

Makerere School of Public Health needs sh33b

By Martin Kitubi

It is barely 65 years since Makerere University School of Public Health, formerly a department of Preventive Medicine, was established.

However, there have been no major expansions since its establishment.

Sadly, when one walks through its home on Mulago Hill in Kampala, what was a basement for parking and the luxurious rooftop for a health breathe, were all turned into lecturer rooms.

This was so because of its growing number of students enrolled annually.

The school is not only among the oldest public health schools in the sub-Saharan Africa, but it is also the largest in the region.

As part of the move for expansion, the school needs sh33b to have a new home, which is expected to be constructed at Makerere University main campus in Kampala.

According to plans which *New Vision* has seen, the new building will have hi-tech laboratories, research centres, lecture rooms, theatre halls and innovation hubs for public health students and professionals.

The new facilities are expected to build capacity for students, Makerere University and experts to detect disease outbreak and develop a data bank on epidemics, such as Ebola.

With the new facilities, authorities say, the School of Public Health will also have capacity to develop, vaccines and medicines for diseases, both for the country and the region.

Prof. Rhoda Wanyenze, the school dean, said enrolment has skyrocketed from 30 master's students 19 years ago, when she was



The deputy vice-chancellor, Anthony Mugisha (left); Byarugaba and Wanyenze during the Makerere University School of Public Health fundraising dinner. Photo by Wilfred Sanya

a student, to over 800 today.

In addition, she says, enrolment will shoot to over 1,000 students in the next two years when new courses are introduced.

"We need to expand; the school of public health has not only ranked Makerere University high in health research, but also the country," she said.

She made the remarks on Friday during the fundraising dinner at the Kampala Serena Hotel.

The dinner attracted many organisations, both local and international, bankers, health experts,

researchers and the academia.

Need for expansion

Wanyenze noted that research must move from what the eyes can see, to what we cannot see and that this calls for improved technology.

"We need to know what is in the food we eat, the air we breathe, the chemicals we interface with in various ways," she said.

In addition, Wanyenze said: "We now have Ebola, we may be moving to other diseases as the rains peak. We should be monitoring the behaviour of the disease-causing germs."

Prof. Lynn Atuyambe, the chairperson of the project infrastructure committee, further stressed that the school will have capacity to find solutions for cholera and the non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes.

She added that with the new facilities, the school will have capacity to handle diseases related to natural disasters, such as landslides, floods, pollution and asthma. Prof. William Bazeyo, the Makerere deputy vice-chancellor in charge of finance and administration, said: "If you

■ Gen. Caleb Akandwanaho alias Salim Saleh, the chief co-ordinator of Operation Wealth Creation, lauded the School of Public Health for its contribution to the health sector.

■ Saleh, who was the chief guest, noted that the institution does not only serve the interests of the country, but the globe.

■ Saleh, represented by Richard Byarugaba, the managing director at the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), said he will support the institution to have the new home.

■ "As a country, we are happy that such institutions are growing. We are ready to support the developments," he said.

■ Over sh600m was collected in cash and pledges during the fundraising dinner.

■ In the breakdown shared by the Public Health School, the new home project will be constructed in two phases.

■ Authorities revealed that sh10b is needed, and that they have so far raised about sh5b. The second phase will require sh23b.

GEN SALIM SALEH COMMITMENT

want to know the health of a country, visit its public health backbone. Makerere School of Public Health is the backbone of the country."