



**REPORT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 66TH BIRTHDAY OF THE KABAKA OF BUGANDA
KINGDOM THROUGH EKYOTO**



BUSUKUMA SUB COUNTY, NAMULONGE

13TH APRIL 2021

THEME

Young people to take a lead in the Fight against HIV/AIDS

Introduction

In 2017, the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS) appointed Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II as its goodwill ambassador in the fight against HIV/Aids in East and central Africa. According to statistics by Uganda AIDS Commission fact sheet 2019, 1.4 million people were living with HIV in 2018 in Uganda. Uganda still has 1,000 new infections and 500 deaths every week. Statistics further indicate that 84 percent of people living with HIV in 2018 knew their status, 72 percent were on treatment and 64 percent had the virus suppressed.

Every year the Buganda kingdom commemorates the Kabaka's birthday. In commemoration of his 66th birthday in April 2021, all the 175 subcounties of Buganda (central Region) organised events prior to the Kabaka birthday which were termed as '*Ekyoto*', (a Luganda word to mean fire place).

In the past '*Ekyoto*', was used by parents and elders, at family level, to gather children around the fireplace and educate them through storytelling, riddles and quizzes. Cultural norms and practices were passed on through oral transmission from generation to generation. The '*Ekyoto*', instilled discipline and family cohesion.

On 10th April 2021, Community Health And Information Network (CHAIN) joined the '*Ekyoto*', which was organised by Busukuma subcounty with the leadership of the "Musaale" who is the cultural head of the "Ggombolola" (sub county). The theme of the day was: Young people to take a lead in the Fight against HIV/AIDS. The event was attended by representatives of Buganda kingdom at the county and sub county level; local leaders including counselors and village chairpersons; NGOs, students and teachers of secondary schools within the sub county of Busukuma, Financial institutions, representatives of churches, health care providers and community members.

Remarks from the Guest of honor- Ow' ekitibwa (Honorable) Edward Kamyá Mugonvu



Ow' ekitibwa (Honorable) Edward Kamyá Mugonvu making his remarks

The event was officiated by Ow' ekitibwa (Honorable) Edward Kamyá Mugonvu a representative of Kyandondo county in Mengo parliament and a former representative (Musaale) of Busukuma sub county. He applauded the representatives of the Kabaka at the sub county level for the good work they were doing on behalf of the kingdom and for organizing the “Ekyoto” (fire place). He noted that it was the first school before formal education started in Buganda. He appealed to the young people to get involved in the Buganda Kingdom activities.

Lighting the “Ekyoto”



Ow'ekitibwa Kanya Mugonvu lighting the Ekyoto

Ow'ekitibwa Kanya Mugonvu officially launched the “Ekyoto”. He noted that the Kabaka cares about the health of his people as evidenced by the many advocacy and fundraising campaigns he has led e.g. Fistula, sicklecell, cancer and HIV among others. He further explained that this year the Kabaka has put particular emphasis on young people and calls upon them to protect themselves from HIV and live a quality healthy life.

Ow'ekitibwa Kanya emphasized the need to live a healthy and responsible life. He cautioned them not to rush into marriage when they are not ready or finished school. *‘Marry the right people at the right time, who will be by your side till old age’*, he said, and gave an example of himself and his wife who are both above 90 years of age and are still health and care for each other. He urged parents and guardians to light “Ekyoto” in their homes to create an environment where they can freely discuss health, social, cultural and economic issues. He pointed out that child upbringing in the past was a collective responsibility of the community unlike now where it is an individual family responsibility.

Remarks from Mariam Regina Namata Kamoga- Executive Director - CHAIN

Mrs. Kamoga applauded all the people present for participating in the 'ekyoto'. She introduced CHAIN and its activities including empowering communities affected by both communicable and non-communicable diseases through information sharing to promote prevention and treatment of disease; Promotion of health literacy and patient safety where families, patients and communities, are educated on their rights and responsibilities as health system users, they are also urged to seek early diagnosis and treatment; Support for Orphans and vulnerable children through provision of educational and health care support; Access to safe water through the promotion of the Solvatten technology which is a solar water purifier to get rid of water borne diseases and to conserve the environment; promotion of permaculture using organic seeds, pesticides and fertilizers to promote household vegetable growing and boost nutrition, health and household incomes for the community.



Mrs. Kamoga – ED CHAIN making remarks

World Health Day 2021

Mrs. Kamoga gave a brief about the World Health Day which is commemorated every year on 7th April and whose theme for 2021 was, 'Building a fairer, healthier world'. She noted that health inequities exist, it was therefore important to take responsibility of one's health. She cited a Luganda saying, '*Asika obulamu tassa mukono...*' which emphasizes continuously taking care of one's health. She informed participants about the recent passing of the long-awaited National Health Insurance scheme(NHIS) Bill by parliament which seeks to provide universal healthcare to all Ugandans. It brings hope to many vulnerable people who are not able to access healthcare. She emphasized the need for health literacy in the community to empower people to make informed decisions about their health as well as seeking early diagnosis and treatment.

She informed them that CHAIN is the lead organisation for the Uganda Alliance of Patients organisations(UAPO), an organisation that brings together patient organisations from different disease areas including sicklecell, epilepsy, stroke, pain management, hepatitis B, mental health, HIV/Aids and Cancer to work together to promote patient cetered healthcare. She introduced Uganda Women's Cancer Support Organization (UWOCASO) , a member of the UAPO. On behalf of CHAIN, she pledged to continue working with the leadership of the sub county to ensure a healthy community.

