

JCRC IMPACT STORY ON LABORATORY SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING IN UGANDA

By Christine Matama (JCRC)



Felix Etum, loads Samples into the Gene Xpert machine at Mubende Hosp. during the JCRC Inception meeting visit on 31st Jan 2022

JCRC is on track towards strengthening laboratory systems and establishing sustainable diagnostic optimized networks & partnerships for integrated HIV-related testing, disease surveillance and outbreak investigation in Uganda.

How do we achieve this?

The Joint Clinical Research Centre (JCRC) through a consortium of three partners will implement a five-year nation-wide CDC funded CoAG that will support Laboratories towards accreditation. Accreditation of Laboratories is key towards strengthening a country's diagnostic network so that quality-assured diagnostic services can be offered to people.

JCRC as the prime partner will be responsible for the management of the grant. The partners include, Biolabs Red services (BLS) that is responsible for providing capacity building to the public health facilities towards achievement and sustenance of international accreditation. The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) that is responsible for digital improvement in the National Laboratory quality assurance dashboard will also establish fully collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Health's Department of National Health Laboratory and Diagnostic Services (NHLDS) and its development partners. This partnership aims to build the institutional, managerial and

technical capacity of the Uganda National Health Laboratory Services (UNHLS) at central, regional and district levels.



MoH/NHLDS, JCRC team with the staff of Mubende Regional Referral Hospital Laboratory after the inception meeting on January, 31st 2022



SPHLS project Inception meeting at DHO's office- Luwero. All DHT members attended on the February, 1st 2022

JCRC carried out inception meetings and data collection at laboratories that are on the accreditation pipeline. The major purpose of data collection was to identifying areas of improvement and these areas will be used by the SPHLS project to determine key priorities. The District leadership was involved as these manage resources that are key in ensuring accreditation of Laboratories such as human resource and finances through PHC.

DHO of Luwero Dr. Nkonwa Innocent in his opening remarks stated that “*Through partnerships and involvement of District Leadership, Accreditation of Luwero General Hospital will be sustained*”.



Bruce Akankwatsa runs a CBC sample at Wakiso Health Centre IV, during the inception meeting on 02nd Feb 2022

The project set out with partners to hold inception meetings throughout the central region to present approaches and goals of the project. Presiding over the meeting and project overview was by the Regional Lab Coordinator, Chris Kisawuzi.

The project was launched in districts of Mubende, Luwero, Wakiso, Mukono, and Buikwe in central Uganda. West Nile Districts of Nebbi, Arua, Yumbe, Moyo, Adjumani and in Northern Uganda the districts of Lira, Agago, Gulu, Nwoya, Omoro, Kitgum were visited while in South Western Uganda the districts included Mbarara, Kabale, Kisoro, Sheema, and Kiruhura. In Eastern Uganda Jinja, Iganga, Pallisa, Soroti and Mbale were visited by JCRC together with NHLDS teams; the project launch and inception meetings took place between 24th to 28th January, 2022.

Sites noted they at times face challenges of inadequate medical supplies or stock outs, shortage of reagents as noted by the Laboratory technologists at the sites. The Regional Lab Coordinator, Chris Kisawuzi, noted that this was key as Laboratories implement quality management systems towards accreditation.

From the inception meetings, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Adjumani *Mr. Richard Edema* noted that with the operationalization of the National Accreditation services through Uganda National Accreditation Services (UGANAS), the accreditation of Adjumani Hospital Laboratory will be sustained as the costs will be affordable for local governments to pay for its services.

The project which was launched in districts of Mubende, Luwero, Wakiso, Mukono, and Buikwe, West Nile Districts of Nebbi, Arua, Yumbe, Moyo, Adjumani in Northern Uganda Lira, Agago, Gulu, Nwoya, Omoro, Kitgum were visited while in South Western Uganda Mbarara, Kabale, Kisoro, Sheema, and Kiruhura. In Eastern Uganda Jinja, Iganga, Pallisa, Soroti and Mbale were visited by JCRC together with NHLDS teams from 24th January 2022 to 04th February 2022 may face challenges of inadequate medical supplies or stock outs, shortage of reagents as noted by the Laboratory technologists at the sites. The Regional Lab Coordinator, Chris noted that this is key as laboratories implement quality management systems towards Accreditation.

Closing the gap

In Wakiso district, the project will focus on one HCIV and later shift to other facilities. The District Health officer (DHO) Dr. Lugoloobi Mathias, expressed concern that the project was at only one facility cannot represent the district. He said “looking at one facility doesn’t represent the district; one facility out of 45? At least focus on working at 10 facilities and also include private facilities,”

The project, which commenced on 1 October 2021 is expected to run till 30th September 2026. It is intended to support the government of Uganda through the department of National Health Laboratory and Diagnostic services (NHLDS) to strengthen laboratory systems and establish sustainable diagnostic optimized networks and partnerships for integrated HIV-related testing, disease surveillance and outbreak investigation in Uganda.

**MEETING WITH LAB TEAM AT KABALE
REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL**



**MEETING WITH LAB TEAM AT KISORO
GENERAL HOSPITAL**

