

# **ST. JOHN UGANDA**

## **OUR HISTORY**

St. John Uganda is part of the International Order of St. John operating in over 40 countries worldwide with a coordination office in London, United Kingdom. The St. John Ambulance Association and the Brigade (short title “St. John Ambulance”) were the single Foundation of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (referred to as “The Order”) The St. John Ambulance Association was established in Uganda in 1930 and a St. John Ambulance brigade which is made up of uniformed and ranked volunteers a year later, following an outrageous widespread outbreak of epidemics in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s. St John Uganda is an illustrious voluntary organization orchestrated by the British medical doctors from Mulago Hospital to compliment the earlier efforts of Sir Albert Cook who had succeeded in establishing Mengo and Mulago Hospitals in 1900 and 1911 respectively.

In 1934, a pioneer group of African men received First aid training at Mulago Hospital. Earlier on First aid training had not benefited Ugandans due to communication barriers since the first training in the early years was conducted in English and therefore Ugandans were not actively involved in the affairs of the St. John Uganda.

In 1935 First aid classes were started at St John by Dr. John P. Mitchell (the then Medical Superintendant of Mulago hospital) and colleagues at Mulago hospital. The first five years of St. John did not register enormous success due language barriers until Dr. John P. Mitchell proposed for translated First aid training manuals for Ugandans in 1935. This was the beginning of active voluntary work for Ugandans since after training; the trained individuals then took on active participation in the organisation.

In 1941, Dr. John P. Mitchell started the pioneer division of St. John Ambulance Brigade at Mulago Nursing School. Up to 1944, St John Ambulance –Uganda had full membership of only 58 people. This limited membership was attributed to inadequate of First aid trainers and language barriers which together halted the progress of First aid training. During that time, all First aid certificates were issued from Great Britain and over 5.5 million certificates had been issued to trained members of the brigade of whom over 2 million of these certificates had been

issued to St. John units outside Great Britain.

By 1946, the body running St. John Ambulance Association (Uganda branch), was the 'The Executive committee consisting of 15 members alongside several sub committees. The functions of the Executive committee were directive and administrative rather than executive. The executive work was reserved for the Sub committees overseen by the main committee. This was aimed at parceling out the protectorate into geographical areas (Buganda excluding Entebbe township and Kisubi mission station) ensuring that each is controlled by a Subcommittee. At this time St. John Ambulance – Uganda was steadily growing covering at least two quarters of the Uganda protectorate.

For a long time, St. John Ambulance Uganda and the Uganda Red Cross Society jointly worked together to fulfill the mission of saving lives and in 1950, a joint Committee to coordinate the work of St. John ambulance and the Uganda Red cross was formed. Dr. O. P. Markandya – who was the Hon. Secretary of the Executive committee of St. John, became the first representative on the joint committee.

By 1955, St. John Ambulance brigade had showed interest of establishing itself as a separate entity from the St. John Ambulance Association but following the sudden death of its Commissioner Dr. Caldwell, all efforts were futile and the post of a Commissioner remained vacant for two years. During this period and in the absence of any competent Brigade officers in Uganda to take up the task, the onus of managing the Brigade rested almost entirely upon the headquarter officer – Mr. Hadow. As it was never intended that this headquarter officer should administer the brigade, he was not vested with the executive authority and so was not in position to recommend or promote to any rank any of the members of the Brigade. This eventually halted the progress of the Brigade at the time.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1957, Sir Fredrick Crawford, Knight - Commander of the most distinguished Order of Saint George, officer of the most excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor and Commander in chief of the Uganda protectorate under the trustees ordinance cap.126.1951 granted St. John Ambulance Association a certificate of registration as corporate body under the name "The registered trustees of the Uganda centre of the St. John Ambulance Association"

On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1958, St. John Council was formed in Uganda as a body representative of the people of the protectorate to be responsible for the overall direction of St. John policy and to encourage and enlist support for the Association and Brigade. For all this time, St. John Ambulance Association in Uganda was under the management of the “Grand priory in the British Realm of the most venerable Order of the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem”

By 1959, St .John Ambulance brigade had nine divisions countrywide and it soon became independent of the St. John Ambulance Association on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1959.

