



First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports Mrs. Janet Museveni together with the Ambassador of Sweden to Uganda, Per Lindgarde (on her left) and officials from Karolinska Institute in Sweden, Makerere University, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Sports after their meeting at State House on Wednesday to discuss establishment of a centre for non-communicable diseases at Makerere University. PPU Photo

By Vision Reporter

# First Lady hails Swedish govt over disease centre

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs. Janet Museveni, has welcomed an initiative by Sweden's Karolinska Institute to establish a centre for non-communicable diseases in Uganda at Makerere University.

She said such an initiative comes at an opportune time when Uganda is grappling with big numbers of people in the country who die from non-communicable diseases mainly because they do not know how to avoid catching such diseases.

Mrs Museveni was on Wednesday meeting with Sweden's Ambassador to Uganda H.E Per Lindgarde, who led a high-level delegation from Karolinska Institute from Sweden to brief her about their ongoing discussions with Makerere regarding the establishment of a centre for non-communicable diseases at the university.

The meeting at State House Nakasero was also attended by Makerere University officials led by the vice-chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, the acting director general of health services in the Ministry of Health, Dr Henry Mwebesa,

first secretary, research co-operation at the Embassy of Sweden City Behravan and senior education ministry officials.

### Need to sensitise

Mrs Museveni acknowledged the need to sensitise the young people in order for them to avoid lifestyles that would make them susceptible to suffer from such diseases in future.

She added that treatment of the life-long non-communicable diseases makes a monumental strain on the country's meagre resources.

Some of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) include hypertension, diabetes, cancer, mental health, severe burns, renal and chronic respiratory diseases.

People get exposed to these diseases when they are still

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young and the risk factors include physical inactivity, obesity, tobacco use and alcohol abuse among others.

### Appreciation

Mrs. Museveni appreciated the support from the Swedish government through the Swedish Development Co-operation and its strong collaboration with Makerere University and other

Government agencies.

She pledged Government's support towards the establishment of the centre for non-communicable diseases.

Lindgarde said his country has been the largest supporter of research in Makerere University for the last 16 years.

According to Prof Anders Gustafson, the dean of research at Karolinska Institute in Sweden, the centre for non-

communicable diseases will be able to collect data and analyse it to inform policy and also build capacity for the human resource for the prevention and early diagnosis of these diseases so as to address the growing epidemic.

The data generated in Uganda will also inform the response to the high burden of non-communicable diseases related deaths in Africa.

Nawangwe appreciated the Swedish government support to Makerere University, saying without it, conducting research at Makerere University would not have been possible.

### Survey

He reported that a demographic survey is already being conducted in Mayuge district to collect local data on what drives the non-communicable diseases.

The principal of the Makerere University School of Health Sciences, Prof Charles Ibingira, said the rise in non-communicable diseases in the country was realised in 2016 and that 50% of the human resource in the health facilities in the country are not conversant enough with how to manage these diseases.

This, therefore, calls for capacity building of the human resource. He said an NCD symposium was organised by Makerere University College of Health to bring together researchers, clinicians, public health specialists, civil society, community leaders, policymakers, funding agencies and pharmaceutical companies from Africa and beyond to discuss the unrecognised yet growing epidemic of NCDs in Africa.

Mwebesa said they welcome this innovation which will help a lot in research for health treatment protocols, control measures and informing policy. He pledged the Ministry of Health's support. He also appreciated all stakeholders who have joined the Ministry of Health to fight non-communicable diseases.

"The focus should be to prevent these diseases because treatment is lifelong."