

How Joint Medical Store evolved to

By Ritah Mukasa

From a small joint venture between the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau (UCMB) and the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB), Joint Medical Store (JMS) has come a long way. Established in 1979, the fully-fledged private not-for-profit body is worth over sh8b.

JMS was formed as an entity in charge of logistics to ensure that UCMB and UPMB facilities get essential medicines and medical supplies.

It currently manages the pharmaceutical supply chain of over 3,500 health facilities countrywide.

The body supplies medicines and medical supplies, in addition to selling, repairing and maintaining medical equipment.

The organisation employs more than 100 staff directly, including pharmacists, biomedical engineers, warehouse experts, administrators, among others.

How deliveries are made

Joanita Namutebi Lwanyaga, the JMS director of customer services, says they serve facilities that are in need of medicines for as long as they meet the basic requirements of National Drug Authority (NDA) and the health ministry.

"We receive orders, process them and deliver to the clients. We are also in charge of warehousing and distribution. This means that all



JMS head offices in Nsambya, Kampala. They have other branches in Mbarara and Arua

our branches fall under customer services," she explains.

JMS branches include the head office, which is located in Nsambya, Kampala. This is where their main warehouse is located. They also have other branches in Mbarara and Arua.

"To get closer to the facilities, we have outlets that are not owned by JMS," she says.

These include Masaka, Jinja and Fort Portal. The outlets distribute JMS products to neighbouring facilities.

The directorate of customer services

has to ensure that they have stocked enough supplies. To ensure that, JMS divided the country into four zones to ease service delivery.

For example, all districts surrounded by Nsambya, such as Kampala, Wakiso, Masindi and Jinja, among



Joanita Namutebi Lwanyaga

others, are served by the head office. Those near Fort Portal Virika are served there, while Mbarara supplies the other 15 districts in western Uganda.

However, districts in the northern region, such as Gulu, where there is neither a branch nor an outlet, are served by Nsambya.

"It is along distance so we plan to set up a branch in Gulu and Mbale," she says.

Resource planning

On how deliveries are executed, Lwanyaga says once they receive orders, they forward them to nearby branches.

JMS delivers the right quantity and quality of commodities.

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serve over 3,500 health facilities

"We are aided by the enterprise resource planning system. We plan and supply. The system helps us to keep track of what is happening as well," she says.

According to Lwanyaga, they have also established an annual delivery schedule, which is bi-monthly.

"We go to every zone every two months. There is a deadline for placing orders and for delivery," she notes.

Most of the donor commodities have been fitted in this schedule plus the Primary Health Care (PHC) credit line, where JMS receives funds from the health ministry.

However, the organisation also receives instant orders from facilities that place orders using their money. These are executed outside the schedule. They do not have to wait for the two months. Even if we are out of stock, we liaise with suppliers and avail the medicines.

For the facilities that are unable to plan and wait for the two months' delivery schedule, Lwanyaga reveals that they have put in place the Regular Order Delivery Schedule (RODS), which is a monthly schedule.

"You realise that some facilities do not have a lot of money to procure and also stock some commodities. Some are limited by storage facilities and can only buy a few products. We supply to those on a monthly basis," she says. In order to benefit from the economies of scale, Lwanyaga explains that they call all the zones to send their orders, after which they consolidate the volumes and deliver.

JMS products

Lwanyaga, who has worked with JMS since 2008, says their first product is the one of selling medicines, medical sundries and equipment.

The second product is warehousing and distribution. This is where they receive donor commodities and warehouse them before



Delivery trucks loading drugs. They supply medicines to over 3,500 facilities countrywide

JOINT MEDICAL STORE EMPLOYS OVER 100 STAFF DIRECTLY, INCLUDING PHARMACISTS, BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

distributing them to facilities. Under this product, JMS follows a list of facilities that are targeted to benefit. The list is provided by the health ministry.

"We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the health ministry, but also the National Medicines Policy 2015 lists JMS as the warehouse for private not-for-profit facilities, just as National Medical Stores (NMS) does for all public facilities," she says.

In the warehouse, there are about 11,000 pallet positions and we have 18,000 stock keeping units. It is a one-stop

shop for all medical supplies the facilities need.

JMS also sells medical equipment, such as hospital beds, refrigerators, among others. They also install, carry out repairs and train hospital personnel on usage of medical equipment.

Projects

JMS has a programme for essential medicines, which are distributed following a defined list as per the clinical guidelines.

"We come up with a list of the medicines the facilities can order for, depending on their

level and care. For example, for a health centre II, we have a list they use to place the order," Lwanyaga notes.

For malaria, they receive funds from the Global Fund and USAID. They also receive HIV commodities and distribute them.

JMS receives sh7.4b under the primary health care credit line from the health ministry annually.

"There are about 561 facilities that are benefiting from this arrangement. These include church facilities, those for Muslims, Orthodox and six

community-based hospitals," she says.

This project is supposed to enable the facilities subsidise medical services. That is why when you go to the non-profit facilities, it is not as expensive as it is with other private facilities.



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REGIONAL OFFICES

Mbarara branch | Mbale branch | Gulu branch | Entebbe branch | Jinja branch | Arua sector office | Lira sector office | Fort portal Sector Office | Masaka Sector Office | Hoima Sector Office | Mukono Sector Office



A JMS warehouse. They also sell medical equipment such as hospital beds