In 1960, the construction of St .John headquarters on Buganda road – Kampala was completed under the auspices of the Order secretariat in London, Lady Crawford charities and support from well wishers. This was the first time the Order of St. John Uganda worked under their own permanent premise. Before, 1960, the Order temporarily operated from Uganda Police Headquarters and Town hall, Kampala City Council headquarters. The Headquarters were officially opened by H.E the Governor of Uganda Sir Frederick Crawford on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1960.

#### **ST. JOHN - AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

In 1964, St. John Council for Uganda unanimously amended regulation six of St. John Council for Uganda – to legitimize the President of Uganda as the Patron of St John. The regulations conferred such powers to the Governor General of the protectorate of Uganda before independence which baffled the new administration at the time.

By the powers conferred by the Constitution of the Order of St. John Uganda, the President of the republic of Uganda was to be the President of the Order of St. John Uganda also. As such, Sir Edward Muteesa II, the Kabaka of Buganda kingdom and the President of Uganda by then was the first President of the Order of St. John Uganda after independence taking over from the Governor General of the protectorate of Uganda.

In 1968, St. John Ambulance Association and the brigade were again merged to form St. John Ambulance.

## **ST. JOHN- UNDER MILITARY REGIMES.**

In 1971, the Order of St. John Uganda arranged for the state burial of its former President and President of the republic of Uganda, Sir Edward Muteesa II after the then president of Uganda, “Field marshal” Idi Amin Dada had ordered for the return of the remains of Muteesa II for a descent state burial in Kasubi tombs. After the arrival of the Muteesa II’s remains, a 5 days state mourning was declared and this attracted thousands of people to pay their final tribute to the fallen President. During this gathering, St. John Uganda was able to treat over 3500 casualties and others with serious injuries were transported and referred to Namirembe and Mulago hospital. Entebbe, Kibuli, lady Irene College - Ndejje, Railways, Uganda police, Wobulenzi, Nytil and Kampala 1 and 2 divisions among others were in charge of the safety of the public duty.

The progress of St. John Ambulance during President Idi Amin Dada’s regime was completely shattered by the political insecurities in the country at the time. The liberation war of 1979 which ousted President Idi Amin by a joint force of the African Union commanded by the late Julius Nyerere, the then President of Tanzania put St. John Ambulance at stake and soon its ambulances and other properties were looted, its members dispersed and others killed. With such a state of emergency, no activity was done for nearly two years as all operations were at a standstill.

For another period of six years (1980-1986), Uganda people’s Movement revolutionarist Yoweri Kaguta Museveni who too had contested for Presidential seat in 1980 declared a guerrilla war following allegations of election fraud by President Milton Obote in 1980 against Democratic Party’s Paul Kawanga Ssemwogerere. These six years were the last blow to St. John Ambulance Uganda. The headquarters of St. John was closed, as some people were abducted and others killed.

## **ST. JOHN- UNDER THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT GOVERNMENT**

After the National Resistance Army ousting the military government of Tito Okello Lutwa on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1986, peace soon prevailed in the country and St. John Ambulance Uganda re-opened. However, St. John was now constrained with human resource, finance and equipments, implying that it could not immediately resume its full operation. Consequently with a concerted effort of the remnant staff and volunteers, the activities of St. John ambulance were eventually slowly reinstated but majorly within Kampala.

A three year renewable memorandum of Understanding between the government of Uganda represented by the Ministry of Health and St. John was signed on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1998 and has been subsequently renewed on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2001, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2004, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and recently 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Initially, the Memorandum of Understanding lead the government of Uganda to resume the government subvention to St. John which was first made in the financial year 1956/1957 under the Ministry of Social services vote but which responsibility was later in 1959/1960 transferred to the Ministry of Health.

Initially, the Memorandum of understanding provided that St. John will provide first aid to government and health assistance in case of epidemics, influx of refugees into Uganda and other related epidemics while government on its part was to facilitate St. John's financial and administrative processes, pay taxes subject to clearance from Ministry of Finance, grant visas, work permit and motor vehicle licenses among others.

Luckily, in 1999 the Order of St. John underwent major constitutional changes resulting into major restructuring and decentralization of the Order operations. New organizational and operational regulations were created, all meant to encourage its member establishments to work closely, helping each other to do better. One major development has been the re-division of all nationals and their associations into a number of regions for ease of operational coordination among themselves and between themselves and the Order headquarters in UK. Since 25<sup>th</sup> October 1999, the National St John Council of Uganda and St. John Ambulance in Uganda have

constituted a unified organisation. St. John registered as a non government organisation in the year 2003 on expiring and renewable terms.

