

THE IGANGA HEALTH UNIT HAS NOT HAD AN ANAESTHETIC OFFICER FOR YEARS

Bugongo health centre theatre idle for 11 years

IGANGA

By Musoke Kizito

Mariam Mugema, a resident of Bugongo village in Nabitende sub-county, Kigulu North, cannot afford sh500,000 to cater for her transport and delivery bills at Iganga Hospital, which is about 20km from her village.

The money would have been less if she was to give from Bugongo Health Centre IV, which is adjacent to her home.

Although the health facility has a well-equipped theatre, which was opened in 2006, nobody has ever undergone surgery there.

Mugema is still in shock after the death of their Woman MP, Hailat Kaudah, who died on July 8 from Kawempe Hospital in Kampala.

Dr. Lydia Namwanje, the head of Bugongo Health Centre IV, said although they have two medical officers capable of performing caesarian section, their skills are rendered redundant due to the absence of an anaesthetic officer.

Anaesthetic officer

An anaesthetic officer assists with the administration during surgery and monitoring of anaesthesia and has an extensive knowledge of anaesthesia techniques, instruments, supplies and technology.

"Although I am capable of carrying out operations, I do not practise what I studied because I only distribute drugs to the patients," Namwanje says.

The facility receives an average of 100 patients daily.

Bugongo Health Centre is a constituency hospital, which is expected to provide services to more than 140,000 people as per the 2014 census.

Complicated deliveries are often referred to Iganga Hospital, according to Namwanje.

Dr David Muwanguzi, the district health officer, said they are aware of the lack of an anaesthetic officer at the facility.

He said the district has advertised the post for several years, but no one has applied for it. "The problem is that the area is not attractive, yet anaesthesia requires additional training. But the salary scale is not different from others," Muwanguzi said. Secondly, there are no chances of promotion, which discourages applicants, he added.

Muwanguzi said since anaesthetic officers are few, one finds themselves working 24 hours a day, unlike other fields where they work for only eight hours.

Haematology analyser

The health facility received a



Women and attendants in a maternity ward of Bugongo Health Centre IV in Iganga



The theatre at Bugongo Health Centre has never been used due to the absence of an anaesthetic officer

haematology analyser in 2010, but it is still not operational due to missing parts.

Although the administration informed the National Drug Authority (NDA) and district officials, the problem about the missing parts has never been addressed.

The analyser was provided at the same time they received a double cabin pick-up truck which is used as ambulance, but it is parked at the district health office in Iganga town.

Ambulance

Amos Nsaana, a member on health centres management committee, said they have talked to the relevant authorities to make sure that the ambulance is parked at the health facility in vain. "What if we get an emergency when the vehicle is in Kampala?" Nsaana asked.

Muwanguzi said in the beginning, the vehicle used to be kept at the facility, but ended up being vandalised.

They decided to park it at district headquarters where there

is security but still under the custodianship of Bugongo Health Centre IV.

Drugs

The facility is besieged by many more problems, including inadequate drug supply.

Namwanje said although they submit their request to the district health officer every quarter, they have a financial ceiling of sh10m every two months.

Drugs are supposed to last two months, but they always run out after one month.

Most times, medical workers prescribe to the patients what they should buy from other private clinics and dug shops.

The hospital authorities also expressed concern that the supplies received always include condoms which are already in excess in the stores. What they need are essentials such as gloves.

Mortuary

The mortuary was abandoned many years ago due to absence of equipment such as refrigerators.

"How can you build a facility and instal machines worth sh150m and fail to provide a medical officer?" Iganga MP.

The district is still looking for money to buy equipment and to replace the door, according to Muwanguzi.

Uniforms

Only half of the medical workers have uniforms. The uniformed medical workers said colleagues are still wearing the nursing school uniforms they recieved at the time of their graduation.

Muwanguzi said this is the responsibility of the Government because they usually take measurements and send them the uniforms.

Area MP speaks out

Iganga MP Fred Bwino Kyakulaga said the state of the facility calls for immediate intervention.

"How can you build a facility and instal machines worth sh150m and fail to provide a medical officer to make it operational?" Kyakulaga asked.

Kyakulaga promised to meet district officials and lobby the Ministry of Health to make sure that hospital problems are addressed.

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