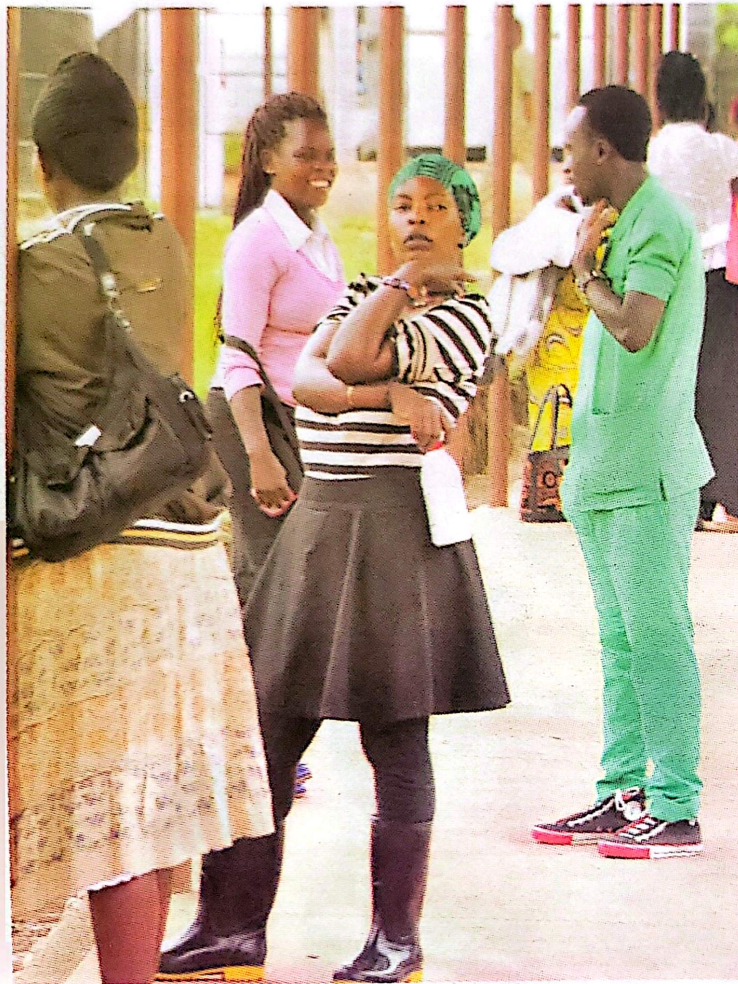


Nurses, midwives keep out of strike



Stranded. Patients stranded at Mubende Regional Hospital yesterday. PHOTO BY JOSEPHINE NNABBALE.

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KAMPALA. Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union (UNMU) that has been split in two groups for close to a decade due to leadership wrangles has reunited and rejected the doctors' strike.

In 2009, Ms Edith Nassuna, UNMU's former general secretary, was replaced by Ms Lucy Atim Joyce, while Ms Janet Obuni and Ms Florence Rwabahima, were also elected as president and national treasurer, respectively.

According to UNMU's current president, Mr Justus Cherop Kiplangat, Ms Nassuna protested her sacking and formed a rival group, a move that weakened the union.

"I convinced the two groups for a meeting over the weekend and we elected new leaders where I am the chairperson. I want to see a strong and self-sustaining union that advocates for nurses' and midwives' welfare in order to deliver quality health services," Mr

Kitlangat said. "We have been negotiating with government and a salary review for all civil servants is under way. We can only strike if we disagree with government," he added.

Doctors under their umbrella body, Uganda Medical Association (UMA), on Monday laid down their tools indefinitely demanding for pay rise despite government's request to call off the industrial action.

The chairman general, National Organisation for Trade Union, Mr Wilson Owere, hailed the nurses and midwives for not getting involved in the doctors' strike.

"All this confusion is caused by Sam Lyomoki (Workers' MP) who was sacked from UNMU as general secretary," Mr Owere said, adding: "Mr Lyomoki has no constituency that is why he has joined doctors to strike."

Mr Lyomoki could not be contacted as his known mobile phone was switched off by press time.

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We are the right group (health workers) government has to talk to regarding the strike which we are not participating in.” JUSTUS CHEROP KIPLANGAT, UNMU PRESIDENT