

By Lawrence Mulondo

# UGANDA TO START MANUFACTURING SICKLE CELL DRUGS – DR MAGOOLA

PHOTO BY LAWRENCE MULONDO



From left: John Watala, the quality control manager at DeiBioPharma showing Musenero and Barugahara the machines they use in drug production during a guided tour of the facility in Matugga, Wakiso district recently

"These drugs offer a cure, but unfortunately they are not accessible on the African continent," he said. "Our goal is to manufacture them here in Uganda to ensure affordability and availability for the 80% of the world that currently cannot afford them."

Currently, a single dose of Lyfgenia costs approximately sh11b, while Casgevy costs about sh8b, making them inaccessible to most patients in developing countries.

Beyond sickle cell treatments, the facility is also preparing to manufacture drugs

## MINISTERS SPEAK OUT

Government officials praised the initiative. Balaam Barugahara described industrialisation as critical for economic transformation.

"Industrialisation turns a nation from a consumer into a producer," he said, adding: "It creates wealth, jobs and a dignified future for our young people." Dr. Monica Musenero said local manufacturing will help eliminate counterfeit and substandard drugs.

"We want Ugandans to take the same quality of medicine as those in developed countries," she said. "Our goal is to reach a point where even Americans and Europeans import medicines from Uganda."

for cancer and other diseases.

"We are determined to change this narrative by producing these critical drugs locally. This will not only save lives, but also position Uganda as a key player in the global pharmaceutical industry," Magoola said.

The Matugga plant has already received approval from the National Drug Authority (NDA) to manufacture 30 different drugs,

several of which are already on the market.

These include Tramadol, an opioid pain reliever; Tranexamic Acid, used to control severe bleeding and Hydroxyurea, commonly prescribed for sickle cell patients. Other products include Clonidine and Proctosteroid.

In the coming months, the company plans to add antimalarial drugs such as Dihydroartemisinin, Amodiaquine and Artesunate.

Magoola said all products are manufactured to meet international standards set by the US Food and Drug Administration, World Health Organisation and European Medicines Agency.

So far, Dei Biopharma has submitted 50 additional drugs for approval to the NDA.

Magoola disclosed that the company and its partners have already invested approximately sh2 trillion, while the Government has contributed sh724b.

However, an additional \$1.1b is needed to fully complete the facility, with efforts underway to raise \$430m.

He called on Ugandans to invest in the company ahead of plans to list it publicly.

Magoola credited President Yoweri Museveni for supporting industrialisation and local innovation.

Dr Magoola