



UNHCR Uganda

Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control Landscape in Displaced Populations

Authors | Dr. Ronald Nyakoojo-UNHCR, Dr. Jacob Oluma-MTI, Hakim Kalungi-IRC

UNHCR's Role and Activities

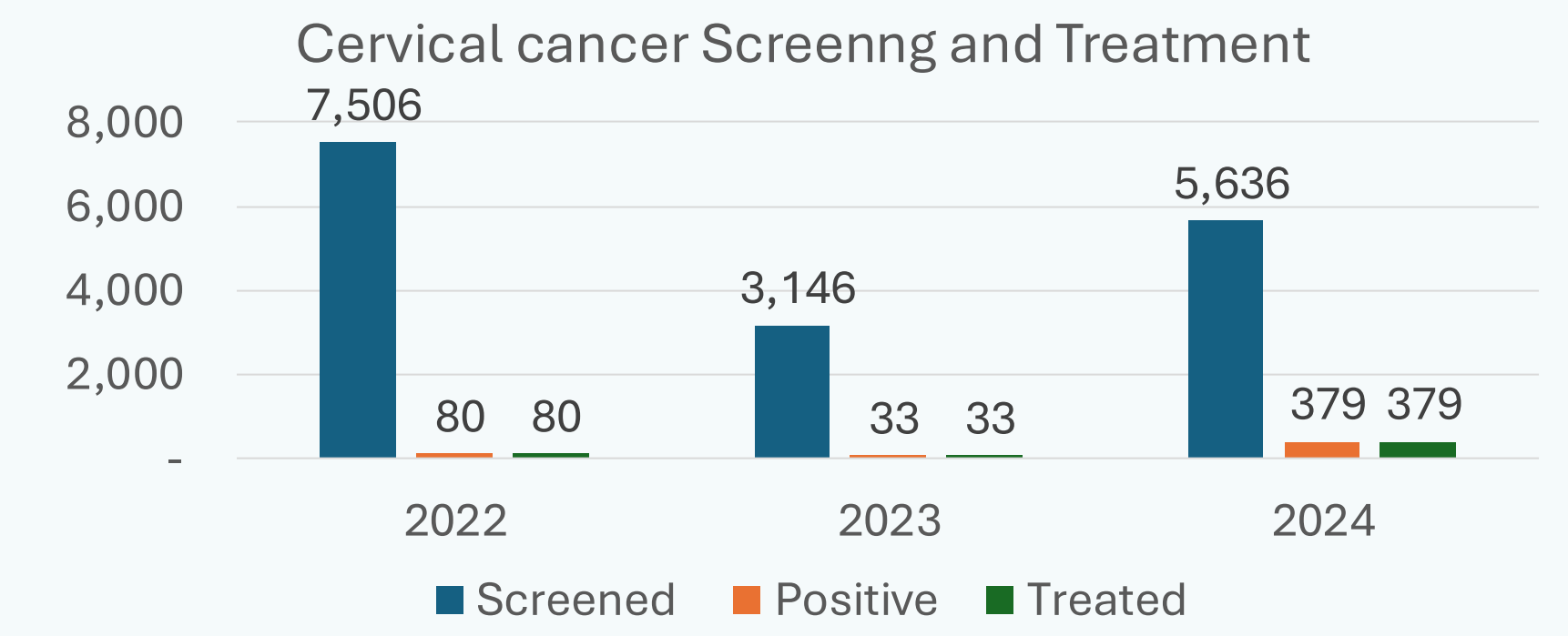
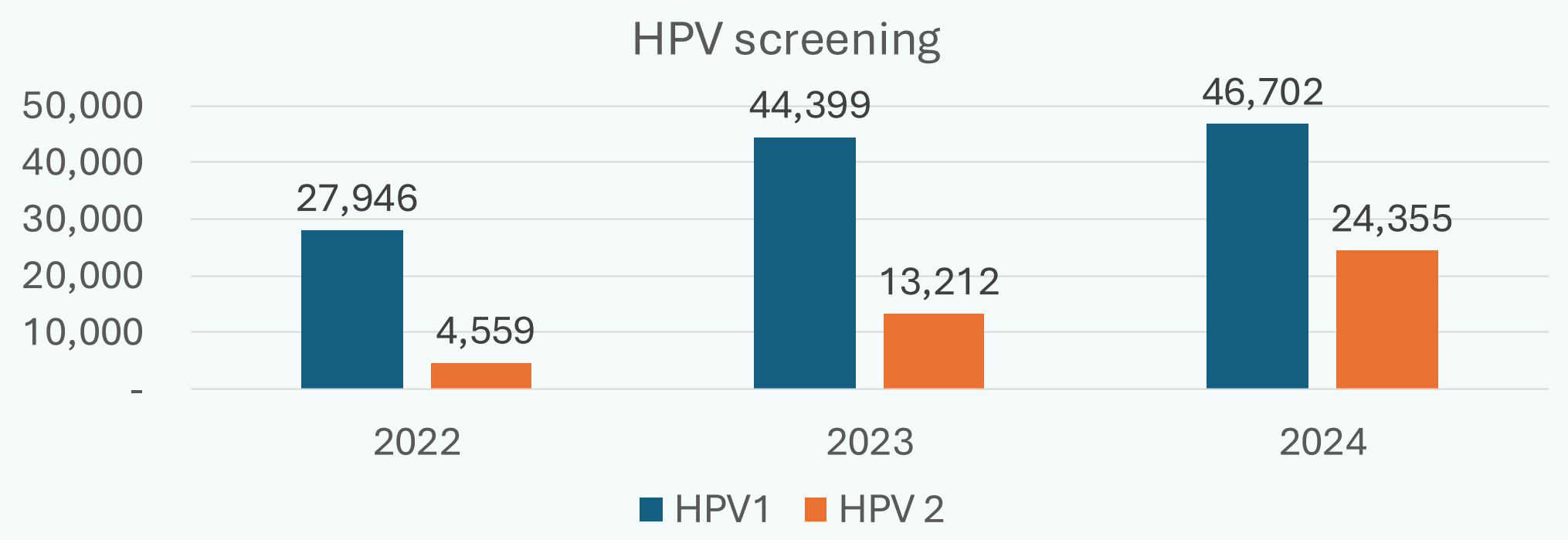
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)' s mission is to protect and support refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people around the world. The core mission is to safeguard rights and well-being of displaced persons and help them find durable solutions ;voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in a third country. UNHCR primary areas of work include; Protection, emergency response and humanitarian assistance, durable solutions, vol advocacy and policy development, stateless prevention and reduction, health and well being, education, livelihoods, climate action and disaster preparedness.
- UNHCR Uganda operations received funding from UNHCR HQ (Core resources, EU, BPRM). Resources are secured through proposal writing, agreements.
- UNHCR implements programs through partners Medical Teams International (MTI), International Rescue Committee (IRC) at the available government facilities. Health services are integrated within national health service delivery. HPV prevention, cancer care are integrated into Sexual Reproductive service delivery.
- UNHCR Uganda operation provides services in 13 refugee settlements across the country. HPV vaccination as guided by the Ministry of Health targets girls aged 9-14 years. Cervical cancer screening is conducted primarily for women of reproductive age 25 to 49 years.

Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control

- HPV vaccination is provided to both refugee and host population for girls aged 10 years. 2-dose regimen given at 0 months and 6 months after the first dose HPV vaccination is integrated into EPI integrated community outreaches, SRHR sessions at women and girls' safe spaces, integrated SRH camps, post-natal clinics and ART clinics. HPV vaccination is also integrated into the national child health days plus campaigns in the months of April and October annually. Vaccination also provided through school-based programs.
- Cervical cancer screening is provided using Static/facility and outreaches for those who cannot access the facility. Screening is conducted using visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) by trained midwives. It is integrated into MCH clinics, ART clinics. Pap smear tests are also conducted at the referral hospitals. Patients with pre-cancerous are treated with thermocoagulation where available and cryotherapy at regional referral hospital. Patients with advanced lesions are referred for specialized comprehensive management to the national cancer institute and regional referral hospital Mbarara RRH.
- The Uganda National Cervical cancer screening and treatment of pre-cancer guidelines and Uganda National cervical cancer prevention and control strategic plan provide implementation guidance.
- Continuity of Services for long term treatment, palliative care is enabled through trained nurses at hospitals within settlement. Referral to district hospital, regional referral hospital and national referral hospital.
- Coordination and partnership with other partners implementing palliative care partners.
- NCD referral database to ensure tracking of the clients.

Overview of Displaced Populations

- As of December 31st 2024, Uganda was host to 1,796,609 refugees and asylum seekers (1,759,496 refugees, 37,113 asylum seekers) in the 13 settlements and Kampala capital city authority..
- The majority of the refugees and asylum seekers are from South Sudan 975,079 (54%) and Democratic republic of Congo 561,880(31%). The SSD are mainly settled in the West and Northern regions of the country while the DRC are located in the mid, western and southwestern regions of the country.



Barriers to Access and Implementation

Barriers	Actions
Inadequate equipment	Central placement of equipment and referrals
Inadequate staff capacity	Prioritize training on site, mentorship
Supply chain ruptures for commodities	Accurate quantification, ordering, redistribution
Stigma, misconceptions, myths about the vaccine	Community sensitization and awareness

Way Forward

- Strengthening integration in service delivery to scale up HPV vaccination efforts.
- Strengthening community awareness addressing myths, misconceptions to facilitate uptake, targeting community leaders, cultural leaders
- Building on going commemorations and campaigns ,day of African child, day of girl child, women's day, world refugee day, world breastfeeding week to increase awareness, interest and uptake of HPV vaccination
- Creating awareness on the new guidelines which recommend one dose vaccination
- Health care worker capacity building and supportive supervision
- Use of data to justify investment in HPV programming

Corresponding Author Contact Email: <nyakoojo@unhcr.org>