

## Interview: President of Uganda June 14, 2004

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**JACKIE JUDD:** Mr. President, thank you very much for joining us.

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Thank you very much.

**JACKIE JUDD:** We appreciate it. Your government recently announced a rather aggressive new program to get AIDS drugs, ARV's out to many people who need them. How is the program going to work; how many people might get the drugs and in what period of time?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** We have about 600,000 people with HIV now virus, and about 10 percent of them are the ones who decline and comes over their resistance to the point where they may need ARV's.

**JACKIE JUDD:** So we are talking about 60,000 people -

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** - in Uganda.

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** And this new program to get low-cost or essentially free ARV's to them, how many of the 60,000 will get the drug in the near future?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** All of them.

**JACKIE JUDD:** All of them?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** In what period of time?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** We are about to start; we are about to start; we are about to start; everything is set. I am very pleased with President Bush, he give us - he give us the money. We also had money from the Global Fund, so the money is available for the next three years for all the 60,000 people.

**JACKIE JUDD:** A health official in Uganda was quoted in the

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American Press as saying this could all happen within four months; do you think that that is a reasonable time table?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes, it is, it is because everything is set.

**JACKIE JUDD:** Everything is set?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** So it can happen that quickly?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes, once you have the money and the drugs, then the next is the monetary assistance to ensure that you have outlets which are knowledgeable and know how to manage those patients in the district.

**JACKIE JUDD:** Does that kind of infrastructure exist?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** To a large enough extent that within four months 60,000 people can -

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** We have a very wide network of units; we have 1,000 units known as the sub-county which is [inaudible] so maybe about 5 miles.

**JACKIE JUDD:** So a health center in a community to make it easier for the people to get the drugs?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes, yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** And to be followed-up?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes.

**JACKIE JUDD:** On another subject, a study came out recently it was published in *Science Magazine* that quantified in certain ways how dramatically behavior has changed in Uganda to help bring down the incidence of infection.

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes, it's very true; it's very true.

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**JACKIE JUDD:** I know you have been at this for so many years, but how do you describe that success; what made your program so successful in actually changing peoples' behavior; less casual sex, fewer partners?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Maybe it is in our tradition because in our traditions we have the Irda or the Chief or the King who admonish these people, and they say look here, stop this, this is going to cause you problems; and the people listen, especially if it is in the interest and if it's a matter of life and death, they listen.

**JACKIE JUDD:** And in the years that have passed since, how much of what you have experienced and what you have seen work do you think can be used as a model for other countries in Africa; and how much of it can't be because of political and cultural differences?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Well I don't know about the cultural differences because I cannot really put myself in the position of other leaders in Africa and in other parts of the world because for me as a leader I look at the people as my responsibility. I am the senior, if you like, so I cannot see them doing wrong and just in danger, I just do that. I don't know how others would take it if the President went on the radio and started lecturing on essentially private behavior. It's no problem, I can talk about it on the television, I can go on the radio, I can go in a public meeting and hiranda [misspelled?] them, not even lecture them just hiranda them and they would not mind. So I don't know what the problem is; I cannot understand what the inhibition is in [inaudible] there must be some reason as you say, for it.

**JACKIE JUDD:** Is there a single strategy you think would work elsewhere in Africa that you wish other countries would have done?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Yes, our strategy of ABC, abstinence for the young people very important because I cannot allow my children to use

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condoms. I have children who are grown now and some have marriage and families. When they were still young I could not call them and say, oh my son, my daughter, you should use condoms when you are engaging in sex; sex for what? Sex has a purpose, not just - if you are young and you are not married; what sex are you talking about? That's why I couldn't accept so I cannot recommend condoms for the young people; that's why we said abstinence until you get married. Now for - once you get married, be loyal to your partner, and if it is a problem between you and your partner divorce and don't go there and have problems and then [inaudible] that's what creates problem. So the divorce would also be relaxed so that if you are incompatible then separate rather than staying together in a type of war. That's only way through the domestic relations deal because there are different conflicts in some of the groups who say for better or for worse you must stay together. That's not wise, if you are not compatible, they should be allowed to separate. So in that B, you must also put that part in.

**JACKIE JUDD:** And C?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** The C, the condom is that if you cannot manage A, and B, then as a fallback position, as a means of last resort, not as a means of the first instance, but as a means of last resort, then you go for the condom because it is better to survive, not sick, then it has you dead; what advantage do we get?

**JACKIE JUDD:** I have a final question; five years from now, what will be the state of the epidemic in Uganda?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** It is shrinking. I think it will go down, it is now prevalence in about 6 percent, I think it will go lower and lower as we launch new campaigns in schools and so on and they can see the younger people - the infection rate in younger people is quite low because

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they listen there is more sensitivity than the adults, so I think it will be much lower.

**JACKIE JUDD:** And among those who are infected if they don't for some reason get access to ARV's; what impact will that have on your nation in terms of manpower, the workforce, productivity?

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** I think the worst is over because many of the people who are sick died, and the ones who are there now have ARV's; dying has reduced and so I think the worst is over.

**JACKIE JUDD:** Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Thank you.

**JACKIE JUDD:** I appreciate the time you gave us today.

**PRESIDENT MUSEVENI:** Thank you.

**JACKIE JUDD:** Thank you.