

Govt, Buganda partner in anti-malaria drive

By Jeff Andrew Lule

As the Government continues with its efforts to wipe malaria out of the country, Buganda Kingdom has joined the Ministry of Health in a new campaign to end the disease in the central region.

The move comes at a time when the Government is rolling out the Long Lasting Insecticide Nets campaign, under the Malaria Control Programme countrywide. The exercise started last year and targets to distribute 24 million nets. So far 109 districts have been covered.

According to Dr Henry Stanley Katamba, the campaign co-ordinator from the health ministry, they realised the great impact the kingdom plays in promoting the campaign to end the disease.

The campaign is estimated to cost \$125m (about sh450b) and is funded by the Global Fund, the British government and President's Malaria Initiative, among other partners.

Katamba disclosed this while addressing journalists at a joint press briefing with Buganda's health minister, Dr. Ben Mukwaya, at Bulange, Mengo, the kingdom's administrative office.

"We realised that people have a great attachment to their cultural leaders. We think cultural leaders can easily sensitise the people on various strategies on how to avoid malaria. Buganda has been promoting proper hygiene in homes, an approach which has greatly led to the reduction of malaria cases in the region," he noted.

Katamba said the partnership is timely as they prepare to

distribute nets in Buganda.

The team will distribute 1,644,016 nets out of the registered 3,012,048 people from 598,406 households in Wakiso district. Only two people from each household get a net.

Katamba urged those getting nets to carry their authentic identification cards for verification including; national IDs, passports and village IDs. The group will distribute nets in Kampala next month.

He said trends show a reduction in malaria cases from 42% in 2009 to 19% between 2014/2015 countrywide. "This is about 50%, which is not small. In Kampala and Wakiso it has reduced to 1%. This means you have to count 100 people to get a malaria case," he said.

He attributed the reduction in Kampala and Wakiso to the Buganda Kingdom's hygiene campaign.

Katamba said they want Buganda to help the Government sensitise people about the campaign.

Nets for refugees

He explained that whether someone is a foreigner or not, they would get nets as long as they were registered and have authentic identification documents.

"We registered households and all those registered will get their nets once they present their IDs," he added.

However, Katamba further noted that the Government has a special arrangement for refugees in camps. "We are going to distribute three million nets strictly to refugees in different camps around the country. This was also



Mukwaya chatting with Katamba after a press briefing in Mengo, Kampala last week. Photo by Ramadhan Abbey

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FIGURES

supported by Global Fund and other partners," he explained.

Buganda's commitment

Mukwaya attributed the main cause of malaria to poor hygiene in homes.

"That is why the Kabaka emphasises cleanliness in homes. We want people to

know how to avoid malaria through cleaning their compounds, slashing bushes, clearing stagnant water and sleeping under mosquito nets," he noted.

"Malaria greatly affects children below five, pregnant mothers and at times also leads to mental disabilities," he said.

Mukwaya noted that malaria is also one of the main causes of poverty as many homes spend a lot on treatment.

He said they intend to use the kingdom structures, from the village to county level, to sensitise people.

Dr. Fiona Kalinda, the kingdom's director of health, said they would sensitise all kingdom officials to promote the campaign.

"We shall train them so that they can pass on the message," she added.