

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ON RIGHT TRACK, BUT GOVERNMENT CAN DO BETTER!

1. PREAMBLE

As Uganda yet again experiences a surge in Covid-19 cases with the second wave fast spreading like bush fire across the country, spotlight is drawn to our health care system. Referral Hospitals are filling up with Covid-19 patients and this spells doom for the health system that was already struggling to contain the infection even at the onset of the pandemic. Covid-19 patients are usually moved from up-country health facilities to urban Hospitals that are relatively better equipped to handle those cases.



One of the ICUs beds that were installed at Mulago National Referral Hospital in 2020 at the height of Covid-19 Infections.

Citizens, CSOs and other stakeholders have severally called for strengthening Uganda's health system. Health infrastructure is composed of, among others, Medical Personnel, Buildings, hospital equipment, Communication systems & equipment and Ambulance and transportation facilities. This includes establishment of new health facilities to provide a network of functional, efficient and sustainable Health infrastructure at least within 5km walking distance to every homestead. In response, government announced in 2018 that it was embarking on upgrade of HCIIIs countrywide to improve service delivery at Local Government Level.

2. IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

Access to quality and affordable health care to citizens significantly contributes to the country's social and economic development. During the past three years, Ministry of Health recorded significant success in completion of various infrastructural developments including upgrade of 296 HCIIIs to HCIIIIs, construction of 10 theatres, 16 Maternity wards and installation of 40,000 Liter reservoir tanks for 26 HC IVs across the country. The main aim of upgrading HCIIIs was reducing maternal mortality and bringing a comprehensive package of maternal and laboratory services closer to the people.

In 2018 government started construction, rehabilitation and equipping of Referral Hospitals, including the Specialized Women & Neonatal hospital at Mulago, the pediatric Surgery Hospital in Entebbe, Kawempe and Kiruddu hospitals. These have since contributed to decongestion of Mulago National Referral Hospital. The upgrade and furnishing of existing 296 Health Centre IIIs, construction of 62 new HCIIIIs in the newly created sub counties and the planned construction of 66 HC IVs in constituencies where there isn't any, will further bring health service delivery closer to the masses.

3. IMBALANCE IN HEALTHCARE

However there is a continued mismatch between health infrastructure development and other resources such as personnel, staff housing, medical equipment, medicines and supplies across the country, this has resulted in inefficiency in investments and service delivery in the sector. Accommodation for staff in existing facilities remains a very big challenge and is the major reason for low staff numbers as well as absenteeism as some health workers have to commute more than 25km from their place of residence to the health facilities on a daily basis. This takes a toll on the health workers consequently affecting staff enrollment constraining delivery of services.

UDN appreciates support by: UDN Membership; [DCA](#); [Save the Children in Uganda](#); [OSIEA](#), [Inspectorate of Government](#); [IBP](#), [Trocaire](#) and [DGE](#).

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Gilbert Musinguzi- gsuminguzi@udn.or.ug; Priscilla Naisanga- communications@udn.or.ug; Opio Jacob- jopio@udn.or.ug;

Inadequate or poor medical equipment in existing facilities is also of great concern as many of the existing health facilities lack the necessary equipment. The Auditor General in his 2020 Consolidated Audit report to Parliament, noted that only 909 out of the 3,569 (that is about 25%) required number of medical equipment was available in 67 sampled Health Facilities (14 Regional Referral Hospitals, 23 district hospitals and 39 Health Centre IVs). Thus there is an overall shortage of 2,6605 equipment across the country. Health facilities also facing inadequate facilitation for emergency services such as ambulances which has also crippled emergency responses across the country. As we seek solutions, there is also an urgent need for development of a comprehensive policy on Ambulance system in the country.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Government should fast track renovation of Lower Mulago Hospital and health facilities at all levels in addition to construction of HCIIIs and HC IVs in newly created sub counties and Constituencies.
- 2) All public health facilities should be equipped with at least low cost housing to cater for accommodation of health workers, who are a pillar for improved health services delivery.
- 3) Government should revisit and strengthen measures to attract and retain staff especially in hard to reach areas. This should be beefed up with better management of health facilities, including mitigation of absenteeism of workers that has spiraled out of control at some facilities.
- 4) As a cost effective management measure and to minimize wastage of the already inadequate resources, Ministry of Health should boost the capacity of Regional Medical Equipment Workshops to routinely conduct supervision, maintenance and repair of essential medical equipment including ambulances.



Above: A section of participants attending a dialogue meeting on Natural Resources rights in Kolir Sub County in Bukedea District on Wednesday 26th May 2021.

Please visit/ talk to us at; Uganda Debt Network ,
P.O. Box 21509, Kampala -Uganda,
Plot 153/155 Ntinda—Nakawa Road , Tel +256-414-533840/543974
Website: www.udn.or.ug

CANCEL THE DEBT

FIGHT CORONAVIRUS

Save lives.

