

dead on June 30, last year, in the city suburb of Bweyogerere

Admission Hamza Kasirye Sematimba.

Mulago needs 1,350 more experts

By John Agaba

After all civil works are completed and the facility fully fitted with medical equipment, the super specialised referral hospital at Mulago will require an additional 1,349 highly trained staff, including senior consultants, blood specialists, anaesthetists and ear, nose and throat surgeons, to supplement the existing workers.

It will enable the health facility to treat Ugandans of even the most complicated conditions.

The maternal and neonatal complex, which has a capacity of 320 beds, is billed as perhaps the biggest of its kind in Africa, while the refurbished national referral hospital will have the capacity to perform organ transplants, including the very complicated bone marrow and heart transfers, and conduct laparoscopic surgeries.

But the facilities will need programmers, biomedical engineers, very skilled cardiac and blood experts and skull reconstructors, plus fine-tooth comb medics, who will not leave anything to chance.

The executive director of Mulago Hospital, Dr Byarugaba Bateraana, said the facility had a 3,075 approved staffing structure, but only 1,726 positions were filled, leaving 1,349 vacancies.

Notably, the facility has 21 senior consultants, of the approved 70. It has 35 consultants, of the required 107, and 46 medical operation

BETWEEN THE LINES: New facility opens this year

- The new health facility, that will be unveiled in December this year, will see Ugandans treated of even the most complicated conditions that previously required trips abroad.
- Currently, Mulago has only 1,726 personnel.

support group officers of the needed 178.

More positions will need to be filled as you scale down the hierarchy. The new facility will require 1,930 nursing staff. It currently has 883.

"It is after all these positions have been filled, that we can say we have adequate staff and deliver services optimally to Ugandans," Byarugaba said.

He was on Tuesday speaking to visiting members of the National Resistance Movement's central executive committee, led by Capt. Mike Mukula.

During the two-day tour that ended on Wednesday, the group, accompanied by Dr. Diana Atwine, the permanent secretary at the health ministry, visited the sites, partly to document progress of civil works.

Byaruhanga noted that the remodelled complexes will improve healthcare in the country. He also said the facility will need a special budget for maintenance.

"It is a concern. Because we will definitely need funds to keep this place running and very neat," the executive

director said.

Works at the women's hospital are expected to be complete by the end of October, before the official unveiling. The specialised Mulago Hospital will be unveiled by December.

Capt. Mike Mukula, who is also NRM's chairperson for eastern Uganda, said the facilities indicated that Uganda was "on the right path" to transforming itself into a middle-income status.

"We came here to see whether or not the promises of good health facilities, education, infrastructure that we made to Ugandans in the NRM manifesto are being implemented," said Mukula.

During the tour, the former Soroti Municipality MP and his team, asked the hospital administration about the challenges they faced and the possible solutions to them.

Mukula described the works as "impressive" and promised to write a report on their visit to the facility, which he would present to the party's top echelon.

"Health is a basic need. This facility (women's hospital) will greatly reduce the number

of mothers who continue to die due to pregnancy-related complications everyday," he said.

"It will also reduce the number of Ugandans who have been constantly travelling abroad for specialised care," he added.

On required additional staff, the permanent secretary said the Government was investing in training of experts, so by the time the facility opens, there will be enough personnel. The teams, she said, will be able to handle cases previously referred abroad.

"We want to ultimately stop sending Ugandans to be treated abroad, when our specialised facilities (at Mulago and Lubowa) are fully operational and have maximum capacity," Atwine said.

On a special budget for maintenance, she said that was the reason services at the facility were not 100% free.

"Patients, either through the (planned) health insurance scheme or out of pocket will be required to pay minimal fees to receive care. These fees will go to maintenance," she said.

The hospital administration also wants remuneration for its staff improved, especially for senior consultants, from sh2.7m to sh19m.

Atwine responded that a special committee was reviewing salary structures of all public servants and that she could not comment on the matter.