



Sorry state. Some of the parents with their children who are suffering from hydrocephalus at CURE Hospital in Mbale recently.

PHOTO BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

Women association, hospital give hope to children with hydrocephalus

Challenges. Parents of the affected children say they face enormous challenges associated with this disease, including feeding, treatment and lack funds.

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KEY ISSUES

Help. The Indian Women Association and CURE Hospital have come in handy by sponsoring some of the sick children to undergo operations.
Concern. Mr Gonahasa expressed great concern over the increasing number of children born with hydrocephalus disabilities in the district.

MBALE. For the last 20 years, a couple living in the remote village of Butoloi, Kakutu Parish, Bulangira Sub-county in Kibuku District has had three normal children.

Mr Peter Kejuka and his wife Ruth Nanzala went on to have a fourth child in the recent past years.

Named Sikola Gawomya, the baby was born without any deformities on her body, however, weeks later, the child's head started to enlarge unnecessarily, a condition that scared its parents thinking their child has been 'bewitched'.

The parents were advised to seek specialised medication at CURE Hospital located in the eastern town of Mbale.

This was after it was discovered that their baby was suffering from hydrocephalus disability.

Hydrocephalus is a buildup of cerebrospinal fluid in the skull that causes the brain to swell and becomes abnormally bigger.

The condition causes harmful pressure on the tissue of the brain and

could result in several impairments to the brain.

"We attempted to seek medical treatment at Bulangira Health Centre three times but the condition of the child remained the same and yet we didn't have money for an operation. We were told that the operation requires Shs950,000, a figure that we could not afford to raise," Mr Kejuka recounts.

"Despite failing to raise the required amount needed for surgery, it didn't deter us from visiting CURE Hospital with Shs100,000 to start up treatment," he adds.

Sikola's case is not an isolated one as there are about 15 of such cases of children in Kibuku District.

Some of the children with similar condition of Sikola were identified as Erika Kalele, a son to Kephew Kawere and Zaina Naigaga, Elias Kirabira, a son to Joshua Musigire and Saida Namugabo.

Parents of the affected children say they face enormous challenges associated with this disease and among them feeding, treatment and lack of money.

But all is not gloom as the Indian Women Association and CURE hospital have come in handy by sponsoring some of the sick children to undergo operations. To that effect, the Indian Women Association has raised about Shs12.6m to cater for about 12 children with such impairment at CURE

Voices



"There are quite a good number of these children with this problem in rural areas but they lack money to seek treatment. This remains a big challenge in the communities but we need to come on board and give a hand where necessary to support these vulnerable children."

FRANCIS BARNABAS GONAHASA, KABWERI COUNTY MP

Hospital.

CURE Children's Hospital of Uganda (CCHU) is a specialised children's neurosurgery hospital in Uganda.

It is a private hospital, owned and operated by CURE International. The hospital is also a teaching centre in paediatric neurosurgery for sub-Saharan Africa

The Indian Women Association headed by Ms Suman Venkatesh, in partnership with the Kabweri County MP, Mr Francis Barnabas Gonahasa, identified some children in rural areas with hydrocephalus disability but were abandoned.

"We were so touched and greatly concerned as Indian Women Association over the plight of these children suffering from hydrocephalus disabilities. As a charity organisation, we had to come on board and mobilised resources to offer support towards their operations," says Ms Venkatesh.

Mr Gonahasa expressed great concern over the increasing number of children born with hydrocephalus disabilities in the district.

"There are quite a good number of these children with this problem in rural areas but they lack money to seek treatment. This remains a big challenge in the communities but we need to come on board and give a hand where necessary to support these vulnerable children," MP Gonahasa says.

Mr Gonahasa says parents of such children have hidden them at home instead of taking them to hospitals for treatment with some thinking they have been bewitched.

The legislator adds that because most of these parents lack money to take their children for treatment, he has decided to come to the rescue of 12 children and support them to undergo operations at CURE Hospital.

He says majority of these children are found in Bulangira and Kirika sub-counties.

Mr Moses Katungye, the hospital administrator, says the facility is financially crippled that it cannot extensively take on more surgeries despite the huge numbers of patients that come to seek treatment.

During her last Thursday visit to the hospital, the Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, said government should come up with a policy to train more neurosurgeons.

"The magnitude of the problem seems to be too big. This needs to be discussed on the floor of Parliament. I will give an opportunity to Mr Gonahasa to present it for debate and action be taken to address some of the eminent challenges," Ms Kadaga said.

She said some men have been forced to abandon their homes because their children have such impairments, thinking they have been 'bewitched'.