informed by data entered into the system.
- Deployed Locums to support the bulk data entry.
- Conducted weekly onsite technical support supervision to subgrantees to track service provision at safe spaces, offered mentorship for teams to understand the layering table and ensure fidelity to its implementation.
- Technical support on areas that the subgrantees continued to have gaps during implementation and ensure provision of age-appropriate prevention services to the AGYWs

Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP) collaborates with Kayunga District leadership for the roll out of the DREAMS program.

Makerere University Walter Reed Project engaged Kayunga district leadership ahead of the roll out of the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS free, mentored and Safe) program in COP year 2023.

The meeting that attracted District Community Officers, District Education Officer, Probation Officer, Resident District Commissioner and health workers unpacked the program aimed at reducing HIV incidences among adolescent girls and young women.

While addressing the district teams, MUWRP-PEPFAR Program manager, Anne Nakirijja emphasized that the DREAMS program has proven its effectiveness in reducing HIV incidences among adolescent girls and young women and this complements other interventions under the PEPFAR program aimed at ending HIV AIDS by 2030.

“Data from the 10 pioneer DREAMS implementing districts has proven that if packages under the program are given with fidelity, the program can effectively reduce new HIV infections. The success was reported in Mukono that we support as MUWRP, Mubende and Rakai. Men to include sexual partners of AGYW will also receive packages to include; HIV testing, gender-based violence training and safe male circumcision among others.” She urged the leaders to fully embrace the HIV prevention program.

The program will first be implemented in the five sub counties of the Galiraaya, Kayonza, Busaana, Bbaale and Nazigo. The selection of these sub counties was guided by data revealing low suppression rates among HIV positive male clients in these sub counties, high treatment unmet need, high adolescence pregnancy rates and numbers of men aged 25–49 years that have not undergone safe male circumcision.

The services will be offered in safe spaces and girls will be provided with service passports and documentation of service package done at individual level through the Uganda DREAMS tracking systems with quarterly district support supervision, performance reviews and data quality assessments.

Composition of the Kayunga District DREAMS coordination team includes; District Health Officer, Chief Administrative Officer (Chairperson), District community Development officer, Biostatistician, District DREAMS focal Person (Secretary), Secretary for Health, Probation officer and all DREAMS implementation partners.



MUWRP-PEPFAR Program manager, Anne Nakirijja addresses the Kayunga District Leaders



Kayunga District Leadership spearheading discussions on the DREAMS program

Students from USA on a study visit in Uganda



A delegation of 20 students from Wisconsin (UW) Madison U.S.A paid a courtesy visit to SIKYOMU community-based organization for learning purposes.

A team of 15 undergraduate students who sought to gain insight into the health care and social services in Uganda interacted with DREAMS girls at safe spaces.

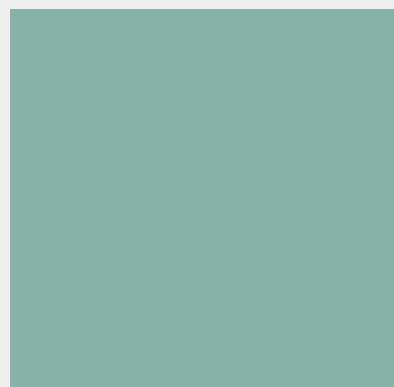
The adolescent girls and young women were able to show case what they have been able to learn from the different packages received including products from the skilling program and a total of 500,000 Ugandan shillings was made in sales.

Up to 8,864 adolescents, young girls and women are supported by SIKYOMU Development Initiative with support from Makerere University Walter Reed Project through the PEPFAR program.





