

UK gives Shs215b to fight malaria

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KAMPALA. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) has launched a new \$59 million (about Shs215b) programme to tackle malaria in Uganda.

The DfID head Officer, Ms Jennie Barugh, told a meeting to end phase II of the Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) project, held in Kampala yesterday, that the UK government will over the next five years invest about Shs215b in a programme that will avert at least 11,056 deaths of children under five.

She also said the new programme will prevent more than 989,000 malaria cases, thus contributing to the UK government's priority on tackling

maternal and child deaths.

Ms Barugh said the interventions will include support to IRS and integrated case management of malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia.

She commended the Ministry of Health for its leadership in the fight against malaria but said some of the challenges have persisted.

Speaking on behalf of Health state minister Sarah Opendi, the head of the National Malaria Control Programme, Dr Jimmy Opigo, said the government and its partners have scaled up malaria prevention and control interventions.

"For example, since 2006, the United States government through USAID/Presidential Malaria Initiative has supported IRS in Uganda, starting

with the districts of Kabale (two rounds) and Kanungu (one round). Between 2008 and 2014, USAID supported IRS in 10 northern Uganda districts," Dr Opigo said.

He said IRS intervention had greatly reduced the malaria burden with several districts reporting a reduction in the number of outpatient attendances. The 2015 Uganda National Malaria Survey indicated that prevalence reduced from 45 per cent in 2009 to 19 per cent in 2015.

But Dr Opigo said malaria remains the leading cause of illness and deaths, accounting for 30-50 per cent of outpatient visits at health facilities and 15-20 per cent of all hospital admissions.

The US deputy chief of Mis-

sion, Ms Colette Marcellin, said defeating malaria is a critical step to reducing poverty and improving maternal and child health.

"Fewer malaria cases mean healthier societies, increased school attendance, more productive communities and stronger economies," she said.

Ms Marcellin added that since 2012, the US government, together with the UK, have invested more than \$81 million (Shs292b) in the IRS project.

She challenged the government to increase domestic financing to malaria to shift towards independence from donor support.

The DfID head of mission said an average of Shs25,000 is spent by every Ugandan per episode of malaria. The DfID is one of Uganda's development partners.

Additional reporting by Martin Luther Oketch