

Emphasis will be on scaling up interventions to address the high burden of HIV/AIDS



Doctors Joseph Gavin Nyanzi, Richard Idro, Shay Pintov and Peter Wasswa interacting during a meeting in Kampala



Hoima Hospital's head of surgery, Joan Balanda Wanyama (right), talking to Bunyoro Kingdom minister Florence Asimwe (second-right) and Israeli doctors at the hospital

In figures

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The number of Ugandan doctors who will go to Israel on a learning exchange, especially in managing NCDs.

SH741B

The amount of money needed to implement the health ministry emergency strategy.

By Hope Mafaranga

Israeli doctors are partnering with their Ugandan counterparts in fighting non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Israeli doctors are visiting Mulago, Hoima and Kiboga hospitals to acquaint themselves with the Ugandan medical system and the challenges it faces, with special emphasis on rural health and medicine development.

The trip to Uganda was sponsored by Shikun and Binui Infrastructure Ltd, Israel's construction company.

Sharing knowledge

The Israeli ambassador to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Noah Gal Gendler, said the Israel medical project will establish civil, business and scientific co-operation between both countries.

He said Israel, which has one of the best health systems in the world, is proud to share its knowledge in favour of development of other countries.

"We are proud of doctors who leave their clinics, families, careers and a fair amount of income in order to donate months of time for the benefit of Ugandan people," Gendler said.

The Israeli envoy said the achievements so far include the opening of Kiboga Diabetes Clinic and medical teams undergoing training. A co-operation agreement was signed between the Israel Medical Association and the Uganda Medical Association.

Gendler urged the health ministry to ensure that NCDs are fully integrated in health systems for early diagnosis, prevention and management.

"I hope this project will continue in the years to come and I hope it will be integrated into the national programme for the prevention of NCDs," the ambassador said.

He revealed that a memorandum of understanding will be signed to enable more Ugandan doctors take part in training done by the Israel doctors.

Gendler said a similar agreement will be signed with Makerere University to promote research co-operation and collaboration between Israeli and Ugandan hospitals and universities.

Dr Charles Olaro, the director clinical services in the health ministry, described the most common NCDs killing Ugandans as cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks, stroke, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and diabetes.

Speaking during a bilateral medical roundtable discussion between Ugandan and Israeli doctors last week at Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala,

Israel partners with Uganda to improve the healthcare



Mothers and newborn babies in a congested ward at Hoima Hospital. Photos by Lawrence Mulondo

Olaro said Uganda has a high burden of NCDs and needs a lot of resources to buy drugs to treat people. Some patients are referred abroad for treatment because the Ugandan health system cannot handle their cases.

Olaro said the health ministry has been collaborating with the Israel medical team who are running the Kiboga Hospital diabetes and hypertension clinic. The specialised clinic treats people from Kyankwanzi, Kiboga, Mubende, Mityana and Hoima, among other neighbouring districts.

He said Israel is advanced in medical

An agreement was signed between the Israel Medical Association and the Uganda Medical Association

technology and Uganda can learn a lot from it to improve its healthcare.

The Israeli team includes paediatricians, orthopaedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, gynaecologists, ENT doctors and social workers.

Olaro said they will work with the team to scale up neural surgery because Uganda has cases resulting from road accidents.

He said Israel has advanced trauma units and if they can help Uganda set up response teams, advanced trauma units and also have people trained, they will be able to build their capacity.

Olaro added that the health ministry has developed an emergency policy

and strategy of having ambulances placed in strategic places. However, \$200m (about sh741b) is needed for implementation.

Top priorities

Olaro said emphasis will be placed on scaling up interventions to address the high burden of HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, hepatitis B, diarrhoea and NCDs.

He said they were also improving reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health services to reduce mortality and morbidity.

Dotan Hemeiri, the operations manager of Shikun and Binui Infrastructure, said they were partnering with Mulago, Kiboga and Hoima hospitals to improve services.

He said the Israel doctors will be volunteering in the facilities to enable Ugandan doctors tap into the knowledge of their colleagues.

Hemeiri said they will also be taking three Ugandan doctors to Israel on a learning exchange programme, especially in managing NCDs. When the doctors return, they will train others.

"We shall also equip other lower health centres of Kabale, Buseruka and Kigaga, all in Hoima district, with beds, mattresses and other equipment to improve healthcare in rural communities," he said.

Field visits

Dr Tom Ediamu, a senior consultant at Hoima Hospital, requested the team to donate hospital beds, mattresses, incubators and oxygen cylinders to handle the large number of premature births at the health facility.

"Mothers and their babies sleep on the floor as a result of inadequate facilities," he said.

Florence Asimwe, the minister for social services in Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, described the collaboration as a marriage that will produce fruits of improved healthcare.

Dr Zeev Feldman, a paediatric neurosurgeon at Sheba Medical Centre and vice-president of Israel Medical Association, pledged to support the Ugandan doctors attain the relevant skills to treat complicated diseases and also enhance research between Uganda and Israel.

WHAT MEDICS SAY

Dr Gerald Mutungi, the head of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) department, health ministry
There is a lot to learn from each other since Israel has a well developed health system. With their help, we hope to fight NCDs.



Dr Christine Ondo, former health minister and board member National Medical Stores
Israel partnering with Uganda in healthcare is not new. In 2011-2012, they helped in the construction of part of Mulago Hospital.



Dr Ezekiel Mupere, epidemiology, infectious diseases and paediatrics expert:
The doctors will strengthen skills and capacity, hence enriching our training, research and clinical care system.

