

Promise Tracker

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THE PROMISE

In the run up to the February 23, 2006 general elections, the first to be held under a multiparty dispensation since the ruling NRM shot its way to power in January 1986, the party released what was christened the "Prosperity for All, Transformation and Peace" manifesto.

In the document, the party which had by then been a few months shy of making it two decades in power, committed itself to establishing a functional hospital in each of the constituencies.

"The NRM policy is to have a hospital fully equipped with an operating theatre, a doctor, doctor's house, and a multi-purpose vehicle (ambulance) in each of the 215 parliamentary constituencies," the document reads in part.

This, if other sections of the manifesto are anything to go by, was meant to be proof that "the health of all Ugandans has always been a matter of high importance and priority" to the party, and a manifestation of its deep commitment to "addressing the health needs of the population in all aspects".

Giving an update of the situation that prevailed at the time, the document stated that there were already 62 regional referral and district general hospitals with health services for the constituencies where they are located, which then required government to provide another 152 functional Health Centre IVs.

Out of the required 152, the party claimed 16 had been commissioned, another 68 had been completed and equipped and are operational, but had not yet been commissioned; 35 had been completed, but had not yet been equipped and were therefore not functional; 31 were about to be completed, while work had only begun on another five health centre IVs.

This suggested that only 84 out of the required total were functional. Sixty eight were yet to be constructed or equipped.

At the time the promise was made, Uganda had a total of 1,403 sub-counties, which meant that it was meant to have had at least 1,403 health centre IIIs, but only 730 were in place.

The country had 7,431 parishes, which required a matching number of health centre IIs, but again if the contents of

Uganda in 11-year wait for every constituency to have a hospital



1,403

Deficit. The number of Sub counties that Uganda had at the time the promise was made, which meant that it was meant to have had at least 1,403 health centre IIIs, but only 730 were in place.

Donations. Hope Birungi of Buyende Hope for Youth project hands over bicycle ambulances to youth living with HIV/Aids.

PHOTOS BY GPO SAM CALES

the manifesto are anything to go by, only 1,055 Health Centre IIs were in place.

However, slightly more than 11 years since Mr Museveni bagged a victory, the promise made has never been realised.

Whereas the health ministry demands that a general hospital serve 500,000 people, a health centre IV serves a population of 100,000 people; a health centre III a population of 20,000 people, and a health centre II a population of 5,000 people. Many districts, constituencies, sub-counties and parishes do not have the recommended infrastructure.

At the same time, the health facilities continue to be plagued by lack of doctors and other categories of manpower.

In some cases, entire districts have either one or no medical doctor. As of the beginning of 2016, Namayingo District had only one medical doctor who is also the Superintendent of Buyinja Health Centre IV, which serves as the district hospital.

Close by, in Namutumba, a district of a population of at least 253,260 people, had by the close of 2016 not had a resident medical doctor at Nsinze Health Centre IV, which serves as the district hospital, after the former in-charge went on study leave in September 2014.

At the same time, most of the existing health centres neither have ambulances

nor residences for their doctors and other medical personnel.

According to the 2016 Statistical Abstract compiled by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubos), there was a 31.1 per cent deficit in staffing levels in public health facilities as of 2014/2015. The document reveals that whereas the recommended staffing levels stood at 55,465 positions, only 38,795 positions had been filled.

It would now appear that the situation was precipitated by lack of funds. While the government of Uganda was a signatory to the April 2001 Abuja Declaration, which saw African countries commit themselves to allocating at least 15 per cent of their annual budgets to improving their respective health sectors, funding to the sector has, since 2010, been below 10 per cent.

The Ubos abstract reveals that budgetary allocations to the Health Sector have been very low over the last seven years with things taking a turn for the worst in the financial year 2013/2014 when the Ministry was allocated 8.6 percent of the national budget, a figure which dropped by one percentage point in the following financial year. In the financial year 2015/2016, it dropped to 6.9 percent and stayed the same the following financial year.



Ambulance. Speaker Rebecca Kadaga tries out one of the community ambulances donated by Unicef to promote maternal and child health.