

Blood shortage: Eight die in Fort Portal

Run out of donors. A district health official attributes the blood shortage to school holidays, saying students are the major blood donors.

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KABAROLE. Eight people, who were in urgent need of blood, died at Fort Portal Regional Referral Hospital last Thursday following an acute blood shortage in Fort Portal, Kabarole District.

"There is an acute shortage of blood at the regional blood bank in Fort Portal and as a result, eight people

died yesterday (Thursday). They lacked blood," Dr Richard Mugahi, the district health officer, said last Friday.

"There is always a blood shortage when schools close," he added. Students, who are the majority blood donors in the district, have been on holiday.

Dr Mugahi, who is also the Tooro Kingdom deputy minister of health, told journalists that the hospital management and the blood bank were planning to collect more blood.

He appealed to the public to donate blood.

In June 2013, there was another blood shortage at the same facility and

the then senior laboratory technologist at Fort Portal Regional Referral Blood Bank, Mr Moses Mukembo, said they had reserved few units of blood for emergencies at different hospitals in

340,000

Units. According to Uganda Blood Transfusion Services, the country requires at least 340,000 units of blood annually as recommended by the World Health Organisation, yet about 200,000 units are collected.

the Rwenzori sub-region.

Dr Mugahi said blood is mostly used by the paediatric ward and anaemic patients.

"The paediatric ward takes a lot of blood due to children who are anaemic or are affected by malaria. One unit of blood can supply four children below the age of two years," he said.

Dr Mugahi also said the Fort Portal blood bank collects blood from Bundibugyo, Kasese, Kabarole, Ntoroko, Kibaale, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa and Kamwenge districts to supply the health centres and hospitals in the region and sends the surplus to Nakasero National Blood Bank.

The Fort Portal blood bank has a capacity of about 2,000 units of blood per month. A unit of blood is about 450 millilitres.

The district administration plans to improve provision of essential infrastructure and equipment at all health centre III and IVs by establishing more blood banks.

Dr Mugahi said there are blood fridges at Bukuuku and Kibiito health centre IVs.

Early this year, hospitals suffered a blood shortage that forced many including, Mulago hospital to suspend major operations, putting the life of patients at risk.