Session on Integrity and Morality among the youth By Mr. Lugolobi Henry- Community leader



Mr. Lugolobi Henry giving his presentation

A community leader and a loyal subject to the Buganda kingdom gave a presentation on integrity and morality. He thanked the Kabaka for permitting the ekyoto to be lit at the sub county and noted that “ekyoto” was not only used as an informal school but was also used by travelers during the night to scare away wild animals and inform passersby that there were people in a given locality. Young people were urged to respect their elders and leaders in their community. He encouraged them to always seek advice from them. He decried the moral decay within society which needed to be urgently addressed. He explained with examples pillars of humanity that should be used as guide in our daily lives. These included; Having a sense of shame, morality, honesty, empathy, taking care of oneself, civic engagement, self-reliance, responsibility, transparency, integrity, pro-active leadership, being knowledgeable, humility, politeness, cleanliness and sacrifice. He urged parents to prepare their children to become responsible and self-sustaining citizens.

Cancer Awareness session by Ms. Gertrude Nakigudde CEO- UWOCASO

The session was conducted by Gertrude Nakigudde the CEO of Uganda Women’s Cancer Support Organization (UWOCASO). She informed the participants that UWOCASO is a membership organization with current membership of 200 cancer survivors and focuses on educating and creating awareness on cancer with emphasis on breast and cervical cancers; offering counseling to cancer patients and survivors; empowering cancer survivors with skills in

income generation and positive living; working with government to ensure availability and access to cancer treatment. Ms. Nakigudde disclosed that she is a cancer survivor and echoed the Kabaka's call to the people of Buganda to promote good health. She highlighted the causes and risk factors of cancer attributing most of them to living unhealthy lifestyles noting that most people do not take good care of their bodies by eating unhealthy foods yet Uganda is endowed with fresh foods, fruits and vegetables. Unhealthy diet was one of the risk factors for cancer. She noted that some cancers are attributed to genetic makeup of an individual.



Gertrude making a presentation

She further informed participants that the most common cancers in Uganda are breast, cervical, prostate and skin cancers. She noted that the government of Uganda has put in place a vaccination program for young girls against HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer. Women were called upon to screen for cervical cancer every 3 years so that they can start early treatment in case the cancer is detected. Participants were further urged to get knowledge on cancer and other illnesses so that they seek early diagnosis and treatment. The treatments for cancer mentioned included chemotherapy, radiation, hormonotherapy and each of these is dependent on the type of cancer.

Counseling Sessions by Ms. Rebecca Nantume (senga) and Mr. Kajjiri John Kristo (Kojja)

The counseling sessions were conducted by Rebecca Nantume (senga) and Kajjiri John Kristo (Kojja) both elders in the community, the Anglican church and the kingdom of Buganda. In

traditional society, communication on sexuality issues was a cardinal role of paternal aunts and uncles, called *senga* or *kojja* respectively in Buganda. Girls and sometimes boys between the ages of 10 to 14 years were sent to their respective aunt or uncle for coaching on sexual and reproductive issues as well as general behavior and discipline. The gender-specific roles were also a big part of the sessions. This was meant to prepare them for the transition into adulthood and marriage. The role of the *senga* was central to ensuring the longevity of marital relationships.



Ms. Rebecca Nantume (*senga*) talking to the young people

The session focused on etiquette and proper grooming of children based on the Buganda culture. Issues discussed included Hygiene and sanitation, respect for elders, house chores and welcoming and taking care of visitors in a home, emphasizing the Luganda saying that; '*Munju temuli kubo*', meaning that there is no passageway in a home, so anyone who comes into your house should be welcomed and taken care of. The *Kojja* echoed the young people to take interest and understand their culture, language, norms and totems of their clans in order to preserve their culture. It was noted with concern that many cultural practices were becoming extinct while others were being referred to as backward, yet their value cannot be overemphasized. They appealed to parents not to concentrate on the girl child alone as was the case but also empower the boy child.



Mr. Kajjiri John Kristo (Kojja) talking to the young people

HIV/AIDS Awareness by Ms. Namiiro Margret, health worker at Namulonge health center 111

The HIV/AIDS counselor and health worker, talked about HIV/AIDS prevention. She cautioned the young people to behave responsibly and delay sex to avoid contracting the disease that was killing many young people. She emphasized the need for routine counseling and HIV testing and appealed to those already living with HIV to live positively through continued protection, enrollment and adherence to HIV treatment. Healthy eating habits, seeking spiritual support and fighting self-stigma were also encouraged. Participants were cautioned against speculation and claiming to be bewitched but rather seek testing services to ascertain their HIV status. Condoms were also distributed to the adults.



Ms. Margaret Namiro talking the young people

Peer to Peer- Luggya David Kiguli- Youth Leader

The youth leader of Buganda Kingdom on the committee of the musaale, Luggya David Kiguli decried the moral decadence that has greatly increased the risk of HIV among the young people in the country. He cited provocative dressing by the girls who expose their bodies which he said was a taboo in Buganda. He further urged the young people to uphold the cultural norms and values of Buganda



Mr. Luggya David Kiguli talking to the young people

Financial Literacy

A representative from Busukuma division resident entrepreneurs' cooperative society Ltd introduced the society to the people and educated them about the saving scheme which was favorable for all categories of people including young people. He urged young people to develop a saving culture which would enable them make viable investments for the stability of the Buganda kingdom.



Q&A session

Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the sessions. The questions raised included those on HIV prevention, prevention and signs and symptoms of cancer. These were responded to and guidance was given by the respective presenters.

Concluding Remarks

The Musale extended his appreciation to all the partners for working hard to ensure the event was a success. He thanked CHAIN for its contribution to the event and looked forward to future partnerships to ensure good health for the people of Buganda.



He called upon all those present to take responsibility and carry forward the ekyoto idea at family level to address issues of morality, health and others. He urged parents not to delegate their parenting role to teachers and house helps. Participants were also urged to pick lessons from the day's activities for the good of Buganda and Uganda.

Pictorial







