**Aids awareness must be boosted**

Perhaps the best indicator that we still have a long way to go

in the Aids awareness campaign is the fact that the World

Bank has granted the Government Sh2 billion for this effort.

That is a lot of money and an indication that the Bank appreciates

that Kenya has a lot of work to do before it can say the

Aids message has sunk.

There are many people who testify that Uganda's anti-Aids

campaign has been more aggressive, pervasive and sustained

than Kenya's. That the Ugandan Government has been more

open about the fact that many people have fallen to the disease

and many more may follow if they do not change their

lifestyles.

Kenyans who have visited Kampala have been struck by

the Aids awareness messages found all over the city. There

are posters and billboards and adverts in the print and electronic

media. It is as if the billboards and posters are competing

for attention. Can the same be said of Kenya?

The difference between Kenya and Uganda is one of degree,

with our neighbours staying clear ahead. Messages on

Aids, its dangers, that it is 100 per cent fatal, no cure exists

and, therefore, safe sex or abstinence are vital, have been run

on public radio and television in Kenya. And, private media,

particularly radio, being the latest, have not been left behind

in educating Kenyans on this scourge.

It is probably safe to argue that if more Kenyans are falling

victim to the Aids-causing HIV -virus, then they are to blame

for failing to heed the messages directed at them. Are there

Kenyans who still do not believe Aids exists and that it kills?

Are there those who think that only people stalked by bad luck

contract Aids?

Indications are that there are parts of the country where

Aids messages have not produced the desired effect. It would

also appear that the initial fear that gripped many Kenyans

and spread faster than the disease has waned to be replaced

with complacency.

These, we think, are the areas and tendencies that need to

be targeted in the new drive to be paid for with the World

Bank grant. In some cases, the areas in question may be rural

and some of the tendencies could arise from outdated cultural

beliefs or a suicidal, devil-may-care attitude. These must be

, fought now.