# Staff shortage chokes Yumbe hospital

YUMBE

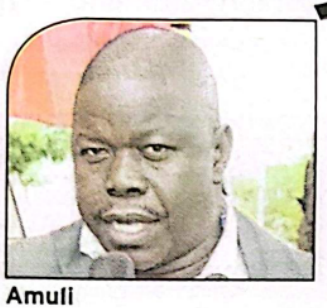
By Adam Gule

Yumbe Regional Referral Hospital, located in West Nile sub-region near the borders of South Sudan and DR Congo, is grappling with a severe staffing crisis as it struggles to serve nearly two million people across its catchment area, including refugees.

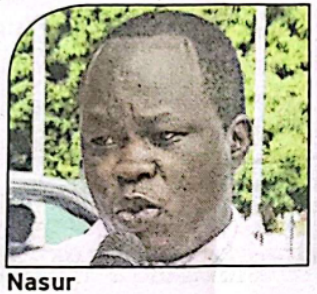
The hospital serves patients from the districts of Yumbe, Koboko, Moyo, Adjumani and Obongi. It also receives referrals from neighbouring districts of Maracha, Terego and Madi Okollo, in addition to patients from South Sudan and the DR Congo, positioning it as a critical cross-border health facility in the region.

However, despite the growing demand for services, the hospital is operating far below the required staffing levels.

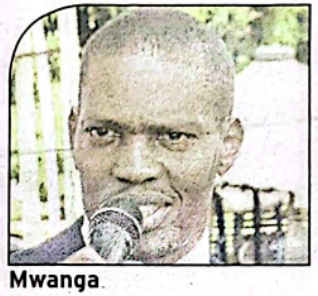
Dr Mubarak Nasur, the deputy hospital director, revealed that the facility currently has only 235 staff, including support personnel, representing just 18.8% of the required 1,246 health workers.



Amuli



Nasur



Mwanga

"When we started this facility, staffing stood at only 9%. Today, we have improved, but not significantly. We have only moved to 18.8%," Nasur said.

He said the staffing shortage has heavily affected service delivery, particularly in the outpatient, emergency, laboratory, maternity and outreach departments.

"This staffing level is far below what is needed to effectively deliver services. The available staff are overstretched across different units, leading to fatigue, possible errors and increased mortality due to limited specialised care," Nasur said.

Nasur added that the staffing gaps were previously cushioned by implementing partners that supported the facility. He said organisations such as the International Rescue Committee and the Infectious Disease Institute had employed more than 200 health workers to complement government staff.

However, he said many of the partners have since withdrawn, leaving major human resource gaps.

"We call upon the Government to deliberately consider increasing our staffing levels to at least 60% to match the current demand," he said.

Health officials say the shortage is already affecting service delivery, especially in specialised care.

Dr Franklin Idi Amuli, the district health officer for Moyo, said the shortage of medical personnel has weakened the hospital's capacity to handle referrals effectively.

"Many specialised services are not adequately provided due to limited human resources and this affects the entire referral system," Amuli said.

He added that the staffing crisis extends beyond the regional referral hospital to lower health facilities supervised by the institution, making it urgent for the Government to intervene.

Mathew Vuni Vuyiga, the deputy resident district commissioner for Yumbe, commended the Government for elevating the facility to regional referral hospital status, bringing the number of such facilities in West Nile to two.

He, however, emphasised the need for targeted intervention.

"We appreciate the elevation of the hospital, but there must be affirmative action to address its unique challenges, especially given the large and diverse population it serves," Vuyiga said.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**Dr Michael Mwanga, the assistant commissioner for surveillance at the health ministry, acknowledged the staffing challenges and reaffirmed government's commitment to strengthening the facility.**

**He said the Government has allocated sh60b for the hospital's wage bill. "With South Sudan and DR Congo nearby, coupled with the population in the catchment districts, we must bridge the staffing gaps," Mwanga noted.**

## ABOUT THE HOSPITAL

The hospital was rehabilitated and expanded by the Government with support from the OPEC Fund for International Development, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the Saudi Fund for Development at a cost of sh69b.

In the 2020/2021 financial year, the facility attained regional referral hospital status.

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