

Leaders rent out health centre, spark protests

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BUSHENYI. Bushenyi Municipality residents are protesting a move by their leaders to close Kashenyi Health Centre II and hire it out to a Chinese road construction firm CICO.

The firm that is tarmacking the 12km Kashenyi-Mitooma road intends to use the centre as a camp site for three years. The move has attracted protests from the residents of Kashenyi ward in Ishaka Division in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

The Shs30m health centre was constructed under a collaboration of Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality and GemertBakel municipality of the Netherlands, which contributed Shs20m.

The residents say the centre has been undervalued by the mayor Jackson Kamugasha, town clerk Katunda Mukuru and Ishaka Division chairperson Deus Mulyenga. The price of the rent-out deal has not been disclosed.

They say the health centre has been shifted to a rented room which is too small for medical operations.

Mr Alex Tusiime, a resident said: "The leaders just went to the nearest trading centre and rented a small room not accessible to all residents formerly served by the health centre."

Mulyenga insisted the due process was followed to conclude the lease.

"A procurement committee at the municipality sat and discussed the issue and there shouldn't be any cause for alarm," Mr Mulyenga said.

However Kashenyi village chairperson, Mr Alex Tayebwa, said he was surprised to see a government facility leased out without any official communication to the lower council leaders and residents.

"We simply saw some people cut trees and upon inquiring, we were told the place is going to be hired out as a camp to house (CICO) machines. This is unfair," Mr Tayebwa said.

He said the municipal authorities undervalued their land for Shs500,000 whereas a neighbour's house in the vicinity was rented by the same company at Shs74m for the three years, compared to Shs18m given to the municipality for the same duration of the lease.

Mr Katunda Mukuru, the acting town clerk, insisted the health centre was shifted to a nearby trading centre and will be there for only one month. He said a temporary structure will be constructed by CICO below the camp site for residents to access health services during the three-year lease period. Ishaka-Bushenyi Municipality MP Gordon Arinda said more investigations into the deal are ongoing.

Mr Daniel Lumansi, the CICO company technical officer, confirmed the lease and said they will respect the terms of the tenancy agreement and meet expectations from both the leaders and the residents. He said a temporary shelter for the health centre will be built for the people of Kashenyi soon.