

Drug shortage hits Kalangala again

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KALANAGALA. Kalangala District has for the third time in less than a year experienced shortage of drugs that cure several illnesses

Daily Monitor has learnt that the only available drugs at most health centres in the district are Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs given to people living with HIV/Aids.

Several patients who visit health centres are currently asked to buy drugs from different private clinics within Kalangala Town.

"I have been here (Kalangala Health Centre IV) for the past six days, but I haven't received any medication. I have so far spent more than Shs170,000 on buying medicine from private clinics," Mr Adrian Matovu, one of the patients, told *Daily Monitor* on

Wednesday.

Ms Damalie Nabirimu, a health rights' activist working with Advocacy for Better Health under Kalangala NGO Forum, said National Medical Stores (NMS) last disbursed drugs to the Island district last November and the consignment didn't include some of the drugs which had been ordered for.

"The consignment included limited drugs that treat malaria, neglected tropical diseases and condoms, yet the vital drugs requested for, were not delivered," Ms Namubiru said in an interview yesterday.

While speaking to journalists on Wednesday, Dr Hillary Bitakaramire, the Kalangala District health officer, admitted there has been a drug stockout for a month, but said NMS had promised to send drugs as soon as possible. He said essential medicines that treat common

diseases like malaria, pneumonia, cough and diarrhea are not readily available.

"But we are working with NMS to have enough drugs disbursed and there is no cause for alarm" he said.

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MS DAMALIE NABIRIMU, HEALTH RIGHTS ACTIVIST

However, Mr Dan Kimosho, the NMS spokesperson, blamed the drug shortage on district officials, who he said budget for less drugs which is one of the reasons most districts suffer persistent drug shortages.

"Those people usually send budgets for drugs at the beginning of

every financial year. But most times they forget to include some of the essential drugs. In fact, we give them drugs according to the budgets and in most cases, we surpass the budget," Mr kimosho noted.

Kalangala only has 15 accessible and operational health centres within the 63 habited islands.

However, many patients prefer to visit Kalangala and Bukasa health centre IVs. The two health facilities mainly handle HIV patients, maternity, and minor illnesses such as malaria and cough

Over the years, health service delivery has been affected by a number of challenges, including non-availability or stock-outs of medical supplies in public health facilities.

According to the June, 2015 report by Budget and Monitoring and Accountability Unit of Ministry of Finance, more than 90 per cent of public health facilities reported non-supply of ordered medical items including drugs and stationary in the past one year.