

Evolution of National Medical Stores

By Ritah Mukasa

The National Medical Stores (NMS) is a government-owned organisation that was established by an Act of Parliament.

It is mandated to procure, store and distribute human medication and health-related consumable items to government-owned health units in all districts.

NMS derives its mandate from the National Medical Stores Act, which came into effect on December 3, 1993. It is supervised by the health minister.

Its head office is located on Nsamizi Road in Entebbe. It employs over 270 people in different departments.

NMS replaced CMS

The health ministry, through the 1993 NMS Act, delegated the drug supply, storage and distribution of drugs function to NMS, hence the formation of an autonomous institution to replace the Central Medical stores (CMS).

NMS was also given the responsibility to ensure the continuous distribution of pharmaceutical products in a financially viable and sustainable manner.

It distributes many drugs which include Uganda Essential Drug Kits, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) drugs and family planning products, among others.

Mandate expands

NMS' mandate grew to serve 100% of government health facilities including the Police, army and Prisons.

In August 2012, this mandate was further expanded to distribute all vaccines across the country.

Moses Kamabare, the general manager of the



Kamabare (right) taking religious leaders around the warehouse in Entebbe during the 25 years celebrations recently

institution, says NMS has enough stock of medicines and vaccines, which it distributes to all government hospitals and health centres on a routine basis, aside the orders made to the organisation by health facilities.

Curbing drug theft

NMS' leadership also came up with the embossment of all medicines to stop theft.

"All medicine and medical supplies are embossed with a seal 'UG NOT FOR SALE' to ensure that they are not stolen and sold on the open market," Kamabare says.

Embossment also helps patients to easily distinguish medicines and medical

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supplies that they can access free of charge from government health facilities.

In the same way, this arrangement helps law enforcement organs such as the Police and courts of law to easily identify Government products for the purpose

of charging and convicting suspects brought before them.

NMS spread its wings

Since its inception, NMS has grown and spread its wings from its head office in Entebbe to many parts of the country for effective and efficient service delivery.

The regional offices are located in Arua, Gulu, Hoima, Kabarole, Fort Portal, Kampala, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto and Soroti.

NMS vision and mission

NMS' vision is to be the leading national supplier of medicine and other medical supplies to meet the needs of the Ugandan population.

Their mission is to equitably provide affordable, quality medicine and other medical supplies to health facilities in the country.

The organisation's core values are integrity, transparency, accountability, operational excellence, corporate social responsibility, strong leadership, team work and customer focus.

Objectives of NMS

NMS' strategic objective is to procure, store and distribute

medicine and medical supplies for use in Ugandan medical facilities.

The principal objectives of the corporation, as derived by the Act, are to procure, economically and efficiently, medicines and other medical supplies of good quality primarily for the public health services.

It is also mandated to secure, ensure safe and efficient storage, administer, distribute and supply the goods in question in accordance with the National Drug Policy (NDP) and National Drug Authority (NDA).

It also establishes and maintains systems to ensure that quality goods are supplied.

NMS estimates the current and future needs, as a basis for procurement, planning and budgeting by the corporation itself and the ministries concerned.

It also performs other appropriate additional tasks entrusted to the corporation by regulation, or as may be accepted by the board as complementary or necessary for the performance of its primary functions.

Structure and funding

NMS has a board of directors comprising a non-executive chairperson, 15 non-executive members and a general manager. Under the general manager, there are seven heads of departments.

These are the corporation secretary, procurement, stores and operations, sales and marketing, finance and accounts, internal audit and human resource and support services.

Others are quality assurance, management information system and public relations.

The board members are Jotham Musinguzi (chairperson), Medard Bitekyerezo, Hanifah Namaala Sengendo, Samuel Orochi, Justinian Niwagaba, Laban Mbulamuko, Kenneth Omoding, Kate Nalukenge and Naome Kibaaju.

Others are Christine Ondo, Richard Mugahi, Emmanuel Osuna, Beatrice Lagaba, Shaban Abdullah and Timothy Musila.

The board serves for a four-year renewable term.

NMS gets operational funds from the sale of medicines, medical supplies and handling fees.

Medicine delivery

NMS delivers medicine to all health facilities from regional referral hospitals, general hospitals, health centre IVs, IIIs and IIs, through a system called Last Mile Delivery.

This system ensures that medical supplies reach the end user at all government health facilities across the country safely and on time.

However, company trucks deliver to the district headquarters and NMS then contracts private transporters to deliver the medicines from district headquarters to individual lower health facilities.

The in-charges and another member of the community or security organisation confirm that medicines received are exactly what is indicated on delivery notes and are in good condition then sign and stamp the delivery notes.



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National Medical Stores
upon their 25th Anniversary*

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