

Community hospital offers free health care

BY AGNES KYOTALENGERIRE

A health care facility, which offers free services and diagnosis for the community in and around Maganjo and Nabweru in Wakiso, is today launching a new three-storeyed building that will take the services to another level.

Ruth Gaylord Hospital Maganjo, sponsored by Hope Medical Clinics Uganda, has served the community since 2013. It was named after a retired Minnesota music teacher in honour of her service through the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, the US.

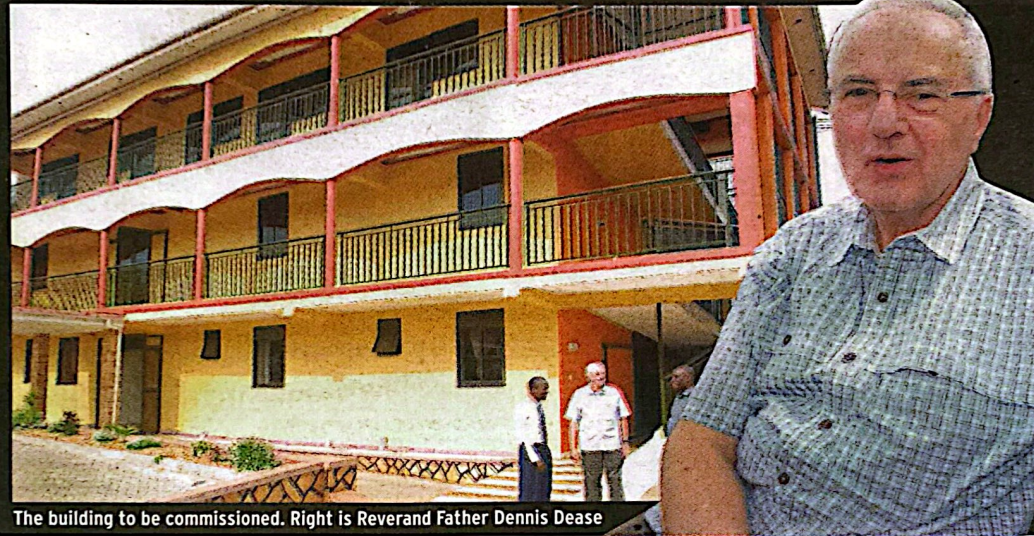
Hope Medical Clinics Uganda is a non-profit entity that was established out of the partnership between Fr Dennis Dease, the president of the University of St. Thomas and the Founders of Hope For The City, both from Minnesota, US.

The organisation builds community hospitals with financial support from donations. Every month, about 1,500 patients access services at the Maganjo hospital.

THE NEW FACILITY

According to Charles Sseka Lugemwa, the country director and founder Ruth Gaylord Hospital Maganjo, the three-storeyed block has private rooms on the first level, an X-ray room, offices and training rooms on the second level. On the third floor, there are five apartments that will be accommodating teams of visiting surgeons.

"We are opening the block and at the same time, breaking ground for the 24 rental apartments," he said. "The rental apartments will generate money to help in replacing equipment.



The building to be commissioned. Right is Reverend Father Dennis Dease

SERVICES OFFERED

Peter Kavuma, the chief executive officer, says the foundation offers affordable health care services to middle and low-income individuals.

Ruth Gaylord Hospital has an in-patient department, offers paediatric services, maternity services, laboratory, theatre, scan, dental and optical services.

Screening and treatment of malaria, antenatal and delivery; dental care, eye care, orthopaedic services and routine immunisation and hepatitis B vaccination are offered free-of-charge.

Joshua Mpabwe, a resident of Kawanda, says his family has been using the hospital for the last two years and he likes its free medical treatment, especially for malaria.

Tina Nakatudde, a mother of six, praises the hospital for its cleanliness

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and friendly workers.

Lugemwa says the hospital is run on a low-cost sharing model, where patients pay only sh4,000 as consultation fees. However, to recover the cost of medicines, patients who can afford are encouraged to pay the full amount.

"It is self-sustaining and money collected is used to run the hospital," Lugemwa explains.

Kavuma says paying and maintain consultants is costly since the hospital only depends on consultation fees and medicines for revenue.

"Some people who can afford refuse to pay for medicines, claiming they cannot afford," he said. "It is for this reason that we are constructing rental apartments to have constant cash flow to run the hospital," he affirms.

The challenge the hospital is facing is late referrals. "We are constantly handling critical cases from mostly patients who are referred late," Kavuma says.

He adds that the aim of setting up the hospital was to demonstrate that it is possible to have a community

health facility that is self-sustaining, a model that can be replicated by the Government.

The hospital has 42 qualified medical workers that include medical doctors, surgeons, nurses and laboratory technicians.

Lugemwa says the hospital resolved to spend more on preventive health services because it is a better strategy of healthcare.

"We deploy our workers into the community to conduct routine immunisation for diarrhoea among children. When we establish a clean water point at a free cost, we reduce on water-related infections like diarrhoea and typhoid," he said.

With support from St. Thomas University Minnesota, the hospital plans to drill a borehole, pump and treat water from underground using solar.

OFFICIATION

The Katikkiro of Buganda, Charles Peter Mayiga, will officiate the function.

The other guests expected are the US Ambassador to Uganda, Deborah Malac, chairman CSM Corporation, Gary S. Holmes, president Emeritus of University of St Thomas and chairman board of directors Friends of East Africa Foundation, Fr Dennis Dease.

Others are the health ministry permanent secretary Dr Diana Atwine and the youth chaplain Kampala Arch Diocese, Fr Joseph Luzindana.

Ruth Gaylord Hospital Maganjo was constructed in 2013 and opened on March 21, 2013 with donation from Gary S. Holmes, a US citizen based in Minnesota through Hope Medical Clinics Uganda.