

RESIDENTS WANT GOVT HELP, A YEAR AFTER THE ARMY SPRAYED IN THEIR HOMES

# Bedbugs attack Kampala again

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Bedbugs have re-attacked the slums of Kampala with a ferocity that is forcing residents to spend nights on the verandahs, barely a year since the army carried out an exercise to get rid of them.

In preparation for *Tarehe Sita* celebrations in February last year, the army carried out a spraying exercise in households in Kampala suburbs to kill the rampant bugs.

Together with Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), they sprayed 94 homes in Makindye division, 72 in Nateete, Rubaga, 99 in Mulago parish, Kawempe and 45 in Kirombe-Biina, Nakawa.

Speaking to *New Vision*, some of the residents who had their houses sprayed are now calling for another exercise, saying that after months of having peaceful nights, the insects are back with a vengeance.

"Since the spraying, my mother and I became comfortable until recently when the bedbugs attacked again. We have tried to fight them, in vain. We cannot afford the insecticides," said Simon Mutebezi, a 28-year-old resident of Kirombe-Biina.

Gerald Sekyewa, a mechanic in Nkele zone in Makindye, said the bedbugs had been neutralised, but later came back. Sekyewa said they need help from Government to get rid of the stubborn bloodsuckers.

He said the Government needs to spray insecticides in the slums regularly so that the insects do not resurface.

"The army should come back and finish them off. The bedbugs did not completely die the last time they sprayed," said 65-year-old Amina Nangendo, a resident of Nkele.

Another resident, a 30-year-old teacher, Matthias Owor, wants the army to supply them with the insecticides such that they can do the spraying on their own.

"The insects are resilient; we have been fighting them, without success. The army should supply us with insecticide so that we fight them ourselves," he said.



A UPDF officer spraying bedbugs in Musoke Zone, Nateete in Kampala last year

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ In preparation for *Tarehe Sita* celebrations in February last year, the army carried out a spraying exercise in many households in Kampala.

Josephine Nagawa, of Mutungo said the situation is made worse by the congestion in the slums. Bedbugs can easily be moved from one house to another and in the end, the whole neighbourhood becomes infested.

In an interview with the *New Vision*, Dr Simon Peter Ochieng from the directorate of public health and environment at KCCA, said although it is their responsibility to ensure that people live in an environment that is free from such insects, they are incapacitated.

"Ideally, we are supposed to spray in the slums, but we do not have the equipment, the insecticides are expensive, yet we are underfunded. Right now the costs are high and we cannot afford," he said.

He said they will engage the village health teams (VHTs) to carry out community health sensitisation in the infested areas and empower people in the use of hygiene to keep away the bugs.

### Bedbugs

A female bedbug is said to lay approximately five eggs in one day and about 500 during her lifetime. The eggs, according to scientists, are about one millimetre long and are visible to the naked eye. These eggs take about two weeks to hatch. The nymphs (baby bedbugs) start feeding as soon as they hatch and pass through five moulting stages before maturity. During each moulting stage, they need to feed once. It takes about five weeks to reach maturity at a room-temperature environment.

### How they move

The bedbugs get into a new home as runaways, when luggage, furniture and beddings are moved to a new home. They can also move from house to house through wires and pipes in houses that share hardware.