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Bill Clinton announces new medical assistance to Rwanda



President Kagame and Bill Clinton, pose for a photo with Co-founder Partners in Health Dr Paul Farmer, Minister Dr Binagwaho, Clinton's daughter Chelsea, and nursing students at the Rwamagana School of Nursing and Midwifery, yesterday. The New Times / Vil
Former United States President Bill Clinton yesterday announced a seven-year programme aimed at training the next generation of medical practitioners in Rwanda – the first of its kind in the world.

He made the announcement at Rwamagana School of Nursing and Midwifery located in the Eastern province, after touring several developmental projects with President Paul Kagame.

The former US president said the new programme will help establish a critical mass of doctors, nurses and health managers who can train the next generation of Rwandan professionals.

Each year, 100 members of the medical faculty from 13 famous American schools of medicine and nursing will be paired with their Rwandan counterparts to transfer training capacity.

“The programme will provide the opportunity for 5,000 nurses to be upgraded to higher and professional training levels. More than 2,000 of them will be trained in specialties, like oncology and pediatrics. E-learning strategies will be used to grade the skills of a major portion of your nurses,” he explained.

About three years ago, the Rwandan government asked President Clinton to assist with building a sustainable world-class health system that can be run without a single cent of foreign assistance.

Following the request, Clinton approached a number of leading medical and nursing schools – on behalf of the Rwandan government – for a long term commitment and a commitment at a lower cost.

“We explained how it is a big job and that it would never get funded if we have the traditional overhead system and the response was overwhelmingly impressive.

“Thirteen universities agreed to participate and waive the 25 per cent or 30 per cent overhead cost that they would normally get for doing this kind of work and contract directly with the Government of Rwanda and commit themselves to operate this programme at an administrative cost of 7 per cent. This is unheard of anywhere in the world,” Clinton said.

“This would be the largest medical education project ever undertaken with foreign assistance and it’s for the first time many universities are going to be working together, under the leadership of the government where they are working.

To implement this plan the Government of Rwanda had to convince donors, especially the US Government to support the plan, he added.

“They actually offered to give up and redirect the funding so that the money can be used to develop resources that the future of Rwanda requires. I have to say I am very grateful to the US Government, especially the State Department, USAID and the Global Fund,” he said.

Clinton also recognised the United States Center for Disease Control for their support to the health education programme in Rwanda. He noted that students, nurses and doctors will be participate and “be part of a story that is for them and for the Americans”.

“In seven years they will create the first world-class health system in Africa and built on terms that will make them hold it together and keep making it better in the future”.

He added: “By the end of the programme you will have permanent relations with these universities on equal terms working together and you will establish a whole new model of how finances will be spent in the future – a future in which we want broadly shared prosperity in the world without wasting one single dollar of the donor taxpayer money which should be spent to empower the countries where the money is supposed to be directed”.

“I believe Rwanda will succeed and when you do, in the next seven years, you will be running a health system without foreign assistance and everybody will be copying what you do and how it is done,” he said.

Early on, President Kagame thanked Clinton for being his personal friend and a friend of Rwanda.

“I want to thank the President for his contribution to the construction efforts of our country in the areas of health, agriculture, education and many other areas,” President Kagame said.

Health minister Dr Agnes Binagwaho said the health of the Rwandan people is critical for the nation’s development and that the country will do anything to help improve healthcare access.

“Two years ago we started to reflect on how we can improve human resources to deal with emerging new disease. Bill Clinton is helping us in educating more professionals,” she observed.

Earlier in the day, Kagame and Clinton visited two projects in the area – Mount Meru Soyco Ltd (Kayonza) and Nyagatovu Integrated Development Project (Rwamagana).

Mount Meru Soyco Ltd was established in 2007 with partial funding from Clinton Hunter Development Initiative (CHDI). The idea was to start an integrated edible oil plant.

The plant is set to be operational by July next year and will cost about US\$15million.

The facility, which covers 13.2 hectares of land, will be a fully integrated edible oil complex with a crushing capacity of 200 tonnes of oil seeds per day. At its full capacity, it will require 45,000 tonnes of oil seed per year. Both soybean and sunflower are grown in different parts of Rwanda.

Nyagatovu Integrated Development Project is a model village with 2400 beneficiaries, who previously lived in dilapidated housing. The model village was launched almost three years ago with an initial plan to build 50 houses, which now has 85 houses with 422 inhabitants over a total land area of 7Ha.

Currently there are five model villages in all the provinces, including Kigali.

The village boasts electricity and clean water, as well as a nursery school, health centre, green house, biogas facilities and a cowshed that can accommodate nearly 200 cows.

More than 100 members of the village also formed cooperatives and are transforming their lives through income-generating activities, thanks to a local credit and savings scheme, Umurenge Saccos.

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15059&a=56125>