

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Kericho becomes a health tourism destination

Under the direction of County Executive Hon Hellen Ng'eno and Chief Officer Dr Shadrack Mutai between 2013 and 2017, the Kericho County Government has given critical attention to the health sector in recognition of the adage, 'Health is Wealth.'

This has always been reflected in the budgeting process where for the last four years of devolution, health has consistently taken the lion's share of the entire budget (30% to be precise.)

It is out of such dedication and commitment that this vital sector has registered tremendous achievements making Kericho a health tourism destination due to the surging numbers of people from other counties seeking medical services in various health facilities within the county.

Kericho County was the first County in the country to launch the County HIV/AIDs Strategic Plan and there have been concerted efforts to strengthen Health Systems and build up the primary healthcare system into one which is robust and responsive to the daily needs of the people of Kericho.

Hospital infrastructure upgraded across the county

Hospital infrastructure across the county has been upgraded, through the construction of a Modern Accident & Emergency unit at Kapkatet Hospital, major refurbishment of Kericho County Referral Hospital and planned major facility improvement of Londiani Hospital.

Expansion of surgical services in Level four medical facilities has also been undertaken with the construction of a modern operating theater at the Sigowet Hospital, equipping of Roret Hospital theatre and ongoing construction of Fort-Ternan Hospital theatre.

103 level 2 and 3 health facilities (Dispensaries and health centers) have been refurbished across the county and 17 new dispensaries constructed to improve access to primary health care services. An additional 23 proposed dispensaries are under construction.

The Kericho County Referral Hospital laboratory diagnostics have been expanded and upgraded and the laboratory Unit is currently undergoing ISO 15189 Accreditation.

Employment, training and promotion of medical staff in the county

In conjunction with the county public service board, the health department has employed hundreds of new staff in an effort to reduce the pressure on the few medical personnel who were working before the county government came into place who were forced to serve too many patients at a time.

The county government health sector currently has a staff population of over 1900.

At least 827 employees have been promoted in numerous phases under a system which bases promotions on merit. 72 workers who had been employed under the Economic Stimulus Project (ESP) were also confirmed as permanent employees while another 112 staff were also employed.

Among those employed most recently are 2 medical specialists, 32 medical officers, 2 dentist radiographers, 4 clinical care nurses, 4 physiotherapists, 4 health records and information officers, two pharmaceutical technologists, 2 laboratory technicians, 12 clinical officers and 10 bachelor of Science Nurses.

The County Government of Kericho has sponsored a number of staff to undergo crucial Kenya School of Government courses in critical care nursing, renal care and renal preceptorship alongside other diverse medical specialist trainings in the Country and abroad.

Top-notch Imaging Services

Kericho County Referral hospital is now leading in Imaging/X-Ray services in the region, a feat which attracted the attention of the internationally acclaimed media house CNN which filmed a documentary on the success story of devolution in Kericho.

Kapkatet Hospital has a 64-slide CT scan equipment and services are currently provided by trained health personnel. Additional X-ray Equipment has been installed at Londiani hospital and similar equipment also purchased for Roret Hospital.

Kericho hosts the second largest ICU/HDU facility in the country

In a bid to expand access to universal healthcare and response to emergency and serious health cases, the County Government of Kericho has invested in a state-of-the-art Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit at the Kericho District Referral Hospital.

The six-bed unit constructed at a cost of KShs 87 Million, is the second biggest ICU facility in the country after that of Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) which has twelve beds. This places Kericho County in the national map in matters health.

With the completion of the facility, several lives have been saved and the cost of transport previously incurred by patients to seek treatment in distant health facilities such as Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital or Kenyatta National Hospital removed.

Outsourcing and automation of Services

To improve service delivery, the department took a decision to outsource laundry and catering services for the Kericho County referral Hospital. Not only has the plan proven to be transformational in cutting costs, patients now eat better food and use cleaner linen.

Automation of processes at the major hospitals has also led to improved service delivery.

Regional Satellite Blood Transfusion center set up at the Kericho County Referral Hospital

A decision by the Kericho County government to set up the first blood bank in the South rift region has been praised as a “life-saving” move which will allow patients in need of blood in the counties of Kericho, Bomet and Narok to access it in good time.

Director of the Nakuru Kenya Blood Transfusion Services Center Nick Kiptonui said the facility, which was launched in early 2017 by H.E. Governor Paul Chepkwony at the Kericho County Referral Hospital was state of the art and would end shortage of blood in the entire region.

