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Homosexuality blamed for HIV/Aids spread in prisons

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By Isaac Khisa & Christine Katende

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Homosexuality has been identified as one of the factors that have contributed to high HIV/Aids prevalence among male inmates.

A report released yesterday by the United Nations on Drug and Crime shows that HIV/Aids prevalence in male prisoners is at 13 per cent whereas among the females it stands at 11 per cent out of 490 prisoners surveyed throughout the country in 2008.

This rate is however higher compared to the national HIV/Aids prevalence that stands at 6.5 per cent.

A total of 392 male and 98 females were interviewed in addition to focus group discussions and HIV/Aids testing and counseling.

This was revealed during an advocacy and policy dialogue meeting on prisons health services on HIV/Aids and Tuberculosis in Kampala yesterday. The Commissioner General, Dr Johnson Byabashaija, attributed the high rate among male inmates to homosexuality. He however, said many inmates are coerced into homosexuality.

"The highest numbers of inmates are normally convicted when they are already infected with HIV/Aids," Dr Byabashaija said.

Mr Byabashaija said there's need to educate inmates about the dangers of homosexuality. He said homosexuality is an offence that carries a two or three year jail term. Sharing razor blades was also cited among ways the disease is spread.

The Executive Director of the Aids Information Centre, Dr Raymond Byaruhanga, said the country still has a lot to do in the fight against the epidemic given that it is higher among the inmates.

The country has 1.5million people living with HIV/Aids but only 17,5000 receive ARV treatment.

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