

Ministry gets health monitoring tools

By Andrew Ssenyonga

The Ministry of Health has received equipment worth sh2.6b for the implementation of the Supervision, Performance Assessment and Rewards Strategy (SPARS) for supply chain strengthening.

The items, which include 198 motorcycles and 248 laptop computers were handed over to Uganda National Health Laboratories Services (UNHLS) to support the implementation of medicines and laboratory supervision countrywide.

In a bid to strengthen the laboratory sub-sector, they have set up 100 lab hubs across the country, adding that each lab hub has its lab infrastructure upgrades equipped and manpower increased.

"This has increased access to health laboratory tests such as TB, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, viral load samples for CD4, chemistry and hematological tests (EIP) surveillance and for outbreak investigations countrywide," health minister Jane Ruth Aceng said

yesterday while receiving the equipment at the UNHLS in Butabika, Luzira.

Aceng stressed that transportation of samples and results is key in the lab hub system and such requires a robust system.

"I wish to thank the US government for the support of the motorcycles and laptops to support the lab hub system in its viral load monitoring system," she said.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The motorcycles and computers will enable supervisors to reach facilities and submit performance data for decision-making directly to the ministry..

While delivering the items, the US ambassador, Deborah Malac, said without judicious supervision of the supply chain, all efforts in providing essential medicines and health supplies would go to waste.

"We must continue to identify

and address potential sources of inefficiency, including poor store management, deficient stock recording and inappropriate prescriptions or use of medicine," she said.

She noted that over the years, her government has been a key partner in supporting the modernisation of the health commodities supply chain in Uganda.

Malac explained that the investments, in partnership with government, have delivered vital logistics tools, supported capacity-building and procured and made available antiretroviral medicines for Ugandans living with HIV.

"I appeal to the Ministry of Health to take over SPARS implementation within the national system, especially as our supply chain enters its final years of implementation," she advised.

USAID and Uganda Health Supply Chain programme chief of party, Dr Birna Trap, said SPARS is a quality improvement approach that combines a number of interventions with regular



Malac (left) and Aceng handover motorbikes and computers to district health officers in Butabika, Kampala yesterday. The equipment was donated by the US government. Photo by Nancy Nanyonga

performance assessments to improve logistics management.

"The motorcycles and computers will enable supervisors to reach facilities and submit performance data for decision-making directly to the ministry," she added.

The head of UNHLS, Dr Susan Nabadda, said findings from the laboratories logistics supplies assessment 2012 revealed that labs in Uganda suffer inadequate storage facilities, poor equipment management, poor documentation and record keeping.

"The lab SPARS since implementation has improved stock management, storage management, ordering, receipt, equipment management and laboratory information systems for lab supplies in all facilities," she said.

She added that lab SPARS is initially being piloted in 20 districts in Uganda, which will also double as study sites to inform the scale up of this initiative.

The districts include Mbale, Lwengo, Gulu, Serere, Kiruhura, Kyegegwa, Masaka, Ibanda, Apac, Arua, Oyam,

Dokolo, Kitgum, Kotido, Bugiri, Buikwe, Kamuli, Kayunga, kyenjojo and Nebbi.

"Laptops and loaded internet modems have been issued to all lab SPARS supervisors to allow use of the electronic transfer of information," she explained.

She noted that it is estimated that 70% of decisions regarding patients' management are based on laboratory tests results. "Disease prevention and control outcomes are influenced through effective use of laboratory data," she added.