

MOVE COMES AFTER PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS VOTED TO END THEIR THREE-WEEK STRIKE ON SATURDAY

# Hospitals back to life

By Vision Reporters

Patients in public health facilities yesterday breathed a sigh of relief as medics returned to work after a three-week strike.

The national executive committee of the Uganda Medical Association suspended the three-week strike during a meeting convened at Silver Springs Hotel in Kampala on Saturday.

The association chairperson, Dr Okwaro Obuku, asked the medics to return to work until December 16, when negotiations with the Government to improve the general welfare of medical personnel are expected to end.

At a number of health facilities visited by *New Vision*, doctors were on duty and all the units were functioning normally.

The patients' turn-out was overwhelming at the various sections — emergency, casualty and general wards.

Dr Dennis Kamara, who is in charge of the assessment centre at Kiruddu Hospital in Makindye division, said most of his staff were back on duty.

"The staff are on duty but the number of patients is low. Since morning we have

worked on only 82 patients, less than a third of what we usually handle," he said.

Fifty-six-year-old Harriet Nabwire, who has heart complications, said she arrived at Kiruddu Hospital at 9:00am and was promptly attended to.

"Last week, I came here but there was no body to work on me, which made me worried. I am now confident that I will be okay," she said.

At Kawempe Hospital, there was an increase in the number of mothers seeking services compared to the past. The family planning section and the immunisation department were full to capacity.

At Naguru Hospital, patients were already in the queue by 6:00am, especially at the outpatient and immunisation departments. They were being attended to by doctors and nurses.

Hajarah Nalwoga, 27, an expectant mother, said the strike scared her but now that they are back, she feels relieved.

At Mulago Hospital, most personnel were at their duty stations. The patients' turn-out was overwhelming, especially at the emergency and casualty sections.

The hospital spokesperson,



Doctors busy attending to patients in Mulago Hospital yesterday. Photos by Ashiraf Kasirye

Enock Kusasira, said the clinics which were most affected by the strike were the ear, nose and throat (ENT) and the ones of dental and immunisation.

## Mothers

Elizabeth Nabuye, who had a caesarean section at Mulago Hospital on Sunday, said doctors did their best to give her all the necessary attention although the number of the expectant mothers was overwhelming.

Judith Kasule, who gave birth on Friday said although doctors were still on strike they attended to her.

Aisha Naginda, who has a sick baby at the acute care unit Mulago Hospital, said her child had received treatment.

"Previously they have been telling us to buy some of the



A doctor attending to mothers at Kawempe Hospital

drugs but I am surprised that the medicine is there," she added.

The health ministry permanent secretary, Dr Diana Atwine, said they had not yet established the number of the medics who had returned to

work by yesterday. "But as per Saturday commitment, we are expecting all the doctors to be on duty," she said.

Compiled by Nelson Kiva,  
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## Milestones of the medics' strike

November 6, 2017:

**1** Medical workers under the Uganda Medical Association lay down tools in demand for better working conditions and better pay. There were attempts by Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda to convince them against the move in vain.

November 15, 2017:

**2** A ministerial committee composed of Deputy Attorney General Mwesigwa Rukutana, health minister Ruth Aceng, Attorney General William Byaruhanga and planning state minister David Bahati meets the leaders of the striking medics but fail to agree on the way forward.

November 25, 2017:

**3** The Uganda Medical Association executive committee meets at Silver Springs in Bugolobi and votes to end the strike after promises from the Government.