



In dilemma. Kiboga hospital, which is at risk of power blackout over unsettled power bills. PHOTO BY EDISON NDIYASIMA

Kiboga hospital faces power disconnection

To operate without power. The facility which receives more than 40,000 patients from Kibale, Mityana, Mubende, Kyankwanzi and Kiboga districts per year will have to go without electricity if the arrears which keep on accumulating are not settled.

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KIBOGA. Kiboga hospital risks operating without power after Umeme threatened to disconnect the facility, over a Shs140m power bill.

The power bill has reportedly been accumulating for the last seven years.

The power distributor, Umeme has increasingly grown impatient after the hospital management failed to pay for the consumed power.

The facility which receives more than 40,000 patients from Kibale, Mityana, Mubende, Kyankwanzi and

Kiboga districts per year will have to go without electricity if the arrears which keep on accumulating are not settled.

Dr Michael Musiitwa, the acting Kiboga District Health Officer (DHO), however, blames the problem on the little funding the hospital gets from central government, which he says cannot run the facility.

"This problem has persisted and whenever we raise the matter to the concerned departments at the Ministry of Health through the district leaders, it is not given the due attention it deserves," Dr Musiitwa said.

According to Mr Musiitwa, the hospital receives approximately Shs32m per release which is 'too little'. He insists that with only Shs32m per release, it's impossible for the hospital to pay the Shs140m for Umeme.

Mr Stephen Ilungole, the Umeme spokesperson has, however, accused hospital authorities of not being serious and asked them to pay or

KEY ISSUES

Little funding. Dr Michael Musiitwa, the acting Kiboga District Health Officer (DHO), however, blames the problem on the little funding the hospital gets from central government, which he says cannot run the facility. He says the hospital receives approximately Shs32m per release.

forget about having power at the hospital.

"We know that they run on a low budget, which is a serious issue though, but these people [Kiboga Hospital] have not paid a single coin since this year began," Mr Ilungole said.

He wondered why the hospital failed to earmark any funds for electricity in their budget.

"They claim that their budget is small yet they have not allocated money for power even when they clearly know that power supply is one of the basics at the facility," he added.

He advised hospital authorities to engage Umeme to find a lasting solution to the problem before it's too late.

"We don't want to end up disconnecting power at the hospital. All we want is to get a payment plan for the accumulated electricity bill," Mr Ilungole advised.

Kiboga District Woman Member of Parliament, Ms Ruth Nankabirwa told *Daily Monitor* at the weekend that she had brought the issue to the attention of President Museveni.

She says the President has since directed the Energy and Health ministers to see how the problem can be resolved.

"We have had this challenge for so long and now the debt keeps on accumulating, but the President had ordered the Health and Energy

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briefly

Couple camps at police

BUKOMANSIMBI. A couple at Kibinge Village in Bukomansimbi District has sought refuge at Bukomansimbi Police Station after allegedly getting death threats from a group of boda boda riders. The Southern region police spokesperson, Mr Lameck Kigozi, confirmed to the *Daily Monitor* that Mr John Ssali and his wife are camped at police after the alleged death threats. "We condemn acts of inciting violence because the matter for which these people are being accused is under police investigation. The cyclists allege that the couple could be hiding their son identified as George Mugera, who they claim is responsible for the murder of a fellow boda boda rider. [Fahad Jjingo]"

Govt blamed

MASAKA. Masaka District engineer Mr Elias Jjuuko has attributed the slow progress of the road network in the district to the underfunding of the sector by the central government. Mr Jjuuko said Masaka District has more than 630km of the road network yet the road fund extended to the district remains at Shs420m. "The residents and legislators expect a lot from Masaka District yet the funds cannot enable us do much for the roads development. We need a revised funding for the roads sector," Mr Jjuuko said. [Ali Mambule]

Kiboga hospital faces power disconnection

Voices



"We don't want to end up disconnecting power from the hospital. All we want is to get a payment plan for the accumulated electricity bill," STEPHEN ILUNGOLE, UMEME SPOKESPERSON.



"We have had this challenge for so long and now the debt keeps on accumulating, but the President had ordered the Health and Energy ministries to combine efforts and solve the matter," RUTH NANKABIRWA, KIBOGA DISTRICT WOMAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

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ministries to combine efforts and solve the matter," Ms Nankabirwa said. She promised to link up with the district leaders to avert the crisis at Kiboga hospital and ensure that the concerned government departments implement the Presidential directive on the problem of unpaid hospital bills.

Ms Racheal Nakazibwe, a care giver at the facility, said electricity plays a big part in running the hospital activities where the disconnection over unpaid bills will create a big problem.

"The facility receives emergency cases at night, including pregnant mothers who are supposed to undergo operation. This can only be possible when the facility has electricity," Ms Nakazibwe said in an interview.

Besides electricity, the hospital authorities say they also have a problem with water supply. "The water pumps use electricity. We are worried that any power disconnection will directly affect the water distribution system at the hospital," one the hospital officials said.

Kiboga District chairperson, Mr Israel Yiga told *Daily Monitor* the district was preparing to install solar panels.

"We allocated some money under the district budget for this year for purchase of solar systems, which will substitute the expensive hydro-electric supply. This will in the meantime help to cut the recurrent bills," Mr Yiga said.

Explaining the high power bills, Mr Yiga told this newspaper that they had received information that the hospital was connected to a three-phase line for commercial consumers, which is expensive.

"We have already talked to Umeme to change our power line and install a relatively cheaper connection," Mr Yiga said.

Various government Institutions and Departments and Ministries such as defence, health, Police and Uganda Prison Services continue to accumulate utility bills. For instance, National Water and Sewerage Cooperation have since threatened to disconnect Ministry Defence over continued

briefly

Pump attend