

Delayed promotions killing morale of medical workers – TIU report

By Ashraf Kasirye

A section of health workers in public facilities have blamed their continuous mischief and abuse of contracts to unfair delay of promotions.

Their blame emerged in a report by Transparency International Uganda (TIU), presented to the Ministry of Health yesterday. The report indicates that failure to promote experienced and qualified workers is one of the major causes of unethical behaviour by health workers.

The report was presented by the executive director of TIU, Peter Wandera, during a stakeholders' conference on using ICT to monitor health service delivery in northern Uganda, held in Kampala yesterday.

Wandera said the survey was conducted in Lira and Oyam districts.

He said vices such as absenteeism, rudeness of staff on patients, late arrival at work and the rampant negligence of duty are fuelled by demotivation of workers.

"Most of the workers told us that they highly invested in further studies and have acquired better academic papers, but they have not been promoted since," he said.

Another major problem stated in the report is the way porters are recruited from Kampala and deployed in upcountry health facilities.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Dr John Baptist Waniaye, a commissioner at the health ministry, said the main reason health workers miss out on promotions is because whenever most of them go for further studies, they do the wrong courses. For instance, one may accumulate diplomas, instead of upgrading to a degree, in which case one will still be considered a diploma holder and remunerated as such.

Wandera explained that most of the people recruited under the pretext of porters are highly qualified. However, due to fear of being denied jobs, they prefer hiding their right academic documents and present O'level certificates.

"Eventually, you find them masquerading as doctors or lab technicians and, after a while, they begin demanding promotions. We think porters should be recruited from the locality of the health centres to avoid such a problem," Wandera said.

In response, the commissioner in charge of emergency medical services at the Ministry of Health, Dr John Baptist Waniaye, said the main reason



Maniaye and Wandera during the conference at Grand Imperial Hotel yesterday. Photo by Ashraf Kasirye

why health workers miss out on promotions is because whenever most of them go to upgrade, they do it the wrong way.

"Someone has a diploma in nursing and he or she goes for another diploma

in clinical laboratory. In public service, that is called horizontal qualification. One will be considered a diploma holder, if one acquires 10 diplomas in 10 disciplines," he explained.

Waniaye said health workers need to

be guided on how to make academic decisions and that, sometimes, the ones who are rightfully qualified, should be guided on how to apply for promotions through their district bosses.

He also asked district leaders and NGOs to help the ministry to advocate structural revision by the policy makers so that more employment positions can be created in the health facilities, to create room for adequate staffing and promotions.

Staff houses and low pay

The report also indicated that most health workers misbehave as a result of lacking accommodation at their workplaces and what they consider low wages, which they must use to cater for their transport and all other costs.

But the chief administrative officer of Oyam district, Dorothy Ajwang, defended the Government, saying most workers prefer sleeping in towns to the staff houses built at their respective health centres.

"Many staff houses in Oyam are not occupied because the people who are supposed to occupy them decided to rent in nearby towns. Some of them have private clinics in the towns, where they prefer to live, as opposed to spending their nights at the staff quarters," she said.