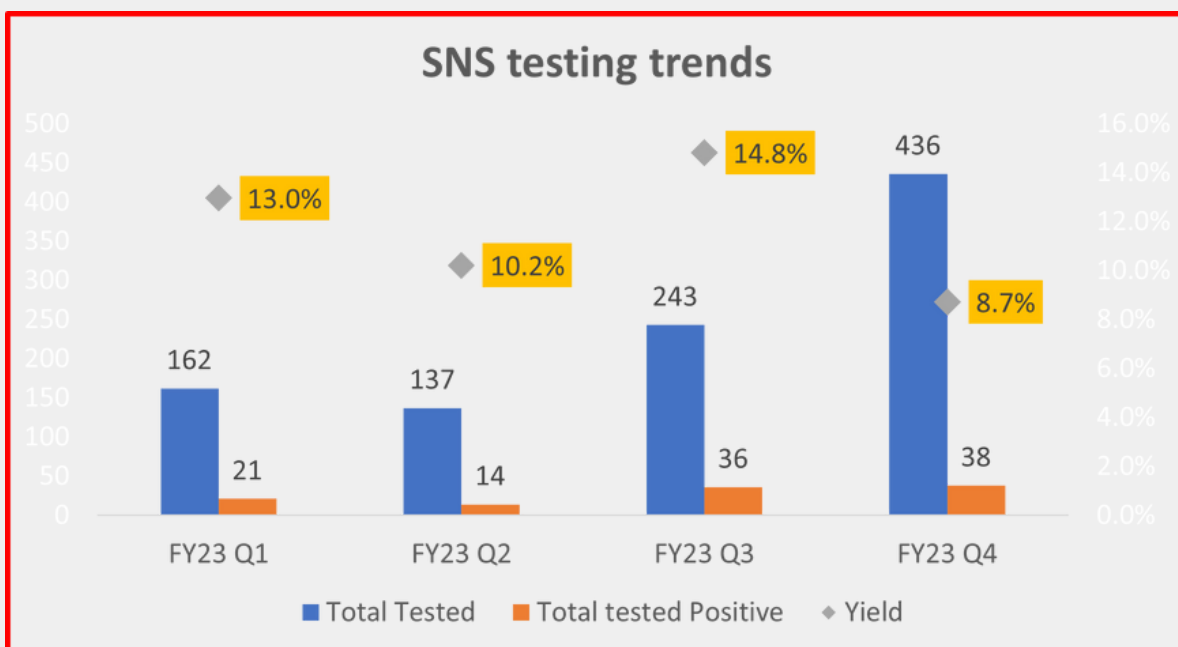
MUWRP program officer: HTS, Vincent Kawooya (leaning forward) conducting SNS CME/on-site mentorship at St Francis Nyenga Hospital in Buliwe.



MUWRP COP 22 Innovations: Social Network Testing

Social Network Testing is a promising and evidence-based HIV case finding modality that involves using social networks to identify, engage and motivate people with undiagnosed HIV infection to undergo HIV testing. During PEPFAR COP 22 (October 2022–September 2023), data from 11 of the 20 pilot SNS sites, showed that 978 social contacts were tested for HIV, of whom 109 tested positive and were linked to ART services. Those who tested negative received HIV prevention information and services. This suggests that once scaled up, SNS provides prospects for HIV case finding and status neutral linkage. The project plans to train and attach SNS coaches to support SNS integration in over 130 HTS sites covering the six districts.

SNS will focus on reaching men, children, key and priority sub-populations through cost effective approaches HIV self-testing, phone calls, physical escorting by the recruiter, home visit and coupon/voucher and self-referral. The innovations for motivating service providers will include certificates, health promotion branded key holders, air-time bundles, public recognition, and other non-monetary incentives. The project will also use SNS data to micro-target locations where infections are prevalent for community HTS in search for the expanded SNS



MUWRP -DOD WRAIR conduct Viral Load Service quality assessment in seven facilities in Kayunga and Mukono districts.

NO.	Causes of non-suppression	Suggested interventions
Among Adults		
1.	Poor adherence	Always encourage them to set alarms as reminders for when to take the drugs
2.	Non-disclosure	Need to emphasize the need to disclose, support with assisted disclosure
Among Children		
3.	Negligent caretakers who have shifted the responsibility of medication adherence to the children themselves.	Conduct home visits to establish the level of support given to children, identify gaps and establish the cause of the gaps for appropriate solutions.
4.	Pill burden which negatively impacts on drug adherence	Disclosure and continuous supported at both facility and home level.

The facilities assessed included; Ntenjeru HCIII, Lugasa III, Busaana HCIII, Galiraaya HCIII, Nazigo HCIII, Kyetume HCIII and Njeru Town council III.

In Kyetume Health Centre III, some of the best practices noted included: having all eligible clients undergo viral load draw, 85% of all Viral load results were received with a turnaround time of 28 days from Central Public Health Laboratories (CPHL) and all clients due for viral load were given pre-appointment reminders.

However, the notable challenges were; documentation of date of results reception from CPHL on the VL results, and viral load suppression challenges among children. The team resolved that MUWRP conducts refresher training for medical social workers to boost their counselling skills and use of social behavioural change models to improve suppression.

EMR UTILIZATION AND HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING IN COP 22

One of the key deliverables for of the Health Information Systems (HIS) team in the previous financial year was the implementation and roll out of electronic medical records (EMRs) systems to the all MUWRP supported ART health facilities. This was done in line with the government of Uganda strategy to digitize Healthcare System in the Country.

