

Issue. The hospital last week suffered a one-hour gap without oxygen.

BY PATIENCE AHIMBISIBWE
pahimbisibwe@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. At least three babies have died due to lack of oxygen at Kawempe Referral Hospital, which is currently handling Mulago National Referral Hospital's obstetrics and gynecology department.

Mulago has been shut down for renovation since 2015 with the overhaul expected to be completed this year.

Sources who preferred anonymity in order to speak freely told *Daily Monitor* that since the moving of the department, they have struggled to get enough oxygen and in many cases patients who should have been saved have died.

The latest tragedy is the case of three pre-term babies who passed last Thursday after the oxygen in the cylinder they were sharing got used up.

Oxygen supply

Our sources say oxygen supply to the facility has been deficient for the last three weeks, hence frustrating the medical workers.

"We have had persistent lack of oxygen since we were taken [from Mulago] to Kawempe. We have made noise but things keep getting worse. There is nothing as frustrating as seeing your patient die when you know they could have been saved. It is sad this system has failed us," the source lamented.

"There are many things we are forced to work without but are necessary. But what can we do? You also want to save the situation. In the process, we risk our lives and put in our

Three babies die as Mulago hospital runs out of oxygen



ISSUE

According to sources, oxygen supply to the facility has been deficient for the last three weeks.

Crisis. Mulago Hospital which is under renovation. Patients are currently being referred to Kawempe hospital. FILE PHOTO

ALLEGATIONS

On the allegations that management had asked patients to contribute, he said: "There must be other issues which we need to investigate. But there are other things that affect us. Kawempe is far away from where we refill. But to say that we asked patients to contribute, that is extortion and we condemn it. We have vehicles which take the gas on a daily basis."

money," the source added.

The source said at some point, because the situation was unbearable, the administrators asked the nurses to advise patients' attendants to contribute at least Shs1,000 so that they could pool some money to buy the oxygen at Shs140,000 per cylinder.

But Mulago Hospital spokesperson Enock Kusasira downplayed the Thursday disaster, saying the hospital suffered only a one-hour gap without oxygen before it was delivered from Mulago's plant to Kawempe.

"That may be true and we regret it. There was a gap of one hour without oxygen. But in the afternoon, it was taken. We take 14 cylinders every day to Kawempe and distribute it to areas where it is most needed. The special care unit alone, where we have premature children, receives 10 cylinders," Mr Kusasira said in an interview.

He blamed the delay on the traffic jam that always paralyses the nearly four-kilometre journey from Mulago to Kawempe Hospital.