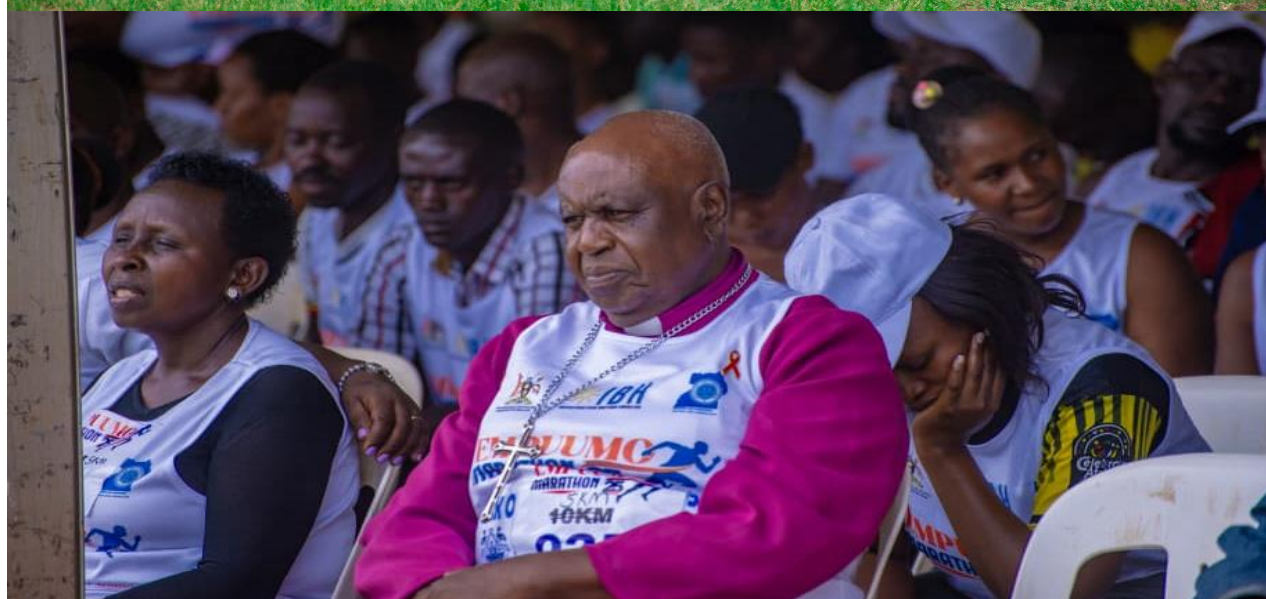


INITIATIVE FOR BETTER HEALTH

REPORT ON EMPUUMO HIV AWARENESS MARATHON A PRE -WORLD AIDS DAY EVENT HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2025 IN BUSHENYI.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 30th November 2025, the Initiative for Better Health (IBH), in partnership with the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) and Bushenyi District Local Government, successfully conducted the **Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon** as a Pre-World AIDS Day initiative.

Held under the theme:

“Building a Sustainable HIV Response to End AIDS as a Public Health Threat,” the marathon leveraged sport as a strategic platform to mobilize communities, promote HIV prevention, increase voluntary testing uptake, and reduce stigma.

The event attracted an **estimated 2,000 participants**, including youth, community members, institutional representatives, and private sector actors. Integrated on-site health services included HIV testing and counseling, STI and TB screening, reproductive health education, and condom distribution.

The marathon was graced by **Rt. Rev. (Rtd) Bishop Yonah Katoneene** and presided over by **Dr. Alhaj Hassan Basajjabalaba** (represented by Hon. Idi Basajjabalaba). **Key national and district leaders** were present, including Members of Parliament **Hon. Michael Mawanda, Hon. Kyampene Cohen, Hon. Annet Katusiime, and Hon. Jaffer Basajjabalaba** alongside district leadership represented by **Ms. Phionah Sanyu (CAO), Dr. Steven Twinomugisha (DHO)**, and other technical officials. Their participation highlighted strong governmental support and reinforced multi-sectoral commitment to HIV prevention.

The initiative was strengthened by the support of **Vision Group as the Strategic Media Partner**, alongside other key development and corporate sponsors whose financial, technical, and in-kind contributions enhanced community mobilization, public visibility, and service delivery.

