

# MPs want malaria control budget increased

By Nicholas Wassajja

The health ministry has drawn up a budget of sh3 trillion, for the control of malaria over the next five years, as the country moves from control to total elimination of the killer disease.

The manager of the Malaria Control Programme, Dr Jimmy Opigo, said out of the required sh3 trillion, the project had so far got over sh1 trillion (\$520m), of which the Government has contributed 5%.

The MPs, under their umbrella body, Parliamentary Forum on Malaria, want the current 5% funding towards malaria control increased in the course of the next five years.

The MPs led by Moses Balyeku (Jinja West) during a press briefing at Parliament yesterday, said the increment should be in a phased manner. For example, 20% annually, but with a target of at least reaching 50% funding in the next five years.

The call tags along a new campaign dubbed Massive Action Against Malaria that targets individuals to take responsibility in the fight against the disease. Involvement of lawmakers is aimed at boosting sensitisation of people from district to village level.



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Despite being preventable, Uganda ranks sixth in the number of deaths from malaria in Africa, whereas its transmission is recorded as the fastest in the world, with approximately 16 million cases reported and about 10,000 deaths annually.

Opigo told *New Vision* that because donor partners had indicated that they would stop malaria funding, yet Uganda is moving from control to elimination methods which were more expensive, there was need for enhanced government funding.

"Although there was need to increase the 5% funding, this did not factor in the direct funding in health services such as salaries and infrastructure development," Opigo said.

Balyeku yesterday told journalists that President Yoweri Museveni would today launch the new malaria campaign at Parliament.

"The mass action against malaria starts tomorrow. We shall host the President, all key stakeholders and district leaders because we want the message about the fight to be disseminated to the grassroots countrywide," Balyeku said.

Noting that the launch is part of Parliament's commitment to increase funding for the fight against malaria, Balyeku also said they were honoured to host the launch of the new campaign under the slogan, "A free malaria constituency is my responsibility."

The Serere County MP, Patrick Okabe, said besides the distribution of mosquito nets and indoor residual spraying, there was also need for political will in the fight because the situation was not changing despite the enormous interventions.

Johnson Muyanja Ssenyonga (Mukono South) said involving politicians would assist in sensitising populations with the aim of changing their mindset from malaria treatment to prevention.

With malaria accounting for 20% of admissions in health facilities countrywide, according to Opigo, the high burden of malaria is a key challenge to the Uganda's human and economic development.