JMS manufactures food supplements

BY GERALD TENYWA

The Joint Medical Store (JMS), a faith-based organisation, has started manufacturing a new food supplement, an immunity booster, to fight diseases.

"We started producing a nutritional drug in December," Dr. Bildard Baguma, the executive director of JMS, said during a press engagement at their offices in Nsambya, a suburb of Kampala.

Baguma said JMS has a laboratory at Jinja, where the nutrition supplement, also known as Replenish, is being made.

The raw materials for the food supplement include Moringa oleifera powder and Selenium. He also said the food supplement is already on the market at JMS stores at sh30,000 and at pharmaceutical outlets.

"Replenish has been designed to naturally increase the production of antioxidant enzymes, including selenium dependent Glutathione peroxidase, Superoxide dismutase and others that disrupt the spread of many viruses and infections," he explained, adding that they were also considering producing other drugs in future.

Baguma also said JMS is in advanced stages to make medical sundries, such as syringes and catheters, which are currently imported into the country. This, according to Baguma, would reduce the cost of the drugs and medical sundries.

JMS was established in 1979 by Protestant Medical Bureau and Catholic Medical Bureau, to support faith-based health units. The Muslim Medical Bureau and the Orthodox Medical Bureau also get supplies from JMS at a low cost. JMS also gets funding from the Government. It has pharmaceutical warehouses in different parts of the country, including cold chain storage for vaccines and other sensitive drugs.



A sample of the immune booster drugs manufactured at Joint Medical Stores. Photo by Juliet Kasirye

The warehouses are also stocked with anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs. At least 103,426 people receive ARV therapy through JMS.

Baguma cited challenges faced by JMS as unfavourable tax regime, poor quality medicine on the market and poor management of medicines, among others.

Dr Fred Sebisubi from the Ministry of Health, said drugs imported into the country must have a 75% shelf life, meaning they should not be imported with a short time remaining to the expiry date.

He said sh230b is allocated for procurement of medicines for the public sector. He said this is about 30% of the health ministry budget and about 10% of the needed drugs. The Government gives sh6.5b to JMS annually, according to Sebisubi.

Solomon Onen, the regulating officer at the National Drug Authority (NDA), said counterfeit medicine is trafficked into the country through the porous borders. He said NDA has a presence at Entebbe Airport, Busia and Malaba border points, but there are over 50 unmanned border points. "We have a challenge of unmanned border points. Unscrupulous individuals use the borders to smuggle medicine into the country," he explained.

Onen said NDA has impounded large amounts of medical drugs at Entebbe, but most of the culprits feign ignorance.

He also said the law against counterfeits is weak because it prescribes a one-year sentence or a fine of sh600,000 for persons found to be dealing in counterfeit drugs. This, according to Onen, is not prohibitive, yet the pharmaceutical industry is lucrative.

He said tracing the origin of counterfeit medicine in the country remains a big challenge and that the recent fake Hepatitis B vaccine, is a symptom of the problem they are currently facing.

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UN envoy a for refugee

BY DAVID LUMU

A special envoy of the Un Commissioner for Refuge East Africa and the Horn Affey, has pleaded to the fund Uganda's refugee p

Affey, who was speakin Riyadh International Hu in Saudi Arabia recently allegations of mismana urgently needs donor f the huge burden of ref the Democratic Repub Sudan, Somalia and E

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"We want to ackno contribution of Uga refugees. Uganda d camps, but has refu allows these peopl country. This elem Uganda," he said.

Affey added: "W King Salman Hu Centre to suppor requires suppor many refugees a other areas. The of resources are establish the fa happened."

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