Immunisation cards a must before school admission

By Martin Kitubi

The Government has ordered learning institutions to stop admitting learners who do not have immunisation cards.

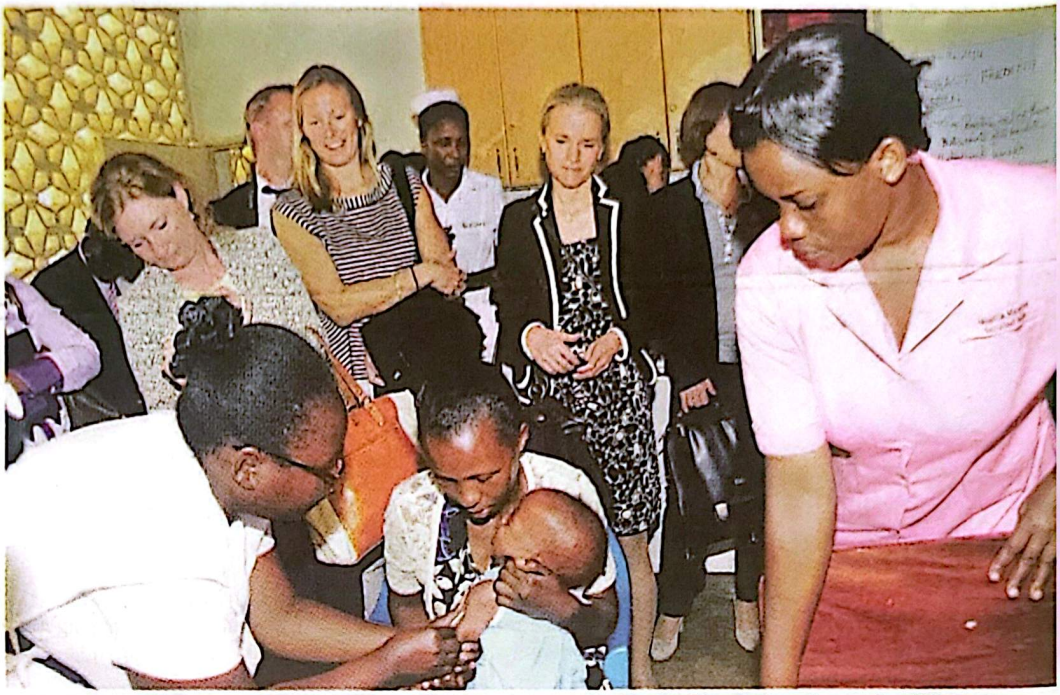
According to Henry Luzze, the deputy manager of the Uganda National Expanded Programme on Immunisation (UNEPI), the directive is in line with the new Immunisation Act, 2017 which was passed on June 19, 2017.

"The law on immunisation is intended to compel people to take their children for immunisation against diseases such as polio and measles," Luzze said.

He added that accessing vaccines at health facilities in the country is now mandatory.

Immunisation of children in the country stands between 95% and 98%, and with the new law, the country is likely to record 100% .

"We have registered several challenges where parents refuse to take their children for immunisation and this frustrates the country's effort to fight diseases," Vivian Sserwanja, from the health ministry said.



A nurse immunises a child at Kiswa Health Centre in Kampala. Going foward, all learners seeking admission to schools will be required to produce immunisation cards

The Act

The Immunisation Act was signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni on March 10, 2016.

Section 4 of the Act orders headteachers, or any person responsible for admission of a child at a school, to only admit children with immunisation cards certifying that they were immunised. "A person responsible for admission of a child under subsection (1) shall keep a copy of an immunisation card of every child who is admitted," the Act reads.

Under the Act, immunisable diseases include tuberculosis, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B, heamophillus influenza, polio, measles, pneumococcal conjugate.

Tetanus

The Act further states that every female between the age of 18 and 49 shall ensure that she is fully immunised against tetanus.

The law also recommends parents of girls between the age of 15 and 17 to ensure that the child is immunised against tetanus.

Subsection 2 mandates institutions of learning to which a female child of 15 to 17 years attends, to ensure that the child is appropriately immunised.

"Many diseases including tetanus are avoidable. This explains why we are emphasising that girls in school are immunised," Luzze explained.

However, the Act mandates the Government to ensure that every Ugandan has access to vaccines.

Penalties

According to Section 9 of the Act, any person who breaches the law commits an offence and is liable, on conviction, to a fine not exceeding twelve currency points or imprisonment not exceeding six months or both. One currency point is equivalent to sh20, 000.

Education responds

Aggrey Kibenge, an education ministry undersecretary backed the introduction of law saying it will guide parents on raising healthy children in school.

"The law was established fo a good cause. We only urge al institutions of learning to abide with the new directive," Kibenge said.

He added that the educatior ministry will ensure that copies o the new law are distributed to al institutions of learning.

Parents

Ahmed Magezi, a bodaboda ride in Bugolobi, Kampala and a fathe of two, said it would be hard fo some parents to trace the cards o their children.

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