The Empuumo Marathon stands as a **model of effective public-private partnership and community-driven health promotion**, demonstrating tangible impact in strengthening district-level HIV prevention efforts and advancing Uganda’s goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

2. BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon was a major community-driven health and sporting initiative designed to advance HIV awareness, prevention, testing, and stigma reduction in Uganda. Held on Sunday, 30th November 2025, from 6:30 AM to 1:00 PM at Kizinda Playground in Ishaka, Bushenyi District, the event was organized under the theme:

“Building a Sustainable HIV Response to End AIDS as a Public Health Threat.”

HIV/AIDS remains a significant public health challenge in Uganda, particularly among young people and hard-to-reach communities. Sustained progress toward epidemic control requires innovative, community-based approaches that integrate health service delivery with social mobilization, public education, and youth engagement.

The Empuumo Marathon was conceptualized as a strategic platform to combine sport, health education, and on-site service provision in a stigma-free environment. By leveraging the unifying power of athletics, the initiative created a high-visibility opportunity to disseminate accurate HIV information, promote healthy lifestyles, and increase voluntary uptake of testing and counseling services.

The event featured 21 KM, 10 KM, and 5 KM competitive race categories, alongside a 3 KM community walk, enabling broad participation from professional athletes, youth groups, families, institutions, and community members of varying fitness levels.

Organized by the Initiative for Better Health (IBH) in partnership with the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC), Bushenyi District Local Government, health facilities, and corporate and community partners, the marathon attracted an **estimated 2,000 participants**, including students, local leaders, government officials, development partners, and private sector representatives.

Through the integration of sports, health education, and free medical services, the Empuumo Marathon provided a powerful platform for community engagement and contributed meaningfully to Uganda's national goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Objective

To promote HIV awareness, prevention, testing, and community participation through a marathon and integrated health services.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- To increase community knowledge on HIV prevention and treatment
- To encourage voluntary HIV testing and counseling
- To reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination
- To promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness
- To strengthen partnerships in the HIV response

4. EVENT OVERVIEW

Date: Sunday, 30th November 2025

Venue: Kizinda Playground, Ishaka – Bushenyi District

Duration: 6:30 AM – 1:00 PM

The marathon featured multiple race categories **21 KM, 10 KM, 5 KM**, and a **3 KM community walk** designed to enable broad participation across age groups and fitness levels.

Key Operational Highlights

- **Community Turnout:** The event drew an **estimated 2,000 participants**, reflecting strong local engagement.
- **Registration & Warm-Up:** Participants were registered on-site, and professional instructors led pre-race warm-ups.

- **Race Flag-Offs:** Races were flagged off sequentially by key dignitaries, ensuring smooth coordination.
- **On-Site Health Services:** Teams delivered HIV testing and counseling, STI and TB screening, reproductive health education, and first aid along race routes.
- **Safety & Monitoring:** The Red Cross and IBH medical team provided hydration points, checkpoints, and emergency support.
- **Community Engagement:** Music, drama, and dance performances were integrated to deliver HIV prevention messages in an engaging, culturally appropriate manner.

This operational overview highlights the **logistics, service delivery, and community engagement elements**, complementing the impact-focused information already presented in the Executive Summary and Background & Rationale.

5. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon was implemented through a well-structured program that ensured smooth coordination, participant safety, effective delivery of health services, and broad community engagement. The program successfully integrated physical activity, health education, leadership involvement, and cultural entertainment to maximize both participation and impact.

Key Highlights

- **Participant Preparation and Safety:**



Participants were supported with pre-race warm-up sessions led by professional instructors to ensure physical readiness and prevent injuries. Safety was reinforced throughout the marathon with hydration points, first aid stations, and monitoring by the Red Cross and IBH medical teams.

- **Inclusive and Reflective Opening:**



The event commenced with a brief opening reflection led by **Rt. Rev. (Rtd) Bishop Yonah Katoneene**, fostering a sense of unity and purpose among participants.

- **Race Management and Leadership Engagement:**



Races across the 21 KM, 10 KM, 5 KM, and 3 KM walk categories were flagged off in an orderly manner, with key national and district leaders participating, demonstrating strong government and multi-sectoral commitment to HIV prevention. Leadership presence included Members of Parliament, district officials, and partner representatives.



