

■ EDITORIAL

Recruit more staff to improve service delivery

Uganda faces a public service emergency with 306,635 unfilled government positions, equivalent to 42% of the required workforce, threatening service delivery across the country. The public service ministry's latest report reveals that the country is operating at 58% staffing capacity, with frontline sectors bearing the brunt: referral hospitals at 31% staffing, education with 87,080 teacher vacancies, and public universities at just 34% capacity.

This is an administrative shortfall affecting millions — including patients enduring longer waits and delayed surgeries, students suffering in overcrowded classrooms, and security services operating below capacity. It is also concerning that about 53% of civil servants have waited beyond the official promotion timeline, earning lower salaries despite years of service.

On recruitment, the Government can kill two birds with one stone by addressing the staffing crisis while simultaneously tackling youth unemployment. With over 500,000 graduates entering the job market annually, filling these vacancies would provide immediate employment while strengthening public institutions.

Properly staffed hospitals improve public health outcomes, reducing long-term healthcare costs. Well-resourced schools produce better-educated citizens, fuelling economic growth.

Universities with adequate staff can drive research and innovation, moving Uganda further up the value chain.

Addressing promotions is equally important. When deserving staff see clear career progression, retention improves, reducing the brain drain that sees skilled professionals seek opportunities abroad. It is paradoxical that job shortages persist amid high unemployment — a contradiction that can be resolved through targeted recruitment.

Senior officials have warned that unless the Government urgently addresses the staffing gaps, service delivery in critical sectors could continue to deteriorate, affecting millions of Ugandans who rely on public institutions for healthcare, education and security services.

WEEKEND
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