Rwanda Military Hospital Accentuates Quality Medical Services

By Frank Namara

Rwanda Military Hospital (RMH) was built in 1968 at Kanombe, a Kigali suburb, as a Military Referral Hospital. It continued to provide health care services to the military and their immediate families until after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi when doors were opened to the general population. To date, it’s the only military hospital in the country.

Since its inception, the hospital has been offering both secondary and primary tertiary medical care. In the 2011-2016 strategic plan however, focus has been directed towards transforming it into a fully fledged referral and teaching facility. In order to achieve and sustain the vision; four major pillars have been given special focus as the prime drivers.

The first pillar is the Human Resource and Capacity Building. The 1994 Genocide left the Rwandan health system paralyzed in terms of human capacity, many health workers were dead and others in exile. RDF took the lead in investing in Human resource capacity building to raise medical doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers the country badly needed. Today RMH has the top number of specialists in the country and raising capacity still continues where many doctors are being trained in different parts of the world.

Like any other institution that is keen on providing quality services, the RMH has supported staff to become specialists and sub-specialists in different areas of medicine and technology. Most of these specialists serve from other hospitals but with full time base at the RMH. The capacities of the laboratory technicians and technologists have also been fortified and are some of the best in the country.

The second pillar that has been given due attention is the Modern Management Systems that are ICT driven. Through the systems, RMH has instituted Electronic Patient records management, an electronic billing system and pharmaceutical data management. A platform for telemedicine (e-medicine) has too been introduced at the hospital.

The third pillar is the Modern Medical Diagnostic Capabilities enhancement. These include; high quality laboratory services and medical imaging. The equipment and the capacities of staff have too been upgraded to match the capacity of a referral facility. RMH has the only laboratory in the country with a 4-Star accreditation with capabilities to carry out tumor markers, hepatitis B screening, genotyping and viral -loading.

All samples of hepatitis B from the country are brought to RMH for screening. The hospital also has a computerized audiology center...
that diagnoses and treats people with hearing impairments.

The forth pillar focuses on medical drugs and consumables; their quality, availability and accessibility by the patients. Col. Dr Ben Karenzi says today they attend to both the military and civilian population. 

"Before the liberation in 1994, RMH used to receive only the military personnel and their families, but today receive 80% civilian population and 20% military," he says.

The RMH has a strong outreach service where specialists are availed and put at the services of members of the public where medical services are strongly needed, especially among the very poor and in remote areas. FARG patients are also attended to through this programme. RMH has got a fully fledged Mobile Clinic used to reach the remote areas.

Every year, in around June, the Rwanda Military Hospital (RMH) in partnership with Ministry of Defense rallies around 1994 Genocide Survivors to give them medical care. This year, from 28th June - 4th July, services will be taken to members of the public in Gicumbi District in the Northern Province. The visit will provide free health assistance to the survivors and other vulnerable people during the common activity dubbed "Army Week".

In the course of Army Week activity, over 700 people per day are treated. Various illnesses are diagnosed and treatment is provided accordingly. The special cases that require surgical operation are transferred to the Rwanda Military Hospital at the end of field consultation and treatment.

The Outreach Services that are usually carried out during the Army Week event have had a big impact on the people in rural areas who would not have had access to specialized and quality health care.

Army Doctors go to places where it’s hard for people to access quality health care mainly in rural areas. In a year, the hospital conducts at least two big outreach programs and other mini outreaches by sending general and Specialist Medics to diagnose and offer treatment to people in remote areas.

Doctors offer treatment in a holistic manner to any kind of disease the residents are suffering from. The Specialists who are well equipped with medics also follow up on those who need further consultation or surgery.

The Outreach Services provided to the public, particularly in rural areas, are not only to help them improve their health but also on how to improve their lives in different areas of their lives. Among the areas are balancing the diet, drinking boiled water, visiting health centers for checkup. The Army week activity mission, is to ensure all members of the public are disease free.
IMPACT OF RWANDA DEFENSE FORCES HEALTH SERVICES WITH SUPPORT OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND PARTNERS NGOS.

