

Kadaga calls for boat ambulances

KALANGALA

By Martin Kitubi

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, has called for the establishment of boat ambulances to be stationed on all islands in the country.

Kadaga said the move will ease access to better health facilities, especially in times of emergencies from islands to the mainland areas.

"I travelled to Rubanda via Lake Bunyonyi and the boat stopped for 30 minutes in the middle of the lake on our way back to the main land. We were all scared, until we were saved. This could be the same challenge patients go through in the islands in times of emergencies," Kadaga said.

She was on Saturday last week addressing a gathering at the Ssesse Island African Aids Project (SIAAP) fundraising dinner at Hotel Africana in Kampala.

Kadaga promised to lobby for funds from the Government, with Parliament's support to procure the boat ambulances for the islands.

Several people from Ssesse Island, including Maj. Frank Musisi, the founder of SIAAP, had raised concern on how people were struggling to get to the mainland for treatment.

Musisi also called for increased medical workers to assist in the provision of health services to the people living with HIV, who he said had resorted to self-medication, a



Monday Atigo, the president of the Uganda North American Association, Kalangala RDC Caleb Tukaikiriza, Kadaga and Musisi at Hotel Africana last week. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

situation which could lead to death.

"At SIAAP, we have nine members of staff. Of these, seven are medical workers and the rest volunteers. People living with HIV/AIDS are increasing and the current medical

team is overwhelmed. We need four more medical workers to contain the situation," Musisi noted.

He blamed the escalation of HIV, especially among the youth in Kalangala district, on the female to

male ratio of 1:5 respectively, where several men share one woman.

"The young population is sexually active and it has been worsened by the sharing of women. We want to sensitise them on this matter, before

it gets out of hand," Musisi explained.

SIAAP was formed in 2004 by Maj. Frank Musisi, a soldier in the US army, after visiting his homeland in Ssesse Islands and realising that about 60% of the people he grew up with had died of HIV/AIDS.

At that time, there were no organisations working to end the prevalence and stigma of HIV/AIDS. He established SIAAP to provide HIV counselling and testing, anti-retroviral therapy and safe male circumcision.

The facility also offers other services, such as community HIV/AIDS mobilisation and sensitisation, family planning, contraceptives distribution and treatment to pregnant mothers, among others.

According to Tadeo Musaazi, an administrator at SIAAP, the facility offers health services to over 10,000 people living in Kalangala district.

"We are offering HIV/AIDS treatment to about 1,100 people, 217 of whom are receiving family planning. We extend contraceptives distribution to over 16,500 people monthly and hope the money raised will increase service delivery," Musaazi said.

SIAAP fundraising dinner

At the dinner, Speaker Kadaga offered sh4m. She also pledged to talk to President Yoweri Museveni to fulfill the promise he made in 2014 of an ambulance to SIAAP.

A total of sh10m was raised in cash and pledges.