

Hospital status brings hope to Luweero

Overwhelmed. The district has for years relied on a health centre IV, which is a referral for more than five neighbouring districts.

BY DAN WANDERA
dwandera@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. For residents and leaders in Luweero, the elevation of the district's health centre IV to a general hospital is a major milestone.

The district is at the heart of Luweero Triangle where the National Resistance Army pitched camp between 1981 and 1986 to launch a five-year bush war that brought President Museveni to power.

Last month, the Ministry of Health announced that they had upgraded Luweero Health Centre IV to a general hospital status beginning the next financial year.

The elevation is in fulfilment of a 15-year-old presidential pledge and a timely intervention to address the overwhelming patient numbers because of its strategic location on the busy Kampala-Gulu highway.

According to Hajj Abdul Nadduli, the Minister Without Portfolio, this comes as good news to the people of Luweero who have over the years grappled with poor health services.

"Upgrading our health centre to a hospital status is a great achievement. It is true that we have a long list for pledges yet to be fulfilled but the health of our people takes priority," Hajj Nadduli, who is also a liberation war veteran, said in an interview at the weekend.

600

THE HOSPITAL RECEIVES ABOUT 600 OUTPATIENTS PER DAY ON AVERAGE.

"Our health care system has been limping. When we launched the construction project for the 400-bed ward at Luweero Health Centre, the focus was to have a hospital to help the people of Luweero triangle and our prayers have been answered," he added.

However, the development has generated debate about the need to have staff quarters at the facility.

Katikamu North MP Abraham Byandala recently suggested a lobbying process for funds from government, NGOs and the donor community for purchasing land on which the staff quarters can be constructed.

"We need about 22 extra acres of land for this project. This land should be within the Luweero Town Council area," Mr Byandala said.

The health centre IV sits on a five-acre piece of land, which cannot accommodate staff quarters. The facility currently has a big turn up of expectant mothers, which match the level of a general hospital.

According to the Director General for Health Services, Dr Henry



The Director General for Health Services, Dr Henry Mwebesa (Right), on a tour of a 400-bed ward under construction at Luweero Health Centre IV last month. PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA

Mwebesa, for a health centre IV, the figure of 250-300 deliveries per month is far beyond its capacity.

"Such numbers are registered at established facilities with a hospital status but with this elevation, they will get more manpower and facilitation to address such challenges," Dr Mwebesa said recently.

Government, Dr Mwebesa said, will also contribute Shs1.2b towards the ongoing construction works for the 400-bed ward at the facility, currently undertaken by Luweero District, while all the other services that come with the elevation, including essential medicines and an independent budget, will be provided.

Dr Innocent Nkonwa, the district health officer, is optimistic that the elevation of the health centre, which comes with a bigger budget, will boost service delivery for not only Luweero but the more than five districts whose residents have always relied on the facility for health services.

"Take the example of the ambulance we have; it was donated to us in 2004 and it has covered about 300,000kms. This shows that it is too old to serve a busy health facility," he said.

The district chairperson, Mr Ronald Ndaula, said more than 90 per cent of the structures housing the health centre IIs, IIIs and IVs have been invaded by bats, often risking lives of patients, medical staff and caregivers.

"The bad smell welcoming you to these facilities raises serious health concerns. Many of the facilities at the level of health centre II and III have single wards, often separated by cardboards. It is no surprise for males and females to share a single ward. Services of a bigger health facility at a hospital status

will bring a new lease of life to the healthcare system here," he said. The district has 64 health units, of

which 24 are privately owned. The health units are spread across 10 different sub-counties, with three

health centre IVs while others are health centre IIIs and IIs.

All these facilities have inadequate structures while many are housed in dilapidated buildings.

During a recent tour by Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation officials, government pledged to have two staff units constructed at Bowa Health Centre III in Makulubita Sub-county.

Dr Mwebesa said funds will be allocated for the construction of the two staff units to ease the accommodation problem. Medical staff at Bowa Health Centre III currently share the ward with patients.

At Kamira Sub-county, many residents trek more than 15kms to access healthcare at Kamira Health Centre III.

Mr Livingstone Kategaya, the former sub-county chairperson, says the health care system is still lacking and that they need an ambulance vehicle to ease the referral system.

"The distance from Kamira Health Centre III to Luweero Health Centre IV is estimated to be 26kms. This makes the referral system for complicated cases, including expectant mothers, very complicated," Mr Kategaya said in an interview.

ABOUT FACILITY

Luweero Health Centre IV registers an average of 10 accident victims per week, according to records, due to its strategic location on the busy Kampala-Gulu highway. However, the facility falls short of some of the services, medicines and medical personnel to adequately handle the emergency cases.

The health centre has some specialised clinics, including the sickle cell and cervical cancer clinics, with an overwhelming turn up of patients. The sickle cell clinic has more than 300 clients and digs deep into the health centre budget, according to Dr Sarah Ogobi the in-charge of the centre.



PUBLIC NOTICE

Airtel Uganda regrets to inform its customers and the general public that effective Saturday, 14th May 2018, you will not be able to make or receive calls to or from Smile Communications Uganda Limited (Smile).

This is because the Interconnection Service between Airtel Uganda and Smile has been terminated due to Smile's persistent failure and or refusal to pay Interconnect Fees to Airtel Uganda despite numerous demands and reminders.

We regret the inconvenience this might cause to our customers.

MANAGEMENT.