**Uganda Red Cross convenes business leaders’ forum to discuss pandemic preparedness for business continuity**

**Wednesday 29th August, 2018**

**Kampala - Uganda.**

Uganda Red Cross has today convened a forum for business leaders’ engagement on epidemic and pandemic preparedness during business operations. The one-day meeting has been held at Hotel Africana in Kampala. While addressing the business leaders, Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, the Minister of Health in Uganda emphasized the importance of the business community in preventing pandemics and epidemics, as well as reducing the impacts of other forms of disasters, for effective business continuity and economic development.

“The business community can play a critical role in preventing or slowing a major disease outbreak by being aware of best practices to prevent disease spread. This is an important and timely conversation as the Government of Uganda works to prevent Ebola, Marburg and other disease outbreaks from crossing our borders.’ Said Aceng.

Uganda Red Cross has taken on preparedness and response efforts in the fight against epidemic and pandemic outbreaks in communities through a USAID funded project known as “CP3.” This is a locally implemented project that aims at empowering people with the knowledge and skills needed to manage an emergency disease outbreak in their local set up, as well as set up mechanisms to stop it from further re-occurring.

In Kampala, Uganda Red Cross in partnership with the Kampala Capital City Authority, have launched a three-months campaign focused on strengthening the resilience of small and medium enterprises to maintain business operations even during a crisis. The other areas targeted include Kasese because of its unique experience with epidemic and pandemic outbreaks, including other natural disasters like floods.

“One of the exciting aspects of this campaign is a free mobile app called ***Atlas: Ready for Business*** which guides business owners and managers in developing a business continuity plan to help prepare for any crisis.” says JulieArrighi, of the American Red Cross.

Additional stakeholder engagement will involve free workshops on business continuity planning, local community gatherings and other forms of meetings where stake holders’ views will be sought to improve the project approach and ensure that the Uganda business community will not be hindered by crises such as emergency disease outbreaks.

“This is a great opportunity for us as business people to be consulted and engaged on issues that concern us in this country. Preparedness to withstand a crisis is key to successfully establish and grow one’s business. If not well prepared, we lose business during emergencies. I am sure this program will help us to plan well and sustain our businesses even during such un fore-seen circumstances”. Said Patrick Bitature, Chairman of the Private Sector Foundation Uganda. “‘I welcome this Red Cross initiative and I encourage business owners to develop a continuity plan through the Atlas app.” Bitature added.

The Business Preparedness Initiative is funded through the generous support of the UPS Foundation, which has a mission of building stronger, safer, more resilient communities around the world. It is implemented in collaboration with the Community Pandemic Preparedness Program funded by USAID, which is led by Uganda Red Cross Society in collaboration with International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC).

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