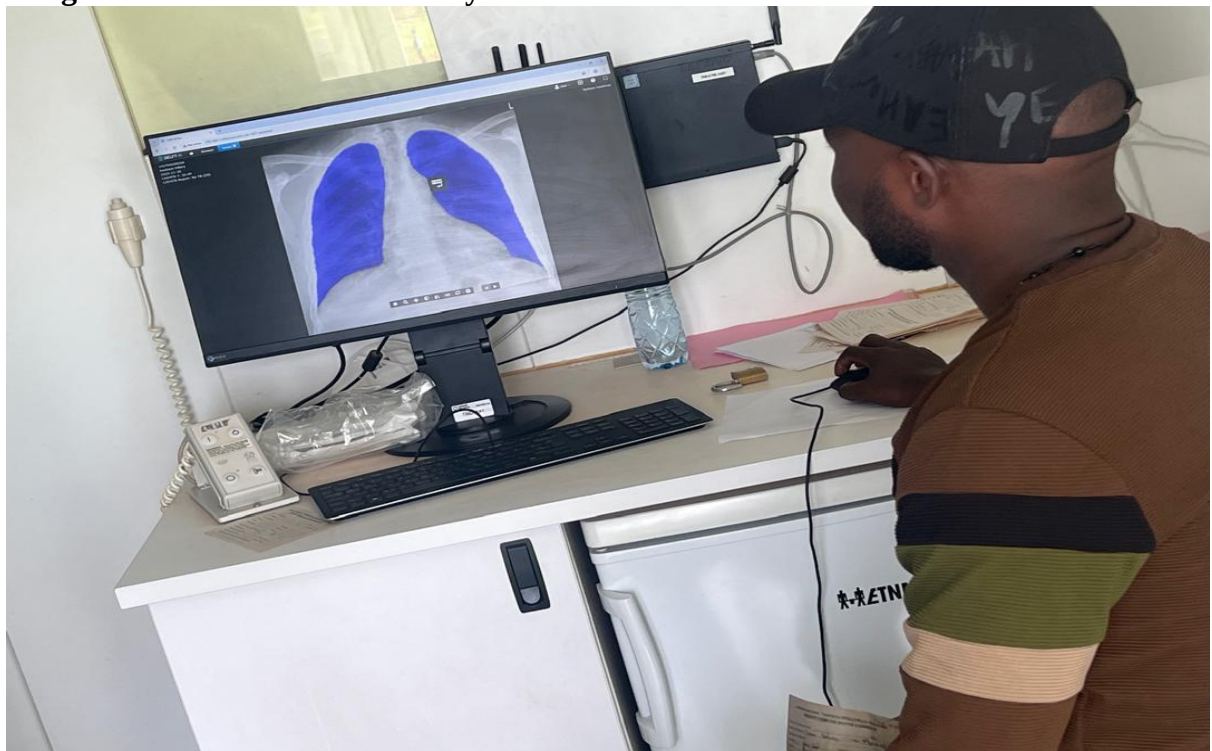




Runners and walkers participate in various marathon categories, reflecting diverse community involvement and enthusiasm for HIV prevention and healthy lifestyles.



- **Integrated Health Service Delivery:**



On-site teams delivered **HIV testing and counseling, STI and TB screening, reproductive health education, and first aid**, ensuring that participants had access to

essential health services throughout the event.





- **Community Engagement and Messaging**



Community engagement was a key feature of the marathon, using **creative and interactive methods** to raise HIV awareness. A highlight was a dramatic awareness initiative led by a volunteer advocate, who introduced himself as **“Mr. Condom”**. Using symbolic representations of condoms worn on his body, he engaged participants and leaders in interactive discussions about safe sexual practices and HIV prevention.



In addition, **music and dance performances** were provided throughout the event to entertain participants, create a lively atmosphere, and enhance overall engagement. These activities, combined with interactive photo opportunities with participants and dignitaries, effectively captured attention, stimulated dialogue, and reinforced HIV prevention messages in a memorable and impactful way.

Cool-Down and Recovery



Upon completion of the races, participants engaged in a guided cool-down and stretching session led by professional fitness instructors to promote recovery and prevent post-race injuries.

6. LEADERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon attracted **high-level representation** from government, development partners, and the private sector, demonstrating strong multi-sectoral commitment to HIV prevention and community health.

During the official stakeholder session, leaders and partners delivered **key messages emphasizing sustainable HIV response strategies, multi-sectoral collaboration, youth engagement, and the role of community-driven initiatives in ending AIDS as a public health threat.** Their presence and active engagement reinforced the importance of **collective responsibility, policy alignment, and strategic partnerships** in achieving lasting impact.