In line with the Order restructuring programme, the St. John Council in the year 2004 took stringent and propitious measures to restructure St John Uganda that was obdurately operating in isolation and compromising the potential of St. John. The tension that had resulted into the split of the brigade from the St. John Council which started way back in 1957 and inherited over the years was reconciled in 2004 when concerted efforts were put in to build a rapport with the brigade and now St John is operating as a joint entity. The restructuring saw the National St. John Council of the Order of St. John transformed to the “St. John Association of Uganda” on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004.

During the year 2004, St. John Uganda contracted a consultant to provide a review of the structure, function and staffing of the Association. In a hard hitting report, the consultant recommended among other things the appointment of a full time National Executive Secretary to help with the day to day management of the Association. During the same time, the Council of St. John worked extremely hard to establish important relationships with various stake holders of which was the Bank of Baroda which donated a Nissan ambulance to help in the immediate transportation of casualties to nearby clinics and hospitals. With the eligible leadership of St. John Council, a 24-hour ambulance service was launched and St John Ambulance’s proclivity for saving lives with pertinacity to handle the daily emergency exigencies that remain a threat to millions of Ugandans, has been overwhelming since then despite the diminutive support from stakeholders.

In April 2005, the Order Secretariat International Development officer, Pippa Hoyland visited St. John Uganda and recommended that St. John Uganda should be included as one of the first Associations in Africa to benefit from the capacity building programme of the Order Secretariat basing on the proven enthusiasm and urge to turn around St. John by the then Council.

The Pippa visit of April 2005 and resultant recommendation was followed by a capacity building workshop in 2006, by which time the Council had already recruited a full time National Executive Secretary to lead the Secretariat, Coordinate the Council, Secretariat and voluntary wing of St. John Uganda.

These developments together with the good management and organization skill of the new National Executive Secretary plus the good guidance and support of the Council Chairman and the Council members proved the commitment to change and thus acted as a catalyst to harness a range of support to St. John Uganda from the Order Secretariat, St. John from the county of Gloucestershire (England), St. John South Africa through the grand Prior's appeal, St. John Kenya, and individuals. The support enabled St. John Uganda to improve and increase both its operational and organizational capacity and to increase the scale and quality of its work. In addition, a memorandum of Understanding between Kampala City Council and St. John was signed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2005 and a subvention that had not been provided for years was resumed.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, the relationship between St. John Uganda and the Order Secretariat of St. John International was strengthened by signing the Relationship agreement and the Deed of indemnity. St. John Uganda was represented by the Chairman / Commander, His Excellency Gordon Wavamunno, and the National Executive Secretary, Mrs. Christine Nandyose Kasirye being witnessed by the Vice Chairman, Rt. Rev. Bishop Wilson Mutebi and The International Order was represented by Rear Admiral Andrew Gough, The Secretary General at the Order Secretariat.

By this time, the stake holders of St. John come up with the First Strategic plan 2006-2008 which was later renewed to develop the plan for 2009-2011 due for renewal. The staff and volunteers were taken through the Capacity building process in a workshop facilitated By Pippa Hoyland the International Development officer from 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March 2006, reviewed from 22<sup>nd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> April 2007. In attendance was Eva Mwai the then Executive Director St. John Kenya, Mr. Craig Troeberg the Executive Director St. John South Africa and Mr. Willy Louw the Training Manager St. John South Africa.

A lot of activities arose from the planned process which included a bench marking visit to St. John Kenya by the National Executive Secretary and Administrator by then Mrs. Betty Kaleebu, Financial training courses, Information technology courses, Training of trainers courses in First aid and Home based care, Emergency ambulance management course, incident command management, to mention but a few to the staff and volunteers of St. John.

Both international and national partnerships have been established with various organisations including the Priory of South Africa, St. John Kenya, and St. John Gloucestershire which partners have been very instrumental in the development of St. John Uganda. The period from 2005 to date has been characterized by improvement in service delivery and growth in income by the Association. Since St. John is a voluntary non-profit making organisation, the surplus income from the sale and earnings is invested in the administration of humanitarian work by the Council and the St. John volunteers. The Secretariat now employs professionals in various fields who have contributed remarkably to quality service delivery.