

EDITORIAL

Govt should improve health workers welfare

This paper yesterday carried a story that many health workers deployed to rural health centres in the districts of Ntungamo, Mbarara, Sheema, and Kabale have difficulty getting a roof over their heads.

There is virtually no accommodation for them at their work stations. A random survey by *Daily Monitor* found that while many health personnel live outside their work places, those who stay within health facilities have to improvise.

Sadly, the health workers' predicament is not isolated to only the named districts. Across the country, the situation at public health centres is more or less the same. While some healthcare givers resort to sharing space with patients in the wards, others squeeze

The issue:

Bad roads

Our view:

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into any available rooms, turn kitchens into a house, sleep in garages or sleep in the outpatient wards after which they fold their bedding in the mornings before work begins.

The danger with subjecting health workers to poor living conditions has far-reaching repercussions not only on the medics, but also on patients and the entire health sector.

First, lack of accommodation for health workers partly points to the root of poor health services delivery, absenteeism, late reporting to work stations, and early closure of the health facilities. It also leads to theft of medicines and equipment. To ensure effective delivery of health services in the country, the welfare challenge healthcare givers face must be addressed.

For instance, how do you expect health worker who travels daily for a long distance to and fro to a work station to perform their duties? Worse, how can a health worker who lives miles away from their work station help in case of an emergency? Inevitably, all this translates into work inefficiency and loss of morale - leading to suffering of patients.

While the government should be commended for establishing health centre IIIs and IVs across the country, we believe building an effective, solid and vibrant health personnel should be its next focus.

Otherwise having health centres without staff to attend to patients, some of which are emergency cases, will not improve the health conditions of the citizens.

For provision of effective health service to take place, the government and other relevant bodies should, as matter of urgency, prioritise improving the welfare of health workers. This encompasses providing health staff good accommodation and paying them adequate salary and on time, among other things.

There is also need for the government to reinstate Primary Health Care funds it withdrew years ago and the money be used to build houses for health staff.

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