

Give health sector more funds - US envoy

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BUNDIBUGYO. The US ambassador, Ms Deborah Malac, has called upon the government to allocate more funds to the health sector.

Speaking during the commissioning of Bundibugyo Hospital laboratory in Bundibugyo District on Monday, Ms Malac appealed to the government to make the health sector its first priority.

"Underfunding in the health sector is still a challenge in Uganda and this impacts the people's lives because more diseases are coming up," she said.

Ms Malac said the government of Uganda should not just focus on the prevention of HIV/Aids and malaria but the whole health sector at large.

The US ambassador added that government should focus on setting up a standard laboratory at least in every district which is well equipped, saying laboratories are essential for delivery of

quality health services.

"This laboratory we have commissioned has been equipped according to the national standards and, therefore, it can handle all infections," Ms Malac said.

She added that the laboratory was set up to handle viral load testing and TB testing, among others.

The Minister of State for Health in-charge of General Duties, Ms Sarah Opendi, said the ministry is pushing for the Uganda national health laboratories Bill to be passed to ensure effectiveness of laboratories.

"We have about 3,400 laboratories but there is no legal body supervising them. So the ministry thought that in order for

THE LABORATORY

The laboratory was refurbished by Baylor Uganda with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It cost Shs636 million.

those laboratories to work effectively, they need a legal body to supervise them," she said.

She added that the laboratory will help the hospital in managing Ebola cases.

Being at the Uganda-DR Congo border, Bundibugyo District has faced a challenge of Ebola outbreaks in the past and there was no well-equipped laboratory to manage the cases.

The executive director of Baylor Uganda, Dr Addy Kekitiinwa, said the laboratory will serve the 28 laboratories in the district and the neighbouring areas.

"This laboratory will support the bio security because it's a few kilometres to the Congo border" she added.

The Bundibugyo District chairman, Mr Ronald Mutegeki, commended Baylor Uganda for its support to the health sector in Bundibugyo.

"Through Baylor Uganda's intervention in HIV prevention, the prevalence has reduced to 3.1 per cent compared to Rwenzori sub-region which is at 5.9 per cent" he said.