

# NATIONAL DRUG AUTHORITY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES THROUGH EFFECTIVE DRUG REGULATION



NDA Chairperson Dr. Medard Bitekyerezo (centre) and (Ag.) Secretary David Nahamya during the Kamuli medical camp.

The National Drug Authority (NDA) came into being with an Act of Parliament in 1993, and its main mandate, is to ensure the availability of safe drugs to the entire population of Uganda.

At the time, it was common place to find drugs sold openly in places like taxi parks, and exposed to unsuitable storage conditions. That was one aspect that needed to change. It is imperative for a population to have access to quality drugs, for everyone shall definitely need them at one point, starting with the vaccines we receive as children, the Essential Medicines vital for daily health (pain killers, anti-malarials, dewormers and the like), and the specialised medicines that treat and/or prevent the multitude of ailments we suffer.

The NDA Act also recognised two other elements that ultimately also affect our health: Firstly, there are the medical devices, including items like needles, syringes, bandages and gauze. You can further include items like contraceptive devices and prosthetics.

The other is the connection between human and animal health. Agriculture remains central to Uganda's economy. The majority of our households possess poultry, livestock, and even pets. These too require drugs and other inputs, and thus the Act also included provisions for their regulation.

NDA's first offices were situated at Butabika Hospital, and the staff numbers were small. But under the leadership of Dr. Jack Jagwe (Founding Chairperson) and Mr. Abbas Kabogo (Founding Secretary), the team hit the ground running. Special thanks goes to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) who provided technical and financial support.

Tremendous strides have been made by NDA since then; ours has been a concerted effort to ensure quality service in the pharmaceutical sector, to ensure there are quality drugs on the market, to ensure there are no counterfeit

products on sale, and to ensure that all drug outlets are licensed and operated by qualified personnel.

We have done this by gradually building capacity: today, NDA has a presence at all drug supply chain levels. Quality assurance measures start



The minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng flanked by NDA officials & the contractors break ground for the new NDA Towers

with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) inspection, where we assess the facilities that supply us with drugs, be it in Uganda or beyond.

Related to that is market authorisation, which we have performed since 2000: here, NDA goes through a dossier on the drug submitted. If satisfied, its registered and sanctioned for the market.

It is detrimental if a good drug is stored poorly; NDA thus also inspects and in turn licenses drug outlets (pharmacies and drug shops), based on metrics like the personnel's qualifications and the suitability of the premises. Today, we have over a 1000 pharmacies, and over 10000 drug shops. The former has the license to carry more classes of drugs, and thus, through a policy of equitable

distribution, we at NDA are encouraging their spread, and are pleased that as of now most major towns in the country possess pharmacies.

We also perform import and export control, for we are at the points of entry, including at Busia, Malaba, Nakawa and Entebbe. We test samples of drugs, condoms and a variety of medical devices: our National Drug Laboratory is WHO and ISO accredited, meaning that we produce indisputable results.

NDA's vigilance continues: we do post-market surveillance, picking samples already on the market to test. There's also pharmacovigilance, which is the monitoring of what happens after

That said, our hope is also to steer Uganda's pharmaceutical industry to greater heights. It faces a number of challenges, including those at the macro-level, like with infrastructure, skills and the cost of capital, but it is acknowledged that Government is addressing these.

At NDA itself, we are supporting local industries through the Buy Uganda, Build Uganda (BUBU) initiative, starting with ring-fencing 37 products that we believe can be locally produced. Registration fees for these drugs have been increased should one seek to import them, and verification fees have been waived for the local producer bringing in raw materials. Our sister agency, National Medical

drugs have been used. To date, there are seven regional offices countrywide. These achievements have been buttressed by an expansion in staff numbers: after starting with just a handful, NDA now has over 300, regularly trained and skilled to

Stores (NMS), also prioritises the purchase of locally produced drugs. We shall continue to encourage investment in the sector, with the ultimate aim of increasing on the 37 and reducing our dependence on imports.

As an 18-year veteran of NDA, I have a sense of pride in the work I and all my colleagues have done over the years. As with any entity, NDA has had its ups and downs. But ours is a pledge that the future shall only be better. Our nation shall be built on the foundation that **Safe Drugs Save Lives.**

(Ag.) Secretary to the Authority, David Nahamya



A cake shaped like the NDA towers is cut at the ground breaking.



A section of patients that came for the free NDA medical camp in Kamuli.

## Silver Jubilee celebrations at Hotel Africana

National Drug Authority closed its Silver Jubilee celebrations with a number of events, held at Hotel Africana on 27/06/19.

The statutory body, charged with regulating Uganda's drug and pharmaceutical sector, encompassing both human and veterinary products, interacted with its stakeholders and the public alike, informing and educating all on

its mandate. It also unveiled a number of initiatives and innovations that shall carry the nation forward in terms of drug regulation, and ensure we only have access to what is safe and efficacious.