BY GEOFFREY WAKIBI

Rwanda Defense Forces Health Services are happy to celebrate milestones achieved at the junction of 21st Liberation Day on 04th July 2015. Over the past years, Rwanda Defense Forces Health Services have worked with U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to promote health services for the benefits of serving Officers, men, their families and surrounding communities in general. The support has seen a number of interventions, ranging from information sharing, capacity building and direct medical services such as current Army Week conducted in Gicumbi District from 25th June to 06th July 2015. This has been done through Non Government Organisations (NGOs) implementing different programs such as: Society for Family Health (SFH), Jhpiego, an affiliate to John Hopkins University and Drew Cares International/Charles Drew University (DCI/CDU) support through SFH

One of them is the Society for Family Health (SFH) Rwanda that promotes health products and services such as condoms distribution (Protect condoms) among men in uniform, conducts HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT), alongside Behavior Change Communication (BCC) to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in collaboration with the Rwanda Military Hospital. SFH reaches out to the Rwandan soldiers and shares with them, among others; Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and promotional materials such as brochures, branded T-shirts, caps with prevention messages.

As one of their objectives in the HIV prevention program, SFH is tasked to increase the percentage of soldiers and their partners that are tested to ensure they are aware of their HIV status. It is in this line that SFH provides military personnel with HIV Voluntary Counseling and Testing services. “Generally the SFH projects with RDF are intended to reduce HIV prevalence by promoting safe sexual behaviors among members of the RDF and their partners. SFH is dedicated to keep working with Rwanda Military Hospital to achieve the objectives of this program,” notes Manasseh Gihana Wandera, Executive Director of SFH.

In addition, SFH, with DOD funding, seeks to advance HIV prevention among RDF personnel, families and surrounding community members through Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) (both surgical and Prepex methods), and the development and support of Anti-Aids Clubs throughout Rwanda that utilize drama, sports, and literature to provide education messages in public places and schools.

Today there are over 20 military Anti-Aids Chibs in the country,” says Wandera.

ABOUT SFH

Society for Family Health (SFH) is a registered Non-Government Organization (NGO) in Rwanda with wide experience in social marketing and Behavior Change Communications (BCC). The organization centers most of its interventions on promotion of behavior change practices through communication techniques and social marketing of health products and services related to HIV and AIDS, malaria control and prevention, family planning, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Maternal and Child Health (MCH), and Nutrition. “Our activities involve social marketing, a non-profit use of commercial marketing techniques to address public health issues to impart information and knowledge to the masses to create behavior changes in societies,” says Wandera.

SFH Rwanda was established and launched in April 2012 after the transition of Population Service International (PSI) with which it is affiliated. SFH’s headquarters are located in Kigali City. The organization also runs five other regional offices that oversee field implementation in all 30
Wandera explains: "Impact," solutions and innovations to institutions in marketing and Behavior Communication. "We marketing and Behavior health creates strategies to help countries care for themselves by training competent health care workers, strengthening health systems and improving delivery of care."

For 40 years and in over 155 countries, Jhpiego has worked to prevent the needless deaths of women and their families, and has put evidence-based health innovations into everyday practices to overcome barriers to high quality health care for the world's most vulnerable people.

Jhpiego's history in Rwanda dates way back in the 1980s supporting family planning efforts until the 1994 conflict that paralyzed its active efforts until the 1994 conflict. Jhpiego actively began working in Rwanda again in 2004, assisting the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to prevent and control malaria in pregnancy (MIP).

From 2006 to 2009, Jhpiego and its partners, Save the Children and IMA World Health, supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) through the ACCESS Program. From 2009 to 2014, the Jhpiego-led Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program supported the Rwandan MoH to apply comprehensive maternal, newborn and child health services addressing malaria, family planning, nutrition and HIV/AIDS in 13 target districts. It also conducted studies to prevent postpartum hemorrhage at the community level and to prevent malaria in pregnancy.

Jhpiego is an international, non-profit health organization affiliated to John Hopkins University; working with health experts, governments and community leaders to provide high-quality health care for their people. Jhpiego develops strategies to help countries care for themselves by training competent health care workers, strengthening health systems and improving delivery of care.

With its chain of offices across the country and other networks, the organization has unique and exceptionally designed models of implementation and works closely with its targeted audiences to understand and address the critical issues they face. It has a mission that is driven by the unwavering commitment to use evidence-based approaches to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people of Rwanda to choose healthier lives; through social marketing and Behavior Change Communications. "We are envisioned to lead other institutions in marketing solutions and innovations to achieve sustainable health impact," Wandera explains.