

... sister Maria Lutaaya and a one Kigongo who was the husband of his ... the two families. We are also looking into that matter to find out whether it has bearing on ... investigating the murder and five suspects were in their custody. ... that with the Government is unable to sustainably finance the decisions. ... policy

Health ministry roots for digital reporting on epidemics

By Pascal Kwesiga

As the use of technology in service delivery increasingly becomes inevitable, the health ministry has thrown its weight behind interventions aimed at developing internet-powered digital platforms to report and respond to epidemics.

With funding from US-based development partners, the ministry has brought together health workers, including epidemiologists and developers of digital applications (apps) to enhance reporting and response on epidemics and pandemics.

For five days, starting yesterday, the health workers and representatives of development partners will be discussing public health threats in the country and the glitches encountered in reporting and responding to them at Lake Victoria Serena Hotel in Kigo, a Kampala suburb.

By Friday, the ICT specialists, who will sit through the deliberations by public



Health minister Jane Aceng

health experts and development partners' representatives, will be expected to have developed prototypes of apps that should be developed to address the challenges the health workers grapple with in preventing, detecting and responding to disease outbreaks.

According to the head of public

emergency operation center at the health ministry, Dr Issa Makumbi, the ICT and public health specialists will agree on the most ideal digital apps in delivering medical services.

The apps will be developed under EpiHack, a global intervention that brings together health professionals and technologists to develop digital solutions to enhance disease surveillance.

"The prototypes that will be agreed upon will be developed further so that we can come up with apps to be used in preventing, detecting, reporting and responding to epidemics and pandemics. The development partners have agreed to support development of the prototypes (of apps) that we shall have approved," he added.

Timely reporting and response to epidemics, he noted, is very instrumental in combating diseases and saving lives as well as insulating economies from possible collapse.

"Uganda is very vulnerable because

BETWEEN THE LINES

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it is located in the yellow fever belt, in the meningitis belt and near the Congo basin. Climate change has also made us vulnerable to some outbreaks as the increasing population invades the environmentally sensitive areas," Makumbi added.

The chairperson of Uganda Aids Commission, Dr Eddie Mukooya, said digital apps would also enhance disease surveillance.

"We expect the technologists to develop apps for five key areas, but they can also develop more than five. Technology has become very

important in service delivery," he stated.

Joseph Agoada, from the Innovations Support to Emergencies and Disasters (INSTEDD), one of the US-based organisations that work with EpiHack, said the intention of bringing epidemiologists, public health professionals and technologists together, is to support development of apps that address the actual challenges facing health workers.

Brian Ssenoga, a senior project manager at Medic Mobile, one of the local technology companies, said they have already developed an electronic platform for village health teams to record and send to the districts information from villages through apps on their mobile phones.

"The village health teams know all the households in their areas. If they are empowered to pick and send information from villages in real time, there will be a huge impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of their reporting," Ssenoga said.