

Justification. Dr Diana Atwine says the claims are made by some striking doctors.

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KAMPALA. The permanent secretary in the Ministry of Health has accused the ministry officials of fuelling the medical doctors' strikes.

Dr Diana Atwine said doctors have come out to accuse staff in the Ministry of Health of being behind the medics strikes, saying they want to ruin the administration.

"Some doctors come and tell us that our people are the ones that tell them to continue striking; they want to destroy us but we came to work and we shall not give up," Dr Atwine said.

The permanent secretary made the revelation during the unveiling of Gary Holmes Centre, an administrative wing of Ruth Gaylord Hospital in Maganjo, Wakiso District, on Sunday.

Dr Atwine said the doctors' strike will soon end despite the forces against it. She said the doctors in the rural areas have resumed work and it is only those in the urban areas that are still on strike.

The permanent secretary said sacking of striking doctors will come as the last resort if all mediation fails but insisted that a negotiated settlement will be reached.

Ambassador's appeal

Meanwhile, the United States ambassador to Uganda, Ms Deborah Malac, has urged Ugandans to avoid waiting on government to provide all social services, but rather take individual or community initiatives to better the country.

"It is a difficult time; as you heard, the government has many demands on the resources that it has. We need to use those resources better and more effectively because there will never be enough resources," Ms Malac said.

She, however, asked government to allocate more funds to the health sector, including salaries, medical equipment and supplies.

She also urged government to deal with the doctors' strike through dialogue.

Ministry officials fuelling doctors' strike, says PS



In dire need. Patients wait to be attended to at Kisenyi Health Centre IV in Kampala yesterday. The doctors' strike, now in its third week, has paralysed service delivery in government hospitals countrywide. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

Dr Atwine added that the Uganda Revenue Authority does not collect enough money to meet all the needs of Ugandans.

"Doris (Akol, URA commissioner

general) is here, she can witness; the money we collect every year cannot meet our needs, but how can we use the little we have so we can reach the most vulnerable? I hope as

government, we borrow a leaf from the examples you [Ms Malac] are giving," she said.

Dr Atwine lauded the use of solar electricity and water pumps at Ruth Gaylord Hospital as the two methods are cost-effective, enabling the facility to provide affordable services to patients.

The hospital's chief executive officer, Mr Peter Kiggundu, said they are committed to providing self-sustaining, affordable and equitable community-based health care services to Ugandans through a dedicated and professional workforce. Mr Kiggundu said last year, they offered more than 5,000 free vaccine doses, and have also already exceeded the number in the first 10 months of this year.

THE STICKING ISSUES

Effect of strike. The doctors' strike, now in its third week, has paralysed service delivery in government hospitals countrywide. The doctors argue that the net pay of Shs900,000 for a medical officer does not match the job market.

Govt response. Military doctors from the UPDF, Police and Uganda Prisons have been deployed at Mulago National Referral Hospital to handle emergency cases. This is after a Cabinet committee last week failed to strike an agreement with the striking doctors.

Court case: medi

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