

**Parliament Health Committee lauds Govt on PHC**

August 31, 2021

**MARINE BASE, ENTEBBE:** The Parliamentary Health Commitee has today conducted a fact-finding mission to ascertain the status of the boat Ambulances that Ministry of Health procured as part the Emergency Medical Services.

The boat ambulances are currently kept at the UPDF Marine base in Entebbe awaiting dispatching to various districts.

Dr. Charles Ayume, the Chairperson of the Health Commitee led a delegation of 20 members of Parliament to confirm the availability of the boats following reports raised on the floor of parliament a few months ago on the whereabouts of the boats.

During the fact finding visit, the committee found that a total of 7 boats have already arrived into the country and are currently docked at the UPDF Marine base and in good shape.

As part of the visit, the MPs were chauffeured for a distance of 20kms in which they inspected, tested and found the boats worth to be used for medical emergency services.

Dr Ayume in his opening remarks during interface with the team from Ministry of Health led by the Commissioner Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Dr. John Baptist Waniaye said the committee on health was acting within its constitutional mandate to provide an oversight role on the strides so far made in water, land and air health services.

"The issue of the boat ambulances had been a sticky one for quite sometime and i found it right to invite colleague Members of Parliament from Kalangala, Buvuma and Nakasongola who are direct end users to come and add their voice to the subject matter,” he said.

He also took the opportunity to applaud government for doing well as far as Primary Health Care (PHC) is concerned.

The Commander of UPDF Marine Brigade, Brig Gen Michael Nyarwa thanked the Parliamentarians for visiting the marine base where the boats are temporarily docked.

He informed the honourable members that in performing government duties there's no single government Ministry, department or agency that can address challenges alone but rather through Inter Agency cooperation.

While presenting a paper to the health committee on the need for emergency Medical services, the Commissioner Emergency Medical Services(EMS) MOH, Dr John Baptish Waniaye said Ministry of Health developed a strategic plan to procure 15 boat ambulances to cover large water bodies to get emergency services in the areas of maternal health conditions, paediatrics, trauma etc.

"The plan is to cover people in the highland district of Lake Victoia, Kyoga, River Nile, Albert, Lake Bunyonyi and Bisinia. The government of Uganda appropriated funds under the Covid-19 supplementary to provide 3 specialised ambulance services class C boat ambulances." Dr. Waniaye explained.

He added that 07 boat ambulances have already been procured out of the target of 15 saying 7 more are to be delivered in September and October.

He said for proper management of these boats, a joint ambulance management system has been formed to include Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Defence and veteran Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Health to deliver the function of emergency response in the waters.

He advised that there's need to establish a framework for repairs by the UPDF and the UPF marines department guided by the the Minister of Health and the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health adding that the roles of all partners are well spelt out as has been approved by the Solicitor General.

The Commissioner however pointed out some challenges including the high cost of running the boats in terms of fuel were the longest journey take upto 500 litres of diesel, maintainance, warming etc.

He acknowledged that boats that were previously procured under the GAVI funds were mismanaged and it's the reason they want to take advantage of the existing services in a joint framework.

He enumerated four core functionalities of the emergency medical services to have to effectively facilitate the performance of the ambulances; paramedics, navigators, mechanics and security coverage for its safety.

The Principle Operations Officer Emergency medical service, Ministry of Health, Ms Maria Nkalubo said Regional Emergency services is being set up in most areas of Uganda to operationalise this plan through entrenched Regional systems by zoning them.

She acknowledged that there's a huge need for theses services but as a ministry, they'll go ahead to prioritise. She said they have identified these water bodies in the districts as listed below. Kalangala, Buvuma, Amolatar, Jinja, Mayuge, Mukono, Namayingo, serre, Kipumi, Buliisa, Kikube, Kabale and Nakasongola. She further said that 1 boat will be assigned to the National Medical Stores for emergency transport services, inspection and deliveries.

Ms Nakalubo called upon the public to take advantage of these boat services and asked the population to be vigilant and report abuse. She said the boats are fully equipped with high level equipment. She added that the service is offered free of charge.

The boat is equipped with spine boards, an isolator, oxygen saturation equipment, blood glucose monitoring equip, resusitator kits, suction machines, 2 oxygen cylinder 10 litres each. Each boat ambulance costs US181,000D

Reacting to the presentation by the Commissioner, Hon Nsibambi was happy for the milestone government took to have these equipments acquired.

Hon Ayebale of Mbarara, noted the need for capacity building and expertise by the staff of Ministry of Health in terms of training Engineers and other workers. Hon Kabusu Moses of Kalangala asked the committee to visit the end users to ascertain docking points in critical highland areas. Hon Dr. Herbert Batuwa of Jinja appreciated and implored on the importance of Emergency medical services by making it operational. He however requested that this sector be allowed to operate separately. Hon Irene Muloni implored the members to push for the establishment of a marine college to help train marine personnel

In his closing remarks, the Chairperson of the Health Commitee, Dr Charles ayume said that the committee had been able to inspect the boat ambulances and was satisfied about their worthiness

Emergency medical services refers to those medical services you give to a patient to save his or her life.

**ENDS…**

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