

Minister roots for mental health policies

JINJA

By Jackie Nambogga

The Minister of Health, Dr Jane Aceng, has expressed concern over the lack of mental health policies at workplaces.

She said one in five people at the workplace experience mental health-related problems.

The revelation was made during the national celebrations to mark the 25th World Mental Health Day at Busoga Square in Jinja on Friday.

In a speech read by the commissioner for national disease control, Dr Patrick Tusiime, Aceng said 90% of people with mental illnesses conceal their status from others due to discrimination. She said common workplace issues such as job stress, work-life conflict, harassment, bullying and violence lead to significant social costs and impede productivity.

Aceng said work burnout can lead to depression yet it is linked to heart diseases, stroke, obesity, diabetes and other forms of cancer.

She called on the Government and private sector to define best practices geared towards promoting mental health in the workplace.

Aceng asked the gender



The empty tent for guests was occupied by journalists and a few health officials. Photo by Jackie Nambogga

ministry, which is charged with occupational safety, to join the health ministry in strengthening policies and establishing programmes for mental health at the workplace.

According to Dr Emmanuel Mufumba, the Jinja district mental health focal person, the major causes of mental illness include depression, anxiety, epilepsy and mania.

He also cites alcoholism, drug abuse, child mental conditions and HIV psychosis

BETWEEN THE LINES: Issue at hand

■ According to the health ministry, 4.4% of the world's population suffer from depression, while 800,000 commit suicide annually.

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commit suicide annually.

Mufumba explained that 1,000 cases of mental health are recorded at their various units monthly in Jinja district.

Much as this was a national event, it was not well-attended, prompting the Jinja district secretary for health, Sylvia Mpabulungi, to ask if they were busy attending consultative meetings on the presidential age limit.

Also, Tusiime, who represented Aceng, asked why representatives from schools,



Dr Patrick Tusiime

higher learning institutions and civil servants did not attend the event.

It was the journalists and a few health officials who occupied the tent that had been reserved for the guests.

One of the civil servants at Jinja district, who preferred anonymity, said he was not aware of what was taking place.

"None of us was invited. We thought it was an event for health workers because we saw majority of them donned in their uniforms," he said.

However, Tusiime said there was no way they would best disseminate information on mental health when schools, business partners and civil servants do not attend national events.