By close of COP 22, the program has a 100% EMR coverage for the all 88 ART facilities with 85 facilities using clinic master and 3 facilities using Uganda EMR. Out of the 88 ART facilities, 8 have an EMR point-of-care system at various service points in the ART Clinic, while 5 have a comprehensive point-of-care system at all facility service points, including those outside the ART clinic, to include Out Patient Department, Maternal and Child department among others.

Reporting Using the EMR

84 facilities could report using the EMR by close of financial year 2023. Various indicators are directly extracted from the EMR for reporting purposes

Furthermore, significant advancements have been made in the realm of report extraction and analysis through the development of the reporting dashboard. These have helped expedite the process of generating comprehensive reports that are important both to the program and the Health Facility.

To support program data capture, new features have been included in clinic master EMR system. These include but are not limited to Cervical Cancer tools, VMMC, HIV Testing Eligibility form and Missed appointment tracker

Interoperability and Health Information Exchange (HIE)

Several systems have been integrated with the EMR; Examples of these include The African Laboratory Information System (ALIS), CPHL dashboard for Viral Load Exchange, Ministry of Health centralized registries for data management and analytics and the Pharmaceutical Information Portal.

Other ongoing integrations include; the Community Retail Pharmacy Drug Distribution Point (CRDDP) system - ART Access and the Ministry of Health National Data ware house.



Facility Data Teams during a training session on EMR System functionality at KRRH

Reporting Using the EMR

The following strategies have been implemented to improve EMR usage in health facilities:

- Capacity building for data staff through routine data mentorships for facility data teams and conducting both physical and virtual quarterly training sessions for system users.
- Development of automated reports for commonly used facility reports to expedite the report extraction processes at the facility level.
- Identification and empowerment of superusers in each district to mentor their colleagues.
- Development and distribution of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on EMR system usage and report extraction to guide users.
- Integration with existing systems to streamline data flow processes in facilities and prevent duplication of efforts at the facility level.

Infrastructure

MUWRP has made significant infrastructure investments to facilitate EMR functionality across health facilities. These include; installation of solar power systems in over 40 healthcare facilities to support uninterrupted power supply to facilities that are either off-grid or plagued by frequent power fluctuations and computer hardware donations among others

In addition, MUWRP has established wireless Local Area Networks (LANs) within the healthcare facilities in our region. To date, over 36 facilities have been interconnected, seamlessly linking various service points within each health facility. These interconnected LANs are instrumental in optimizing the flow of patient information and data, further enhancing the efficacy of the EMR



Solar Batteries Installed at Lugasa HCIII in Kayunga



Solar Control Panel Installed at Busabaga HCIII in Buikwe



DATA CLERKS REFRESHER TRAINING

Makerere University Walter Reed Project conducted a refresher training for the Electronic Medical records teams in the four supported MUWRP districts.

The teams were equipped with knowledge on the PEPFAR indicators, HMIS data elements, the EMR overview, data extraction forms the EMR, Other HMIS systems among others.

This is purposed to improve the quality of program data.

Col. Julie Ake's visit to the DIC and Kimmi

The Director of the US Military HIV Research Program (MHRP) Col. Dr. Julie Ake conducted a technical duty Yonde (TDY) visit to Koome Islands.

Before her visit to the islands, she was first briefed about the ART program performance with a focus on innovations to address gaps in case finding, treatment and KP program. At the islands, she interacted with girls under the DREAMS program at both Kansambwe and Kimmi Islands





Victor Katemana shakes hands with Nakifuma HCIII ART in-charge

IMPROVING COLLECTION AND USE OF DATA

As part of the efforts to improve collection and use of data to guide programming, a team from the International prevention and treatment program (IHPT) strategic information visited four sites supported by Makerere University Walter Reed Project.

The team led by Health Management information system advisor at IHPT, Victor Katemana accompanied by Vincent Butera visited St. Francis Naggalama Hospital, Kayunga Hospital, Nakifuma HCIII and community-based organization CHAIN foundation.

DEPUTY CHIEF OF US MISSION VISITS KOOME AS PEPFAR MARKS 20 YEARS OF IMPACTING LIVES

The US Deputy Chief of mission paid a courtesy visit to Koome HCIII and Kimmi islands all supported by Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP).

The courtesy visit coincided with commemorations of 20 years since the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was started. PEPFAR has been funding the provision of HIV prevention, care and treatment services in Uganda since 2003 and MUWRP is one of the organisations receiving support since 2005 to provide services in four districts of Buvuma, Mukono, Buikwe, Kayunga and one research clinic in Kampala.



EDITORIAL TEAM



Hadijah Nabulya
Chief Editor



Anne Frances Nakirija
PEPFAR Program Manager



Lucia Nakiyega
Production Team Leader



Ronald Gombya
Graphics Designer