

# 'Medics most corrupt service providers'

By Andrew Ssenyonga

An anti-corruption action study has revealed that medical care service providers have received more bribes than the other sectors.

The report that sought to understand corruption issues at the community level showed that medical care stood at 22.5% and was closely followed by the non-traffic Police with also 22.5%.

The courts of law came third with 20%, local council courts stood at 15% while traffic Police came last with 10%.

According to Jones Mbabazi of Adroit Consult International who conducted the survey, the nature of the bribe was mostly in cash (97%) and was mostly demanded.

"Bribe was mainly paid to health facilities for medical care, the Police and courts for seeking justice," he explained.

During the dissemination of the anti-corruption action study report on Tuesday in Kampala, Mbabazi said respondents reported that service providers were levying extra charges and soliciting bribes in exchange for service delivery.

"A few respondents reported corruption for fear of reprisals, lack of trust in the accountability system and general complacency," he said.

The study examined the rights-holders perception of



(Left to right) Priscilla Serukka, Bruno Ngabirano the CEO of Rutesh Consults and the George Ntambi, ED of Action for Disadvantaged People interacting after workshop at Grand Imperial Hotel Kampala yesterday. Photo by Nancy Nanyonga

corruption in their communities and also identified gaps in the fight against the vice. It assessed and strengthened community readiness in the fight against corruption.

The research, which was supported by Stromme Foundation, was conducted in the districts of Amuru and Nebbi districts in northern Uganda. It indicated an increase in corruption in the period of

## BETWEEN THE LINES

■ The medical association says health workers need accommodation and attractive salaries.

last twelve months.

The study revealed that about 25% of the respondents had offered a bribe in the last 12 months. The majority fell in

rights-holders, which were drawn from Uganda and Tanzania.

Mbabazi also said in terms of frequency, 80% had offered a bribe once and women were more likely to give a bribe.

"This shows that the poor and vulnerable were more likely to give a bribe in exchange for the services thus increasing their vulnerability," he noted.

Mbabazi recommended the strengthening of local activism through community awareness, and advocacy.

Ben Bataringaya a resident of Bushenyi district, advocated for accountability through third party monitoring such as the use of community score cards, satisfaction surveys and independent evaluations.

The Stromme Foundation regional director, Priscilla Serukka, voiced a concern about implementation of sub-standard projects, duplication of projects, prevalence of projects abandonment in the country and that most times these projects were not beneficial to the people.

"There is need for constructive criticism, which would help Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to play more effective role in the development of the country," she told the participants from different parts of the country.

Serukka said CSOs have played a major role in

alleviating poverty and in developing various sectors, including health and education, since independence.

"The CSOs are playing a significant role in empowering the poor and creating employment opportunities," she said.

Serukka also urged the government to bring to book the vested groups involved illegal activities in the name of CSOs.

In an effort to curb absenteeism of health workers and improve service delivery, the government last week announced introduction of a biometric clock-in system in government hospitals and health centres.

But the Uganda Medical Association has described the procurement of the biometric clock-in system as a waste of resources.

Dr Anthony Obuku Ekwaro, the general secretary of the association, instead advised government to address tangible incentive systems such as providing housing near health facilities and improving the inadequate allowances and remuneration of workers.

"The method of surveillance they want to introduce is more of a punishment. They want to penalise doctors by cutting even the small salary for those who, for one reason or the other, miss duty, however justifiable the reason is," he said.