

PANIC AS HOSPITAL DEVELOPS CRACKS

West Nile



BY AGNES KYOTALENGERIRE

Grace Moriku, 30, sits on her bed next to a cracked wall in the maternity ward, cuddling her baby. Although Moriku is happy to have received treatment from the hospital, little does she know that a few years to come, she may not be able to access health services from the same facility as the hospital has developed cracks and may collapse any time.

Moriku is among the 232,813 residents of Adjumani district, who might be denied medical services in the event

MINISTRY OFFICIAL SPEAKS OUT

The permanent secretary at the health ministry, Dr. Diana Atwine said the ministry does not manage day-to-day activities of Adjumani Hospital and on that note, she does not know the status of the hospital.

However, she said she is aware that a number of old hospitals require renovation, which she said largely depends on the availability of funds.

that Adjumani Hospital collapses.

According to statistics from the hospital, on a monthly basis, the facility treats 6,681 patients. The figure includes 5,613 patients from the out-patients department, 157 deliveries and 911 in-patient admissions.

"The hospital is sinking; the walls are drifting apart and we fear that it can collapse any time and

injure or kill patients," says Michael Ojja, the hospital administrator.

Ojja said the cracks are due to the pressure exerted by the heavy roof.

He said when he talked to ministry of health officials, he was told that there is no money, yet they need over sh10m to rebuild the hospital and put internal pillars to support the roof.

Adjumani Hospital, located in the West Nile region, was built in 1997 by Dragados contractors, an international company, with funding from the African Development Bank. Then how can a hospital of only 20 years develop cracks?

Dr. George Didi Bhoka, the district health officer, said the cracks are as a result of structural defects that resulted from the shoddy work done by the contractors.

He partly blames the structural defect to the contractors not understanding the soil structures; that the sandy soil, where the hospital structures sit, could not support the structures.



The administration block of Adjumani Hospital, which is cracking, requires renovation

PATIENTS, HEALTH WORKERS SPEAK OUT

Harriet Achiro, the medical officer at the hospital, says the cracks keep on expanding, which she thinks puts the lives of health workers and patients at risk.

A mother in the maternity ward, who preferred anonymity, said she was scared that anytime the ward could collapse.

"It would be sad if the building collapsed and killed

us at a place where we have come to seek treatment," she said.

INTERVENTION

Bhoka said they have noted the problem and, with support from the health ministry's infrastructural development department, together with the Belgium Technical Co-operation, they have done an assessment of what is required to fix the defect.

"An estimate of about

sh2.5b is needed to do the renovation, but because of limited resources, we have embarked on the renovation in phases," he explained. The first phase to renovate the outpatient department has been completed.

Bhoka said the second phase will include renovating the administration block, as well as the maternity, surgical, paediatric and medical wards. The third phase of renovation will be the staff quarters.