Moroto hospital stuck with bodies

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MOROTO. Pathologists at Moroto Regional Referral Hospital in Karamoja Sub-region have stopped conducting postmortems due to lack of space, with the mortuary filled with unclaimed bodies.

The morgue has no refrigerator to keep dead bodies and officials reported 13 uncollected corpses by end of last week.

Some of the dead bodies were decomposing, emitting horrid stench and attracting perky blue flies.

Dr Alfred Ogwang, the hospital executive director, said they have no land to bury unclaimed bodies yet the Municipal Council which is mandated to bury unclaimed corpses is dragging its feet.

The hospital, he said, had formally communicated to municipal officials about the situation but it has taken no action.

The Town Clerk, Mr Swaibu Balaba, however, counter-blamed the hospital managers for running away from their responsibilities.

He said the municipal council can only bury bodies of people whose relatives are unknown, not patients whose kinsmen can easily be traced through medical records and the referral system.

> "The smell alone coming out of the mortuary is terrible and it is affecting some of the nearby restaurants in the town."
> ALFRED OGWANG, HOSPITAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"We shall not as a municipal council accept to dance to the tune of Moroto hospital. The patients who are referred to the hospital have their details and can be traced," he said.

"It is unclaimed bodies that the municipal council takes responsibility to bury. These ones at Moroto Hospital are abandoned bodies that the hospital should be responsible for," Mr Balala added.

In a separate interview, Moroto hospital board chairperson Mark Aol Musoka regretted the lack of cooperation between the health facility and the municipal council which he said was adversely affecting the hospital's functioning.

He said it is not the first time council officials were ignoring pleas of the hospital administration to help bury unclaimed bodies.

"We are not happy with the way the municipal authority is operating right now," he said, adding that they are due to meet council officials to harmonise their positions on the polarising matter.

Mr Musoka asked the government to consider building a new, fully refrigerated morgue to replace the colonial-era one that has a capacity to store only three dead bodies.

Our investigations show that the pastoralist Karimojong community by tradition do not associate with bodies, which they often abandon either at facilities or in the wilderness.