Mr Kiptonui noted that several other counties had turned away requests by his organization to set up blood banks and lauded Prof Chepkwony for becoming the first governor in the region to construct a satellite blood bank.

“Following the establishment of this state-of-the-art blood center in Kericho, many patients who are in quick need of the commodity will get it in time and have a higher chance of survival. Road accident victims and new mothers who need emergency blood transfusion will benefit a lot from this center,” said Mr Kiptonui.

“Patients in Kericho will no longer have to wait for blood to be brought to the South Rift from our Nakuru center because it will be stored right here. We are really grateful to the county government of Kericho and urge other counties to follow suit,” added Mr Kiptonui.

Hospitals that will now receive blood from the Kericho satellite blood bank include the Kaplong, Litein and Tenwek mission hospitals, Kapkatet Sub County Hospital and Longisa Sub-county hospital among others.

The blood collected in Kericho will be screened in Nakuru before use to ensure that it is safe.

Maternity services

To ensure that mothers maintain healthy pregnancies and ultimately deliver in a clean and conducive environment, the Department has constructed 27 new maternity units and rehabilitated 17 others.

This has resulted in more mothers attending ante-natal care clinics from the previous 58% to almost 70 per cent and reduced maternal deaths from 14 mothers in 2013/2014 to less than 10 deaths in 2014/2015.

Statistics available indicate that mothers delivering in health facilities have risen from the initial 1,242 in 2013 to the current 8,165.

Water supply to major hospitals improved

The County Government has also ensured that there is a sufficient supply of water to three major Hospitals of Londiani, Sigowet and Roret that had experienced perennial water challenges for years, a situation which had limited their ability to function at optimal levels.

Construction of central medical drug store

The department also put up a central medical store within the Kericho County Referral Hospital to store a major consignment of drugs and non-pharmaceuticals as part of its efforts to bring an end delays in delivering drugs to public medical facilities across the county.

The drug store is fitted with Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras to monitor all movement of drugs in a bid to prevent cases of drug theft.

Dialysis Unit operationalized

The Health Services Department has also operationalized a 5-bed dialysis unit at the Kericho County referral Hospital.

The facility, which has been fitted with the most modern equipment and can serve up to 20 patients a day and is run round the clock by highly professional personnel. The facility has ensured that kidney patients who used to travel all the way to Eldoret, Kisumu or Nairobi to access dialysis services can now access them closer home, saving them transport expenses.

By and large the services are also cheaper compared to other areas, with patients paying Kshs6000 per session which can be fully covered by the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF).

Mortuaries improved

The county government has over the past four years moved to rehabilitate existing mortuaries in public facilities as well as build new ones in a bid to ensure that loved ones are given a respectable send-off.

A modern morgue has been constructed at Londiani Sub-county Hospital and a similar facility at the Sigowet hospital has been operationalized. The existing mortuary facility at the Kericho County referral Hospital has been refurbished.

In financial year 2014/2015, the department was feted by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for best practice in the health infrastructure and Kericho was also voted as being among the top counties with best practice in 2016 by the National Performance Review Committee.

Partnerships

Through partnerships forged during his international trips, H.E. Prof Chepkwony was able to secure medical equipment and supplies support worth over Ksh100 Million for Kericho County from Huron Valley Ambulances and the World Medical Relief in the State of Michigan in the United States of America.

The equipment include operation theater supplies, four dialysis machines, specially designed Intensive care Unit (ICU) beds, oxygen concentrators, orthopedic equipment, nebulizers for use by asthmatic patients, assorted laboratory equipment, X-Ray processors and eye clinic supplies.

Also in the shipment were equipment for the newly constructed blood bank, the physiotherapy department and casualty department as well as nursing supplies, assorted medical furniture and cardiology equipment among other equipment.

In addition to the equipment, the Governor also secured donations of two fully-kitted ambulances which have arrived in the county and will go a long way in assisting during times of medical emergencies.

Ambulances

The county Government of Kericho has also purchased six ambulances – one for every sub-county – to enhance the referral system and improve emergency response. It was an addition to the already existing fleet of ambulances which will now be stationed at selected level two and three facilities.

The Beyond Zero Clinic, which was donated to the county by First lady Margaret Kenyatta, will also be deployed to market places and distant areas in the county to offer medical support.