

Medicine

Burglary

Healthcare

Monitoring unit seizes stolen drugs from Kampala house

By Moses Walubiri

Over the weekend, detectives attached to the Health Monitoring Unit (HMU), acting on a tip-off, raided a house in Bunga, a Kampala suburb, to recover an assortment of drugs and equipment that they suspected had been stolen from government stores or medical facilities.

According to Collins Karugaba, HMU's head of investigations, the operation resulted in the recovery of an assortment of health equipment and medicines worth sh500m.

The assortment, which also included laptops and ipads meant to facilitate health facilities, stethoscopes, blood pressure gauges and other paraphernalia for delicate operations, were recovered from a one Duncan Ssekibule, who is currently in Police detention.

Yesterday, HMU's top brass, led by its executive director, Dr Jackson Ojera, displayed the recovered items, underscoring one of the challenges the country is facing in improving healthcare in the country.

Destined for South Sudan

"The information we got is that the medicine and equipment were destined for South Sudan or DR Congo. Stolen drugs and equipment is disguised as foodstuffs to beat security at border posts," Phiona Abaasa, HMU's principal public relations officer, said yesterday.

Although some of the medicine and medical equipment is embossed with the Government of Uganda insignia, the majority, according to Ojera, is from a private health provider called 'Bulamu'.

Information available to HMU indicates that Bulamu is a health service provider that offers health outreach programmes to



Ojera and Jjumba display medical equipment that was impounded in Bunga at the unit's office in Naguru yesterday. Photo by Roderick Ahimbazwe

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RECOVERED ITEMS

disadvantaged people.

Bulamu's drugshop suffered a burglary and it is possible its entire stock was swept by the burglars.

According to Karugaba, HMU got a tip-off that an individual, who is not a medical practitioner, had assortment

of drugs and medical equipment in his home.

At the time of the sting operation, Ssekibule was not at home. However, when summoned through a phone call, he denied having any equipment in his home.

An hour into the search, he arrived with his lawyer, but the search team had stumbled upon boxes of medicine and other medical equipment right from his sitting room to the bedroom.

As litigation rages over the burglary and possession of medicine by an unauthorised person, HMU will hand over the items to the true owners.

According to Pontiano Jjumba, HMU's assistant director, the entity has an arrangement with the Judiciary to have recovered medicine distributed even before conclusion of litigation to avoid it expiring in its stores.