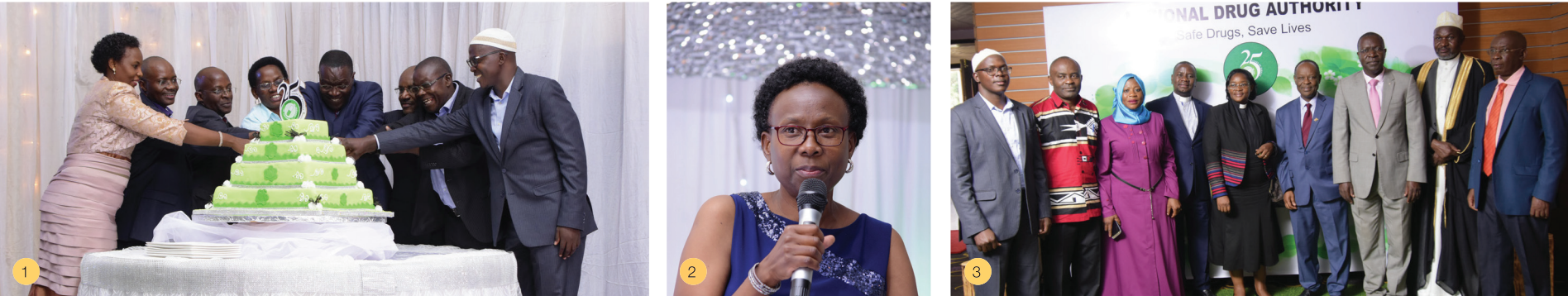
The fete started with an inter-denominational Prayer Breakfast, with Reverend Canon Dr. Rebecca Nyegenye, the Provost of All Saints Cathedral, Kampala, serving as the Main Celebrant.

The Authority then held an expo, in which members of the public got an opportunity to interact and learn about NDA, its mandate and activities, and get knowledge about the drug and pharmaceutical sector in general.

Crowning the celebrations was a Grand Dinner. The Chief Guest was the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng. Amongst the

speakers was the Chairman of the Authority, Dr. Medard Bitekyerezo, and the (Ag.) Secretary, David Nahamya. Highlights of the evening included the launch of the NDA Management Information System, an IT platform that shall speed up NDA activity and increase transparency.

## Pictorial for NDA Silver Jubilee Celebrations



Clockwise: (1) The Anniversary cake is cut. (2) Minister of Health, Dr. Aceng. (3) NDA & MoH officials with religious leaders at the Thanks Giving Breakfast. (4) A section of the NDA Expo. (5) Religious leaders guide the prayer breakfast. (6) Ndere Troupe entertain dinner guests.

## NDA holds Medical Camp in Kamuli as part of their 25 year Celebrations

National Drug Authority (NDA) held a free medical camp at Kamuli District Hospital on 1st June, 2019. It marked the start of a range of activities the Authority shall hold to commemorate 25 years of regulating Uganda's drug sector.

The Chief Guest was the Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, who is also the district's Woman Representative.

NDA worked hand-in-hand with the Uganda Medical Association (UMA), the medical workers' umbrella body, to ensure the event's success.

The camp provided free medical care to over a thousand patients, including general medical services, eye treatment, dental care, HIV testing, and cervical cancer screening. NDA also donated medical equipment, including BP machines, medical screens, over 20 (dental) forceps and delivery sets, plus 50 blankets.

Helen Ndagije, NDA's Director-Product Safety, expressed pride that, in spite of the formidable numbers, they had achieved their goal. 'We wanted to reach out and help those in need,

and we believe we have done that,' she stated, adding, 'It is rare to gather such a variety of specialists in one area, and we are pleased to have done so'.

In her remarks, Speaker Kadaga thanked NDA for the work they have done over the past 25 years. 'We all need medicine at one time or the other. We should thus be appreciative of NDA's role in ensuring that the drugs we use for ourselves and for our animals are safe. Their enforcement activities, where they net fake medicines before they reach the market, are very important. A safe drug environment is every one's responsibility and we should work together in achieving this vision'.

NDA's partnerships were also lauded: over the years they have enabled the Authority to acquire the technical capabilities necessary to fulfil its mandate. NDA Chairperson Dr. Medard



Rt. Hon. Speaker Rebecca Kadaga & NDA Chairman Dr. Medard Bitekyerezo at the medical camp.

Bitekyerezo stated, 'Without them we would not have succeeded in performing our duties. We are extremely grateful for their support. We remain committed to serving Ugandans on this journey

towards safe public health through the effective regulation of medicines'.

Acting Secretary to the Authority David Nahamya called on all to exercise vigilance and report all suspected cases of fake drugs and also to look out for those that suffer adverse drug reactions. To date, NDA has seven regional offices countrywide- in Nakawa, Jinja, Mbarara, Tororo, Lira, Arua and Hoima.

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Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga