

Bats invade, Budaka health centre

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KAMPALA. Health service delivery at Sapiri Health Centre in Budaka District is grinding to a halt with patients threatening to abandon the facility after bats invaded and occupied the unit, making unbearable noise and producing repugnant smell in the wards.

Mr Samson Kwiri, the chairperson of the health unit management committee, confirmed the presence of the mammals, saying the bats have destroyed the ceiling boards where they assemble and make shrill cries and emit repugnant smell. He said patients can no longer bear the situation.

"Our biggest challenge now is that the bats have taken over the facility. Their odour is not pleasant at all to the patients and nurses. During the nights when we have emergency cases and the bats are about to fly out, you have to wait outside for several minutes before you can come in. They frustrate your service delivery" one of the nurses, who preferred anonymity, told *Daily Monitor*.

"For the past couple of months, they have been increasing in number. They have taken over the facility and anything they get close to, they destroy. We need emergency intervention," the nurse added.

Mr Kwiri said the only health unit in the area serves more than 15,000 patients from several remote villages around, hence the need for the district to come to the aid of the facility to get rid of the mammals.

No response

He said several reminders to the sub-county leadership to fumigate the unit has yielded no response.

Mr Kwiri also said the number of people seeking health services at the facility has drastically dropped due to other challenges, including lack of power, water, mama kits, drug stockout, cracked ceiling and low staffing levels, now worsened by invasion by the bats.

"The health unit is stinking with bad smell oozing in all the wards, and the mammals continue to make a lot of noise and defecating all times. This now puts our lives at risk of contracting other illnesses. The remaining option is to abandon the facility if the situation is not addressed," a patient said.

Mr Steward Mukangu, the health facility head blamed the invasion of the bats on the cracked ceiling and walls.

Mr Mukangu said the bats, numbering more than 1,000, have occupied the health facility for more than two years now. He said the health unit has no money to buy the chemical to exterminate the bats and that the district team has not responded as expected.

But Dr Winfred Mutaki, the Budaka District Health Officer, who promised to follow up the issue, said the matter has not yet been brought to her attention.