

Health NGOs petition govt to end doctors' strike

BY DAVID MAFABI

dmafai@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. A health civil society network of more than 10 organisations has petitioned the Health ministry to step in and stop the current strike by medical doctors.

In a letter to Health permanent secretary Diana Atwine, the Uganda Alliance of Patient's Organisations (UAPO) said the industrial action is already costing lives of many patients, children and expectant mothers across the country.

The November 7 petition signed by Ms Regina Kamoga, the chairperson UAPO, says whereas doctors deserve improved

remuneration and welfare, UAPO is extremely concerned that the doctors have preferred an industrial action to saving the lives of their patients.

"It is our considered opinion that we urgently call for an end to the declared industrial action by our doctors and resume dialogue [with government] so as to save lives. There is need to urgently avert the impending death of the already vulnerable patients," the petition reads in part.

"We, therefore, urge our government to show more commitment to addressing the doctors concerns by providing them the tools to work with and by availing the patients the medicines

they require," the petition adds.

Doctors at all public hospitals under their umbrella body Uganda Medical Association (UMA) on Monday voted to go on an indefinite strike until government meets their demands.

ABOUT UAPO

UAPO is a not-for profit civil society network of more than 10 organisations that include Uganda Women's Cancer Support Organisation, The Aids Support Organisation, Sickle Cell Association of Uganda, among others. The network of national and community health organisations champions making Uganda free from preventable suffering, and death caused by poverty related and neglected diseases, both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

The patients' fraternity says as a matter of urgency, the doctors should be assured that an independent salary commission will be put in place so that they can end their industrial action and save lives across the country.

However, Dr Atwine said government was already holding talks with the striking medical workers and there is more commitment to addressing the doctors concerns.

"The President has already directed the Public Service minister to provide a comprehensive package for civil servants' remuneration within two months and this is a concern of different groups of people, the prosecutors, medical workers and other groups," she said.

As part of their demands, the doctors want government to review their salaries which will see an intern doctor earn Shs8.5 million as opposed to the current Shs960,000 before tax.