This integration of **strategic attendance and targeted messaging** enhanced the visibility of the marathon, strengthened community trust, and underscored the shared commitment of government, civil society, and the private sector toward ending HIV/AIDS.



Chairman of the Organising Committee Mr. Pisom Migizi delivering opening remarks during the Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon.



IBH Executive Director Mr. John Aturinde Kateba addressing participants on community-driven HIV prevention and sustainable health responses.



Hon. Jaffari Basajjabalaba, District Chairperson speaking during the official speeches session



Hon Michael Mawanda Member of Parliament Igara East addressing participants



UNAIDS Country Director Ms. Jacqueline Makokha delivering key messages on ending AIDS as a public health threat



Dr. Nelson Musoba addressing participants and reaffirming government commitment to HIV prevention and treatment.



Chief Guest delivering the keynote address during the Empuumo HIV Awareness Marathon.



The Chief Administrative officer Ms. Phionah Sanyu in an interactive moment with Hon Annet Katusiime the Woman Member of Parliament



Hon Haj Idi Basajabala and Hon Michael Mawanda

7. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon achieved the following:

- Increased HIV awareness among community members
- Strengthened demand for voluntary testing services
- Reduced stigma through open dialogue and community engagement
- Enhanced coordination between government, civil society, and private sector actors
- Increased youth engagement in health advocacy
- Strengthened district-level ownership of HIV response efforts

The event reinforced the importance of localized, partnership-driven interventions in achieving national HIV targets.

8. CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR STRENGTHENING

While successful, the event highlighted areas requiring continued support:

- High demand for testing services exceeded available supplies
- Limited financial resources constrained service expansion

- Need for stronger post-event referral tracking systems

These insights inform planning for future scale-up.

9. LESSONS LEARNED

- Sports-based interventions are effective in mobilizing large communities
- Early and strong community mobilization increases participation
- Multi-sectoral partnerships enhance service delivery and impact
- Integrating entertainment improves community engagement and message uptake

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutionalize the Empuumo HIV Marathon as an annual event
- Increase resource mobilization and corporate sponsorship
- Expand integrated health services during future events
- Strengthen referral and follow-up systems for individuals who test positive
- Increase youth leadership and peer-led advocacy

11. AWARDS AND CLOSING SESSION

The event concluded with **awards presentation, closing remarks, and a photo session** led by the Chief Guest, IBH Executive Director, Director General of UAC, Rt Bishop, Chairman Organising Committee, UNAIDS Country Director, sponsors, and the IBH team.



Vice President of Uganda, H.E. Rt. Maj. Jessica Alupo at the world AIDS day, presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Dr. Nelson Musoba, Director General of the Uganda AIDS Commission, in recognition of the Commission's support and participation in the Marathon



The UNAIDS Country Representative for Uganda, Ms. Jacqueline Makokha handed over certificates of recognition to outstanding organizations, companies, institutions, and government agencies for their remarkable support and active participation in the Empuumo Marathon.



Dr Nelson Musoba awarding a certificate to partners for their invariable support to the Marathon



12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SPONSORS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon was made possible through the financial, technical, and in-kind support of:

- Uganda AIDS Commission

- Bushenyi District Local Government
- Ministry of Health
- UNAIDS Uganda
- Vision Group
- Uganda Communications Commission
- National Housing and Construction Company Limited
- National Water and Sewerage Corporation
- Uganda Revenue Authority
- Equity Bank
- Crown Beverages Limited (Pepsi)
- Pearl Dairy (Lato Milk)
- MTN Uganda
- Tuzza Hotel
- Kampala International University (KIU) Western Campus
- Uganda Red Cross Society
- Ishaka Adventist Hospital
- Kyamuhunga People's SACCO
- Kyamuhunga Jubilee SACCO
- Butuuro SACCO
- Joy for Children Uganda
- Health and Human Rights Watch
- Busy Bee Primary School
- And other valued partners

Your partnership demonstrates a shared commitment to ending AIDS as a public health threat.

13. CONCLUSION

The Empuumo HIV Awareness & Testing Marathon stands as a model of effective public-private collaboration in advancing Uganda's HIV prevention agenda.

Through collective effort, the event strengthened awareness, expanded service access, and fostered community solidarity in Bushenyi District.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all sponsors and partners whose commitment made this impactful initiative possible. We look forward to continued collaboration in scaling sustainable, community-led HIV response interventions.

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