

Speech by Prof. Nelson K. Sewankambo, Principal College of Health Sciences, Makerere University, Kampala, during the launch of Safe Male circumcision services at Makerere University Hospital. December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Your Excellency the Ambassador of the United States of America, Mr. Scott H. DeLisi.

The Vice Chancellor Makerere University,

The UNAIDS Country representative

The CDC Country Director and your team

The representative from the Uganda AIDS Commission

The representative from the Uganda AIDS Control Program

The Director and Management of Makerere University Hospital

The MJAP Board, Management and Staff

Makerere University community,

Our distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great honor to welcome you all to this hospital that serves Makerere University, one of Africa's top ten Universities. Makerere has been at the fore front of academic excellence and research in Uganda and the region, the products of which have been used to improve health services in this country.

Your Excellency, allow me express my deep appreciation to you for coming to officially launch Safe Male Circumcision services at this hospital, two weeks after celebrating the World AIDS day. I am glad to see Prof. Serwada who contributed immensely to the evidence for SMC.

As we all know, Uganda has suffered with the HIV burden and its related effects for over three decades. In order to reverse the tide of this epidemic, the Uganda MOH has put in place a comprehensive Strategy for HIV prevention. Under PEPFAR II, in order to achieve an AIDS Free Generation, more efforts and resources are now being

challenged to the evidence-based HIV prevention strategies which include: HCT, ART, PMTCT and SMC.

The Makerere University Joint AIDS Program (MJAP) was established in 2004 with funding from the US Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDs Relief (PEPFAR) and technical assistance from the US centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to mitigate the HIV/AIDS scourge. MJAP, which is under the College of Health Sciences, is supporting the roll out of the above HIV prevention interventions in three Teaching and referral Hospitals in this Country (Mulago, Mbarara & Butabika), as well other health facilities including this hospital and all the lower level government health facilities in Mbarara District. The above strategies are optimally balanced with sexual and gender based violence services, Abstinence, Faithfulness, and consistent condom use. Your Excellency, with additional support from the American people, to-date, MJAP has offered HIV care and treatment services to more than 41,000 patients in 20 care sites, which translates to one in every ten individuals on HIV/AIDS care and treatment in Uganda. In order to increase access to HIV care and treatment MJAP has supported accreditation of 14 Health Center IVs and IIIs in Mbarara District to ART and Option B+ for PMTCT. MJAP employs efficient models of HIV care including use of nurse only and pharmacy only visits and other task shifting approaches as well as use of generic ARVs as opposed to branded ones. In line with the GIPA principle, MJAP engages people living with HIV in the provision of HIV care and treatment services. MJAP also offers integrated TB/HIV services at all the care points.

MJAP spearheaded provider initiated HIV testing and counseling (PITC) services in Uganda, starting with Mulago and Mbarara teaching hospitals. Through these PITC services, MJAP generated evidence which informed the revised National HCT Policy. To date MJAP has offered HIV counseling and testing services to more than 1,150,000 individuals.

MJAP supports district-based programming in Mbarara district where we work very closely with the district health managers in order to ensure full integration of HIV/AIDS services with the rest of the health activities, local ownership and

sustainability of these services. For greater impact on health, the above efforts have been complemented with significant health systems strengthening activities.. In line with this, MJAP has supported hiring of key staffs to fill critical human resource gaps in the facilities; training of varies cadres of staff in all components HIVAIDS prevention, care, support and treatment. MJAP has also contributed to pre-service training by supporting Pharmacy, Lab, Counseling interns to acquire relevant hands on skills. In addition, MJAP supports the Community Based education services Program (COBES) to Medical students in Makerere and Mbarara Universities which gives the students an opportunity to appreciate the health challenges and realities in the communities. In all the health facilities we support, MJAP has contributed to significant improvements in infrastructure, equipment, Laboratory services, and data and logistics management systems.

Mr. Ambassador, please accept our heartfelt appreciation to the American government for all the support to MJAP over the years, which is over 70 million United States Dollars.

MJAP started offering SMC services at this facility as part of a comprehensive HIV prevention, care and treatment package at the end of 2011. MJAP, together with this Hospital, has trained high performance circumcision teams that on a daily basis serve about 60 males. So far, more than 10,000 males have received the service at this facility. Overall, MJAP has circumcised 15,129 males across the various sites at a unit cost of USD 30. With more support, the MJAP team has the capacity to reach out to many more men. As a contribution to the National capacity for SMC services, MJAP also trained 15 other circumcision teams spread all over the country.

Following SMC at this facility, patients are linked to other services at this facility, or at the MJAP-supported treatment site at Mulago hospital, or elsewhere, based on their preference.

Your Excellency the Ambassador of the United States of America, the Honorable Minister of Health, the Chairman Uganda AIDS Commission, the Vice Chancellor

Makerere University, the Makerere university community, MJAP staff and management, distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen thank you for listening to me.